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Written by Lawrence Block

Published by Hard Case Crime

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by **Lawrence Block**



A HARD CASE CRIME BOOK
(HCC-115)
First Hard Case Crime edition: May 2014

Published by

Titan Books
A division of Titan Publishing Group Ltd
144 Southwark Street
London SE1 0UP

in collaboration with Winterfall LLC

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Print Edition ISBN 978-1-78116-777-9
E-book ISBN 978-1-78116-778-6

Design direction by Max Phillips
www.maxphillips.net

Typeset by Swordsmith Productions

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Printed in the United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE

Marty let up on the gas about fifty yards from the Customs shed. He put the clutch on the floor, ground the gears slightly, dropping the big Olds into second. Then his foot eased down on the brake and the car pulled up where it was supposed to. He rolled down his window and let his face relax into an automatic smile.

The guy on duty was a Texas redneck with a hawk nose and a pronounced Adam's apple. He grinned in recognition. "Anything to declare?"

"There's two cases of tequila in the trunk," Marty said. "And a hundred pounds of marijuana under the back seat. That's about it."

"Well, hell," the Customs man said. "Just so you ain't bringing back a dose or nothing. Go on."

The Customs shed was just an extra checkpoint, and the men on duty there didn't knock themselves out. There are, actually, two borders between the United States and Mexico. The official border is easily passable, and no passports or cards of identification are required. The working border is about sixty miles within Mexico, and that is where tourist cards are required and the Customs check is fairly rigorous. The reason for all this is a simple one. The border towns—Juarez and Tijuana and Nueva Laredo and Matamoros—thrive on American commerce. They operate under Mexican law and Mexican laissez-faire, yet they are easily accessible without a scrutinization or a host of red tape.

Marty smiled a final smile at the redneck, dropped the Olds

down into first, gunned the motor and popped the clutch. The Olds shot forward, six years old and still the fastest piece of iron on the road. Marty was in Texas now. El Paso. Ciudad Juarez was behind him, behind the Customs shed, on the other side of the border.

He drove along Crescent, took a left at Brantwood, turned right again on Coronado Avenue. He pulled up alongside a parking meter, got out of the car. Someone had left five minutes on the meter for him. But it would take more than five minutes to eat, even in a greasy spoon. Hell, it took five minutes before coffee got cool enough for him to drink it. He dug a nickel out of a pocket of his gray gabardine slacks, stuck it into the meter's hungry mouth, and crossed the street to the diner.

It had Formica counters, bare hanging light bulbs, a floor of cracked linoleum. A pair of truckers sat at the far end of the counter. One of them, the heavier one, was joking with the waitress. She had big breasts and a pair of washed-out eyes, and she laughed at everything the trucker said. The other trucker wasn't saying anything. He had his eyes on the girl's breasts, and you could read his thoughts without half-trying.

Otherwise, the place was empty. Marty found a stool at the other end of the counter from the truckers. He reached into his shirt pocket, pulled out a pack of Luckies with two bent cigarettes left in it. He selected one, straightened it out, lodged it between his lips. He left the cigarette pack on the counter and dug a Zippo lighter out of his back pocket. The chrome plating had worn off the lighter. It was a few years older than the Olds parked outside, and, like the Olds, it still worked perfectly. He thumbed the wheel and lit the cigarette. He inhaled, held the strong smoke in his lungs for a few seconds, then blew it at the ceiling.

By this time the waitress realized he was alive. She left the

truckers reluctantly, scampered over to Marty. "Morning," she said. "The usual?"

"Fine, Betty."

She smiled when he called her by name. That was silly—everybody called her by name, because her name was embroidered on her white uniform just above her left breast, which was where everybody looked sooner or later. She went over to the window and told the cook she wanted ham and eggs, with the eggs sunny side up. She came back to Marty and leaned on the counter with her elbows. Her mouth was curved in a smile, and her breasts hung over the counter like ripe fruit from a tree.

"You weren't here yesterday," she said.

"I was across the border. In Juarez."

"All day?"

"All day and all night."

She wrinkled her nose at him. "You're a bad boy," she said playfully. "Those Mexican girls can give you a disease."

"I wasn't with a girl."

"Then why stay all night? You coulda driven back and slept at your own place. Why stay over?"

"I had business," he said. He wished she would shut up. Usually she made small talk without making a pest of herself. But right now she was getting on his nerves. She was asking questions, and he didn't feel like being grilled. He felt like eating a plate of ham and eggs and drinking a cup of coffee.

