



# Brides and Sinners in El Chuco (Camino del Sol)

*Christine Granados*

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**Brides have their dreams, sinners their secrets**, but sometimes it's not so easy to tell them apart.

In the border town of El Paso—better known to its Mexican American residents as El Chuco—dramas unfold in humdrum households every day as working-class men come home from their jobs and as their wives and children do their best to cope with life. Christine Granados now plumbs the heart of this community in fourteen startling stories, uncovering the dreams and secrets in which ordinary people sometimes lose themselves. Many fictional accounts of barrio life play up tradition and nostalgia; *Brides and Sinners in El Chuco* is a trip to the darker side. Here are memories of growing up in a place where innocence is always tempered by reality—true-to-life stories, told in authentic language, of young women, from preteens to twenty-somethings, learning to negotiate their way through troubled times and troubled families. In the award-winning story “The Bride,” a young girl recalls her sister as a perennial bride on Halloween, planning for her eventual big day in a pink notebook with lists of potential husbands, only to see her dream thwarted at the junior prom. In another, we meet Bobbi, the class slut, whose D-cup chest astounds the other girls and entices everyone—even those who shouldn't be tempted.

Granados' tales boldly portray women's struggle for solidarity in the face of male abuse, and as these characters come to grips with self-discovery, sibling rivalry, and dysfunctional relationships, she shows what it means for Chicanas to grow up in protective families while learning to survive in the steamy border environment. *Brides and Sinners in El Chuco* is an uncompromising look at life with all its hard edges—told with enough softness to make readers come back for more.

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