

# BLOOD WEDDING

Carlita wasn't your typical Rican beauty but did she have character! The ozone adjusted whenever she entered the Kiwi. With that deliberate stride, she cut right through the stale smoke and conversation. The whores didn't like her and she had little time for the transvestites. Reece knew her well. But then, he knew everyone.

She never gave me the time of day but I drank her up. Reece said she'd been a dancer. That probably accounted for her bearing - poised as a cobra, head slightly thrown back, chin thrust forward. She had a small white scar near her mouth which served only to highlight her full lips. I would have guessed she was in her late 20's, but I heard different later. Whatever! Her skin glowed with an animal vigor. Her one concession to jewelry was a silver ankle bracelet. Her eyes were a slate gray. Still, I have trouble picturing the life force behind them. You didn't stare head on at Carlita. She wasn't that kind of woman.

Reece had warned me to keep my distance from Roman. Although a braggart and a drunk, that didn't make him unique; but he was Ukrainian, a rarity in the Kiwi. I can't say what Carlita saw in him; he was a hard man who rarely showed any feelings. On the rare occasion he paid her any heed, her haughty glare would dissolve into a soft, girlish smile. Then again, he was married, so maybe it was all an act.

Jesus was a mid-level smack dealer from the projects. Impossibly handsome, in a Spanish way, he was some years younger than the other two. His was a brittle, brooding presence and he took offense often and easily. He had long, tapered fingers and paid for his drinks with crisp 100 dollar bills. Even Reece had no idea that he had been sleeping with Carlita.

I never saw either of them after the scene at DeLeon's Funeral Parlor. Roman's wife went hysterical when Carlita approached the casket. But that had no effect. She just kissed his porcelain forehead, kept her cool and mantilla intact. Then she strode towards the projects in the dog day heat, off to settle her sacred score.