"Coffee," he said. "Want to bring it now?"

"Oh, sure. Just a minute."

She went to the coffee urn and drew a mugful for him. She set it on a saucer, put the saucer in front of him. "Black," she said. "No cream and no sugar. Right?"

"You should know."

She was leaning forward now, again. He stirred his coffee with his spoon and tried not to look at her breasts. He couldn't help it. They were hanging there, ripe fruit for plucking, and they were big and round, and they looked soft and touchable and—

Jesus, he thought, maybe I should have found a Mex girl, got some of it out of my system. Three bucks for a nice hot Mex girl, a wham and a bam and a thank you, Ma'am. But Betty had good breasts, big ones, and she stuck them out at you and you could see their outlines clearly through the uniform, could see the way they twisted the blouse of the uniform slightly out of shape. And she probably wasn't even wearing a bra; the way she was leaning, the way the breasts looked, and, oh, man!

"Betty," the trucker said, "c'mere."

"He's calling you," Marty said.

"He can go to hell," she said. "Those truck drivers. All they want to do is joke dirty and talk dirty and maybe touch you and proposition you. To hell with him."

"And you don't want to be touched."

"Well," she said.

He looked at her. There was a smile on her lips. She stuck out her tongue, licked her lips like a tiger after a good meal. Her eyes were not so washed-out now. They were a brighter blue, and her hair was spun gold, and her lips warm coral.

"Sometimes I want to be touched," she said. "It depends who's doing the touching. It makes a difference."

The cook broke things up by ringing a little bell. Betty turned at the sound and Marty watched her walk to the window for his ham and eggs. The skirt of her uniform hugged her buttocks, and they swayed as she walked.

She's doing that on purpose, he thought. Swinging the rump for the same reason she sticks the boobs out.

She brought him his food. The yellow yolks stood up like breasts on a girl, he thought. And he wished he could stop thinking about girls in general and breasts in particular. He took his silverware, wiped it with a paper napkin, attacked the food. Betty stood there and watched him eat. It was annoying. He looked up at her, letting part of the annoyance show in his eyes, and she turned away and walked back to the two truckers. They wanted more coffee, and they wanted to talk to Betty.

He was hungry and he ate in a hurry. The coffee was barely warm when he got around to it, and that was the way he liked it. Some men damn near burned their mouths with coffee. He liked it warm, but not hot. That way you got the flavor of it.

He needed a second cup of coffee. He cleared his throat, once, and Betty turned away from the truckers and hurried after him. She filled his cup and gave it back to him, her eyes wide, warm.

"You were in Juarez on business," she said.

"Yeah."

"What kind of business?"

He thought of telling her to go to hell. "Private business," he said.

"You in business for yourself?"

He permitted himself to smile. "You could call it that."

"What kind of business? Monkey business? Sometimes that's the best kind, you know."

He took his last cigarette from the pack on the counter. He spun the wheel of the Zippo, lit the cigarette. "I'm a gambler," he said. "I went to Juarez to play poker. I played until the game broke up. Then I came back to El Paso."

"You're a gambler?"

"Yeah."

"You stayed there all that time for a poker game?"

He didn't answer. He remembered the basement room at Navarro's house, air-conditioned, plush chairs, a green-shaded light hanging from the ceiling. No clock on the wall. Chips on the table, chips that went back and forth. Now it was Friday morning. Around ten Wednesday night he had sat down at the table with five hundred dollars worth of chips. Two hours ago he had cashed in twenty-eight hundred dollars. Now it was in a money belt around his waist. He remembered hand after hand after hand, voices that said only the words needed to bet and raise and call and fold.

"I stayed there all that time," he said. "For a poker game."

"You win?"

"Yeah."

"You usually win?"

"I'm a gambler," he said, annoyed again, annoyed with the silly words and the big breasts and the thorough lack of subtlety. "Of course I usually win. Otherwise I'd do something else for a living."

She digested this. He stood up, tired of the girl, tired of the diner, tired of the clothes he'd been wearing since Wednesday. He dug into a pants pocket, found a loose single to cover the food and coffee. He added a quarter for the girl.

"You're a gambler," she said.

He thought that if she leaned over any further, she was going to drill boob-shaped holes in the counter's Formica top. He picked up his cigarette from the little glass ashtray and put it between his lips.

