



The King and Queen of Comezón (Chicana and Chicano Visions of the Americas series)

Ms. Denise Chávez

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Comezón: It's more than an itch. It's a long-standing desire that will never be fulfilled. And, in this novel by award-winning author Denise Chávez, it is also a border town in New Mexico whose denizens' longings are as powerful as they are, all too often, impossible.

But in the feverish dance of life that seizes Comezón during its two annual fiestas, all things seem possible. As the townspeople revel in the freedom of the fiestas, their stories unfold in all manner of mystery, drama, and comic charm. In the middle of it all is Arnulfo P. Olivárez, master of ceremonies and befuddled patriarch of a less-than-tractable family. At the moment, he is calculating his chances of becoming mayor, as well as pondering the fate of his beautiful disabled daughter, Juliana.

Arnulfo's daughters ("the half and the whole," he deems them) are the Fiesta Queen, Lucinda, a lovely, lost and wild girl, and Juliana, her half sister, wheelchair-bound but with soaring dreams of love for the local priest, El Padre Manolito. Their mother, the saintly Doña Emilia, attends to all her children, including Arnulfo, with grace. Lucinda's unsuitable suitor, Ruley Terrazas, a tall, bumpy-skinned boy, is not to be trusted, nor is his father, Cuco "Matamosca" Terrazas, the local chief of police. And Rey Suárez, owner of the Mil Recuerdos Lounge, is haunted by his former incarnation as an immigration officer, an expert in spotting fake IDs.

Between New Mexico and México, between Cinco de Mayo and the 16th of September, between the dreams and the realities of Comezón's characters, something has to give. Each character is attempting to find love in this feverish fiesta called Life. And in the deft hands of Denise Chávez this tragicomic novel gives unerringly: pleasure, surprise, and the satisfaction of a tale well told.

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