

Chapter 40

Farm Wedding

“What a great road for four-wheeling!” I said to Father John as we bounced along the back mountain roads in the red Toyota truck. “So... We’re going to a wedding.” I said.

“Yes, we are.” He repeated, “We are going to a wedding! And you should find this interesting.” “Did you bring your camera?” he asked, knowing I’m a wedding photographer.

“Yes I did,” I responded” We stopped talking for a minute to hold on better as we bounced through a very rough spot.

All of the people who lived in the rows of houses on this particular farm would be there. There was a school, a church, a small store, and about sixty or eighty families. The school only had the first three grades. If someone wanted to study more than three years, they would have to go elsewhere.

There were a lot of people walking around as we drove into the housing area and up near the church.

“Shooting a wedding here is going to be fun for me.” I thought, as I pulled the camera from my backpack and put the strap around my neck. “Things wouldn’t get going for another fifteen minutes or so,” I thought, as I walked around and scoped out the area.

“What a nice day for a wedding,” I said, to a small group of people gathering near the church. “My name is David, and I came with Father John,” I said, shaking everyone’s hand, “It’s very nice to meet all of you.”

They told me their names and we talked for a while. “Where are you from?” one of them asked.

“I’m from the states,” I answered, “I live near where Father John comes from. After ten minutes, there was a sudden movement towards the church and people began to slowly enter the church to get a place to sit.

I was surprised to see the bride coming up the pathway on her way to the church. She was walking with two of her friends as if they were only walking to school. The bride was very young, and I knew that she was the bride because she was wearing a white veil. Her dress was nice, but an ordinary dress that was simple and appropriate. I took a couple of photographs of them walking together before they noticed me.

“By the church gate,” I said pointing to the white gate. I took a picture. “Arm in arm together,” I said and took another. “Don’t laugh,” I said, and I took another picture of them laughing.

There was a line of people waiting in a slow moving line going into the small church. The three girls got into the line and, to my amazement, entered the church when their turn came. “My,” I thought to myself, “what humility for the bride to enter the church in line with everyone else.”

Most of the people were dressed in their best ordinary clothes. I wasn’t able to pick out which one was the groom yet. The bride sat with her family near the front. And soon the ceremony began. Father John made some remarks, introduced the bride and groom, and began with the first readings...

“The groom was very young,” I thought. His shirt was a little large and his black pants were a little short. “He probably borrowed the shirt from his stout friend, and the pants from his shorter brother,” I figured.

Even with the microphone, no one heard their vows or saw much of their faces. It actually happened pretty fast amid nervousness and tears. I have a wonderful picture of them during that formal solemn moment. Then there was a moment of question as they counted out the thirteen



coins. One of them gave the coins to the other as a traditional symbol. They sat together on a small bench placed to one side until the ceremony was over. I think they were relieved to be out of the spotlight.

The reception and dinner was in a large room where they usually stacked sacks of freshly picked coffee during picking time. They had many chairs, but only a few tables for serving the dinner.

“Come with me,” said a well-dressed gentleman, as he led me to the center table, “Please sit here,” he said smiling, and he indicated a chair. “So, you’re from Minnesota,” he began, and sat down beside me.

“Yes,” I said, “I haven’t been here in your country long. I enjoy your wedding customs, too. They seem like a very nice couple.”

“I agree,” he said. At that moment someone came and asked him something and he gave some instruction to them. “I agree,” he repeated turning back to me, “That young man has worked for me here on our farm since he finished his schooling.

He was the farm owner. We barely finished the introductions around the table, when the plates of food came.

Father John, who was on the other side of the table, prompted the farm owner to say the prayer, and he did well. Then we began the wedding meal. The farm owner’s wife and one of his sons were there, the parents of the groom, the owner’s mother and grandson.

“The bride and groom are not seated at a table,” I thought to myself, “This is really strange.” So I looked around and finally saw the two of them sitting with the other people also waiting to eat. The bridal couple was seated on two little stools that were too low for them. They were not talking. They were just sitting there against the wall, with their knees sticking up too high, looking very bored.

“The bride and groom are not seated at a table,” I mentioned to the owner, thinking that they had been forgotten.

“Oh,” he said smiling, “They have to wait and will probably get seated at this table when we finish.” Later I took their picture. I

have a great picture of them sitting on those two low stools waiting and bored.

I imagined that the groom would be at his farm work the next day, and she would be up early making tortillas for him. And that would be their life together in house number forty-three or something forever and ever.

They didn't get to sit at the table when we left because it wasn't their turn yet. So I stole them away with me back to the church. We lit candles and took pictures, we put flowers together and took pictures, and we gathered some of their friends and took pictures.

We took pictures at their house, which turned out to be number twenty-six. We stopped at the bridge and they walked towards me hand in hand. We did some close-ups near some bright red flowering vines hanging over a wall.

Then I rushed them back to the coffee shed and, handed them over to their parents, taking one final shot of them with parents and farm owners.

"I'm ready," I said to Father John, who was with some people near the red Toyota truck. Soon we were heading back up the mountain. I printed maybe twenty or twenty-five enlarged color photographs, which I placed in a leather album and delivered to them a month later.

They may have to work hard, and live humbly, and stay in such lowly circumstances for the rest of their lives. But at least they'll have the most envied wedding album on the entire mountainside.