"You could gamble on me," she said. "You could try your luck."

He reached out a hand and touched her breast with it. The flesh was firm, unyielding. He wanted to squeeze, to caress it.

Instead, he let go.

"I'm a gambler," he said. "But I never play sure things."

He turned around and left the diner. She yelled something dirty after him, something dirty enough to make the truckers spin on their stools and laugh. Outside, he crossed the street to the Olds, opened the door and got behind the wheel. He put his key in the ignition, started the car, pulled away from the curb.

It was hot, he thought. Not even eleven in the morning and hot as hell already. By afternoon, when the sun really got warmed up, it was going to be horrible.

He drove home.

Meg Rector slept until noon. Sleeping was easy. The hotel was expensive and the air-conditioning worked the way it was supposed to. The bed she slept in had a firm mattress. The sheets were good percale, and they were perfectly clean. She'd had half a pint of Beefeater gin before she went to bed, not enough to leave her hung over in the morning, just enough to make deep sleep come in a hurry.

At noon she awoke. For a moment there was a nebulous where-am-I feeling, the unfamiliar sensation that comes with waking in a strange bed in a strange room in an unfamiliar city. This didn't stay long. She stretched and shook her head and remembered where she was.

The Hotel Warwick, in El Paso. A room on the tenth and top floor with a view of the city, for what it was worth. Alone, of course. Alone, and twenty-six years old, and divorced, and bored. And, now, awake. She got up from the bed, her hair black and loose and long, trailing down over bare shoulders that were just barely tanned. She was wearing a nightgown sheer and black, and she looked down at it and laughed humorlessly. You don't have to wear a nightgown anymore, she told herself. You're not

married anymore. You can sleep naked, the way you used to.

She stepped out of the nightgown, walked to the closet, hung the gown on a wire hanger. Then she changed her mind, took the nightgown from the hanger, balled it into a nylon ball and stuffed it into the wastebasket by the dresser. You can sleep naked, she told herself again. No more nightgowns. So why fill a closet with them?

Meg walked naked into the bathroom. Her toothbrush and a small tube of toothpaste were on the rim of the sink where she had left them before going to bed. She brushed her teeth, rinsed her mouth. She unwrapped a small cake of soap, turned on the stall shower, got into it. She lathered herself thoroughly, washed herself thoroughly, holding her head back to keep the water away from her hair. She got out of the shower, dried off with a towel, went back to the bed and sat on its edge.

El Paso, for God's sake. She remembered getting there, remembered first of all flying to Mexico City from Chicago just a week ago, remembered spending a week at an expensive American hotel on Reforma while her divorce went through. It wasn't like being in Mexico. The whole street was for Americans, everybody spoke English, and it was like Miami or Vegas or Palm Springs, just another resort for Americans with too much money. She killed a week, talking to no one, staying in her room for hours on end and sipping Beefeater gin from a water tumbler. She ate all her meals in the hotel's dining room. Then the divorce was through. She wasn't married to Borden Rector any more, she was an emancipated woman, and there was no reason to stay in Mexico City anymore.

She would have had to wait eight hours for a nonstop plane back to Chicago. There was a flight leaving right away, stopping at El Paso and Kansas City before it got to Chicago. She took it, using the return half of the round-trip ticket that Borden Rector's

attorney had given to her along with a sheaf of forms and a bundle of expense money.

At El Paso she got out of the plane, managed to get her luggage back even though it was checked through to Chicago. She didn't know anybody in El Paso, and didn't want to. Nothing fascinated her about El Paso. But she had realized, while the big plane was in the air, that she had no desire at all to return to Chicago. And flying was dull, monotonous.

So here she was, in El Paso.

She stood up. Her purse was in the dresser's top drawer. She found her cigarette case in it, took out a cigarette, lit it and smoked. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror on the closet door, stopped and regarded herself thoughtfully. She saw the long black hair that had remained miraculously dry in the shower, saw the tall body with the full curves and the trim waist and the full, flaring hips. Her arms and legs and face were slightly tanned, but the rest of her body was a very pale white, with the white breasts almost shocking with their crimson tips.

She looked at herself. *Nude Smoking a Cigarette* she titled the picture. She laughed again, an audible laugh, a mirthless laugh. She ground out the cigarette in an ashtray and put clothes on.

Downstairs, in the lobby, she walked to the room clerk's desk and coughed until the little round-shouldered clerk scurried over to her.

