



RAPID READS



THE  
SPIDER  
BITES

MEDORA SALE

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**Summary:** Detective Rick Montoya must find out who firebombed his apartment before he can clear his name of a bribery charge.

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*For Harry,  
as always*

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE SPIDER COMES HOME

**M**y name is Rick Montoya. Some people call me the Spider. But you don't have to. If you don't like spiders, you can call me Rick. I answer to both names.

It all started at sunset one day near the end of October. We had just come to the end of the late apple harvest. I had no reason to stay at the farm any longer. My boss, Scott, handed me a stack of fifty-dollar bills.

"Your pay, five months' worth. I deducted room rent and put the rest away. Just like you asked. Count it," he said. He tapped his finger on the pile of money. "Go on. Count it."

Scott's a nice guy. But not very friendly, if you know what I mean. I counted the money and divided it into four piles. I stuffed them into the pockets of my jeans. There was room for them all. With space for more. When I got home I was going to have to buy a new pair of jeans. These were much too big. I had already punched two more holes in my belt and it was still loose. I was a lot thinner than I had been when I started this job.

"I'm going into town if you want a ride," Scott said. "I can take you as far as the turnoff to the produce terminal."

I grabbed my backpack and climbed into the truck. It was time to get back to the city.

\* \* \*

We didn't talk much on the trip in. I've known Scott all my life and he never did talk much, even as a kid. My father worked for his father. I grew up in a little house on the farm. When I was old enough, I worked

for his father in the summers. So we knew each other. We didn't need words, most of the time.

"Where are you going?" he asked suddenly.

"Home," I said.

"Where's that?" asked Scott. "Angela's? Or your old apartment?"

"The old apartment."

"Why? What's there for you?"

I couldn't think of an answer to that.

"Look, if you're not going back to Angela, we'll just pick up your stuff. Then you can come back to the farm. I can always use you. It really helps to have someone in the crew who can speak Spanish. The workers seem to trust you."

"Thanks, Scott. I might need a job. But that'll be later."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm in a tight spot right now. You already know I'm under suspension until they wrap up this investigation. My lawyer says

there's a good chance I'll be cleared. But then, he's paid to make me feel good, isn't he?"

"I hope he knows what he's doing," said Scott. And I think he meant it.

"So do I," I said. "Anyway, I've got something important to do first."

"What's that?"

"I have to find this guy, Freddie."

"Who's Freddie?"

"Just a guy."

He shook his head like he thought I was a little bit crazy, but he let it go.

Maybe I should have accepted his offer.

\* \* \*

He dropped me off. I waved goodbye and started walking. It was three miles to the apartment, but that was nothing. Not after five months of hard physical work.

The long walk gave me time to think. It looked like I was through as a cop. Suspended from the force. Under investigation for corruption. Even if I got off on



that charge, the slime would stick to me. I'd be fired and no one would hire me, even as a security guard. I had to face that, no matter how confident my lawyer was.

It was dark and cold out on the streets. It had been raining earlier. The sidewalks were wet and slippery, covered with fallen leaves. Even so, I reached West Central Avenue in under an hour.

Home was nearby. In an old house across from a park in a crowded, friendly neighborhood. The house had three stories and a basement, and had been divided into three apartments. I rented the basement. It had its own entrance at the side. I liked that. And it was quiet. It felt safe and private. A fox or a rabbit would be happy hiding down there. Or a spider.

The apartment was supposed to be empty. Before I left, I had paid my landlady, Cheryl, the rent for six months. But there were lights on in the kitchen and the living room.

The street was deserted because of the rain and the cold. I walked cautiously down the driveway between the house and its next-door neighbor. The automatic security light went on. That didn't bother me. It goes on when a cat walks by. Or a raccoon.

I stopped and listened for signs of movement. Everything was quiet. I went around to the back window. I could see into the brightly lit kitchen. It was empty. Then I bent down and looked around. There were dirty pots on the stove and dishes stacked in the sink. Through the kitchen door, I saw a shadow move. The hall light went out. Then a hand reached into the kitchen and turned out the light.