"Where's a decent restaurant?"

"Just around the corner," he told her. "You go out that door—" he pointed "—and turn right, and walk to the corner, that's Carleton Boulevard and you turn right again. Giardi's Restaurant is just four doors from the corner."

"Italian food?"

"Italian and American. It's very good there."

His brother probably owned it, she decided. But he didn't look very Italian. Maybe his brother-in-law owned it. Or maybe his brother had purchased it from Giardi, or—

The clerk was still waiting patiently. "Listen," she said, "what the hell do you do in this town?"

The clerk looked puzzled. He was wearing glasses, thick glasses, and they made his eyes seem enormous.

He said, "Do?"

"For excitement. What goes on?"

The clerk took a short breath, thought, expelled the breath. "Why, there are movie theaters," he said. "And night clubs, of course. There's a listing of entertainment in the daily newspaper, the *El Paso Sun*. And then there is Juarez, of course."

"Across the border?"

"Yes. It's a…a border town. Not a very decent sort of place, I'm afraid, but quite a few persons go there for…for amusement. But it depends what sort of excitement—"

She told him to forget it. She turned around, went out the door he had pointed to, walked to Carleton Boulevard and found Giardi's. The food was better than she had expected. She asked for a breakfast menu, found out they had stopped serving breakfast two hours ago, and stopped the waiter in mid-sentence when he started to offer to get her an omelet, maybe, or some wheat cakes, or—

She had a plate of spaghetti with chicken livers and a bottle of red wine. She had never cared much for breakfast food, hated eggs and couldn't stomach cereal. But Borden liked breakfast. Every day, for four years, Borden liked breakfast.

Four years of Borden. Four years of marriage, four years that added up to fourteen or fifteen hundred days, and every day the same, except that each was a little more horribly monotonous than the last. Four years of wearing a nightgown to bed

because Borden thought it was indecent to sleep in the raw. Four years of making love briefly, and rarely; four years of on-again off-again, with Borden finished and ready to sleep just as she started to get interested in the game.

A year, perhaps, of running to the bathroom and finishing the job herself. Then three years of not bothering, because Borden had not even managed to arouse her. Three years of cheating now and then; not out of need as much as out of boredom. Four years of dullness and drabness, of having money without enjoying it, of living, damn it to hell, with Borden.

For excitement, she had told the clerk. What did it mean? God, how did she know what it meant? Maybe it meant getting laid or getting drunk or shooting dice or taking dope or driving in a fast car. She hadn't seen any excitement in too long. She hardly remembered what it was like.

She had a cup of coffee and smoked a cigarette with it. El Paso, she thought. And Juarez. Somewhere in one town or the other, there was going to be a little excitement. Somewhere in Texas or Mexico there was going to be a reprieve from the boredom, a respite from the monotony. Call it excitement, or call it something else. It hardly mattered.

She paid the tab, tipped the waiter. Outside it was hotter than hell—that was the trouble with air-conditioning; you couldn't stand it when you were out in the open again. She headed automatically for the Warwick, then stopped halfway there, turned on her heel and headed off in the opposite direction. That wasn't what she wanted. She'd had her fill in Mexico City in the hotel on Reforma. Sit in the room, drink Beefeater, go out for dinner, go back to the room and drink some more. No, thank you. That was no way to find excitement.

She stayed on Carleton Boulevard until she found a cocktail lounge that looked inviting. It was air-conditioned, it had low

ceilings and dim lighting, and it looked expensive enough to keep the riff-raff out.

She went inside. She took a table on the side, asked the waiter for Beefeater and ice. Then she waited for something to happen.

Lily was on the road for twenty minutes before a car stopped. It was a flat, empty stretch of road, a chunk of Route 49 halfway between Dallas and El Paso. Desert country, dry and desolate. Her last ride had dropped her there, and she was beginning to wonder if maybe she hadn't made a mistake taking the last ride. The driver had dropped her in this godforsaken middle of nowhere, said he was turning off another mile down the road. Maybe she should have waited for a ride clear through to El Paso.

She was a small girl, just a few inches above five feet. She was seventeen. Her face looked about two years younger than that until you saw her eyes, which looked twenty-five. Her figure was petite but perfect. Chunky breasts pushed out the front of the short-sleeved boy's shirt she wore, and neatly rounded hips filled the khaki slacks. On her feet she wore simple leather sandals that had been hand-made by a Negro leatherworker in San Francisco's North Beach area. The sandals were very comfortable.

North Beach, and S.F. She hadn't started out there. She was a Denver girl who ran away from home three weeks after her sixteenth birthday, and S.F. was a natural place to stop running, and the Beach was a natural spot to grab for a home. She liked the area. She spent a year there, living here now and there now, meeting people and doing things. Her parents never found her. Maybe they didn't look.

A year in S.F. A year that didn't age her face a day, but that

turned her eyes from child's eyes to woman's eyes. A year that made her rock-hard inside. A year that taught her many things.

Then she was hooked up with Frank, who was tight with Spider Graham. And then one day S.F. was too hot for the Spider. Spider, thin and tight-lipped and nervous, had robbed a liquor store with a toy gun. The rollers had a make on him and the Spider had to run. Frank was his friend, so Frank went with him. She was Frank's steady lay, so she went too.

They stole plates from a Cadillac and slapped the plates on a Ford and stole the Ford. They drove the hell out of the car, running south, skirting L.A., cutting out through Death Valley and across Arizona. The car died somewhere in the middle of New Mexico and they stole a Chevy off the streets of a sleeping town and pushed east again. They parked the stolen Chevy in a lot in Dallas and the Spider dropped the parking check down a sewer. They all laughed like hell and tried to figure out something to do in Dallas, some way to put a few dollars together.

Spider had an idea. They had a commodity named Lily Daniels. They would trade Lily in for money. Rather, they would rent her out, and live off the proceeds.

Frank thought it was a great idea.

Lily thought it stank. She was a few million miles from virginity but she wasn't a whore. She would give for a guy because she liked him, or she would give for a guy because she was hot to go, or she would give for a guy because maybe it would be a minor gas. She never gave for money. She didn't have eyes for the notion.

She didn't have any choice, either. Spider went out to pimp, and he came back with a drunk Texan fifty years old and clumsy as hell. And slung like a bull. They put the Texan in the room with her and she tried to tell him it was a mistake.

He ripped off her blouse, grabbed her breasts in his hands and squeezed them until they ached.

"I paid a hundred dollars for you, dolly," he said. "I paid the money to that nervous kid with the skinny lips. You don't go and tell me now it was a mistake. I don't make mistakes, not for no hundred dollars."

"Please—"

He slapped her face. He hit her in the stomach, and her hands went out for his face, to claw him. He brushed her hands away casually, hit her on the top of the head.

She started to fall, and he kicked her in the breast. He was wearing heavy boots and the pain was unbelievable. She thought she was going to die. "You want more, dolly?"

"No," she said. "I'll do it."

She took off her clothes and got on the bed. He took her with no preliminaries; evidently the beating had aroused him if not her. He plunged into her, and he was far too large and hurt her far too much. And it all lasted far too long. When it was over she was horribly sore, and sick to her stomach.

He left the bed, sat down in a chair. She reached for her clothes and he said, "Not yet, dolly."

She didn't understand.

"I paid that skinny fellow a hundred dollars," he said. "I got something more coming for my hundred dollars. The last was pleasant, but I got more coming."

"What?"

He told her, explicitly.

She stood in front of him, her eyes wide. "He told you I'd do that? Spider said I'd do it?"

"Said you loved to do it," the Texan said. "Me, I don't care whether you love it or not. You just do it or I'll beat you half dead."

He would, she thought dully. He would kill her. She did not want to be beaten. She still ached badly and she did not want any more pain.

She sank to her knees before him. He stroked her hair, like a father patting his daughter on the head, and he told her she was a sweet little dolly. And she did everything he wanted her to do.

Afterward, she looked for Spider and Frank. She couldn't find them and they did not come back to the room. They had left Dallas, as far as she could tell, and they probably would not be back. Hell, they definitely would not be back. And she didn't have a penny.

That was two days ago. She'd managed to eat, managed to talk people into buying food for her. And now she was on the road to El Paso, halfway there on Route 49. She didn't know why she was going to El Paso. But from El Paso she could go to Mexico and she knew people in Mexico, people who'd been her friends in S.F.

She stood on the road for twenty minutes before the car stopped.

The car was a big Buick, air-conditioned, with power windows and power doors and power brakes and power steering and power everything. The driver was a dark man in a business suit. He had deep eyes and thinning hair. She guessed his age at forty-five.

He leaned across the seat and pressed a button. The window went down and he looked through it at Lily. He asked her where she was headed. She told him she was going to El Paso.

"Hop in," he said. "I'll run you there."

She sat beside him and he pulled away again, his foot heavy on the accelerator. She pressed the button to close the window because the car was air-conditioned. It was a pleasure to get

out of the heat, she thought. And the Buick was a fast car. They would be in El Paso in no time at all.

They drove two miles in silence. Then he asked her her name, and where she was going. She made up a name to tell him and said she was visiting relatives. He asked her how come she was hitchhiking and she told him she wanted to save money.

"Spend all your money on pretty clothes?"

She was wearing khakis and a shirt that was dirty now. She had no suitcase.

"I didn't have any money," she said.

"I see."

Two miles further on down the road he dropped a hand to her thigh. She looked down at the hand. It looked like a separate entity, a living creature poised on her thigh. He moved the hand higher, along the inside of her thigh, and she sighed.

"Pull over," she said.

"You mad, honey? I just—"

"Pull over." she said, tired now. "I want a ride to El Paso. You want a ride too, I guess. I guess we'll both have one."

He pulled the car off the road and killed the ignition. They went from the front seat to the back seat, and he opened her shirt and took off her pants. She was still a little sore from the man in the hotel room but it wasn't too bad.

When it was over he was breathing hard, his face covered with sweat. It seemed odd to her that a man could sweat so much in an air-conditioned car. He was exhausted, and wordless, while she herself was completely unmoved. It was as though he had not touched her at all. He had used her body, had enjoyed the outer shell, but he had not come close to the person who was Lily Daniels.

"You're a real woman," he told her. "I hope you don't think I

would have forced you or anything. I'd of driven you to Paso anyway, even if you didn't want to do anything."

"I know," she said.

"But you wanted it too," he said. "You had yourself a fine time. I could tell, all right. I know when a woman likes it."

If he wanted to think so, that was fine with her. She put her clothes on, combed her hair back. They returned to the front seat and he started the motor, headed for El Paso again. He drove very fast this time. She watched the speedometer and it passed a hundred frequently.

She saw the tan road rushing toward them in a never-ending stream, everything blurred from the great speed at which they were traveling.

But it was as if they weren't traveling—so fast was the speed. It was if they were soaring through space somewhere.

Then they would hit a bump, or a rut in the road, and the car would rock slightly and she would be brought back to the reality that they were on the ground and not in the air—on the ground and traveling a hundred miles an hour.

She looked out the side window but the poles and cacti passed by the window so fast that she could not even tell they were there. Only when she looked hundreds of yards past the road could she see anything clearly—and then her pupils had to jerk rapidly across her eyes to see even that.

She turned her head and glanced out the rear window but she could see nothing but a mad swirl of dust.

It was far to El Paso, that she knew although she didn't know just how far it was. Yet suddenly they were passing an occasional home and he let up on the gas. It seemed like they weren't even moving now and she glanced down at the speedometer. They were going sixty!

Then as they began to reach the outskirts of El Paso he let

up on the gas even more and the speedometer dropped to forty.

In El Paso, at a traffic light, he took two ten-dollar bills from his wallet and handed them to her. He was shy about it, telling her he wanted her to have a good meal and buy a pretty dress. She thanked him and got out of the car.

El Paso, she said to herself. Now what?

Just what could she do here?

She didn't know.

Yet she had gotten this far without ever knowing what she was going to do from one minute to the next.

Somehow she'd gotten this far all right. All right, once she had gotten away from Frank and Spider. Or they had gotten away from her.

Whichever way it was didn't matter. Just the fact that she was no longer with them was all that mattered.

No matter what happened to her now—it couldn't be worse than what had happened to her in that hotel room. Worse than that Texan had done to her.

She could still feel the pain.

In spite of the comfortable car ride.

In spite of the cool air-conditioning.

In spite of the two days that had passed, and the hundreds of miles she'd put between herself and that room. In spite of it all, the pain was still there.

Aching.

Throbbing.

Her thigh muscles so sore, she had trouble walking.

And inside of her—the pain extended deep inside her, and the tiny finger-edges of it extended themselves to all parts of her body.

She had to get out of El Paso, and into Mexico. But first she

had to get washed and rested, and get some food in her empty stomach.

But how?

Then she slowly remembered the bills she held in her hand.

She looked at them.

Twenty dollars, twenty dollars, twenty dollars, her mind repeated and she smiled to herself.