

SAMPLES FROM

SUFFER THE CHILDREN

SECOND VOLUME:
BORDERLAND SERIES

FLACA and PUCHO

Flaca had not wanted publicity for her house of refuge, in fact had put some effort into suppressing mention of it, including intimidating a couple of reporters who showed up and telling Riles in no uncertain terms that it was not to see print or she'd be implacable.

But word got around. Fine if it led in some girl who'd gotten up enough self-resolve to run from an abusive man, but not enough to just get rid of them. But not so good when it started being thought of as the first place to look if your old lady took off… or some reservoir full of helpless pussy. But they did get a bit of that, and Flaca and her security team were very strict in dealing with it.

The first time they got unwanted tourists, it was just a couple of drunken morons in a dilapidated Tercel that still had traces of the taxi paint on it. Talk had led to available women and the more tequila that got poured on it, the more sense it made to go cruise this place in Bravo they'd heard about, a whole house full of cute chicks with no men around to protect them. So why didn't they just cruise up there and do those bitches a favor or two? An idea that ended up becoming widely accepted as a very bad one.

They didn't even need the crunch of gravel to announce them, they caromed up the dirt road from Bravo blaring high distorted *Norteño* music—accordions and snare drums telling them everything they needed to know about how a macho guy deals with faithless broads. Once the ground to a halt in front of the house, they tumbled out making as much noise as they possibly could, including shouting endearments to the lucky women who awaited them inside. The front door was even black, just like the song about the *Puerta Negra* that just stood in the way of love. They were all pissing on the gravel when Angeles stepped out that door, leaving it open behind her. All she said was, "Wait."

The cantina cowboys goggled at her, tucked themselves back in their pants for now, made appropriate comments on her general suitability for being bent over and bred senseless. Angeles raised her voice and said, "Stop! You're not wanted here, guys. Time to leave. Right now."

In a lower voice she said, "Wait until they take a step this way."

Which of course, they did, telling her to fuck off and get ready for some fun, then lurching towards her. Which is when she said, "Now."

And Pucho slammed into them like a saw-toothed thunderbolt, gnashing and growling in the gravely snarl of Death Itself. A black bolt out of hell that most of the rowdies never even saw before feeling their clothing and flesh ripped and torn away. Screaming like little girls, streaming blood, missing pieces, they piled into the car through the windows and doors, one guy crouching on the hood in terror, and got the hell out there. Pucho pursued them for a ways, giving him a chance to severely lacerate the one who fell off the hood at the first switchback and ended up rolling down two embankments before mercifully losing consciousness.

Girls poked their heads out the windows then, watching the graceless retreat and laughing when the Toyota slammed into retaining walls at the bends. Pucho trotted back to the house, his mouth and fur soaked in blood. Panchita sauntered down the front steps, sticking a very big automatic pistol between her flat tummy and her belt. She used both hands to grab his head and wool it around in affection. She beamed. "*Good* doggie!"

The next visit was only two guys, but was read as more threatening. For one thing, they were both sober. The spokesman wanted his wife back, and wasn't leaving until he had her, *punto final*. Both he and his wingman looked tough in the real way, not the blustering way. Flaca spotted both of them as being armed, just from the way they stood. Their black Suburban was another bad sign.

They were trying a new plan: Palomo would step out to warn them off. Not even showing them a glimpse of women, just some guy softly telling them that they were trespassing and the police would be called. He went out onto the porch, but one look at these two told him they weren't afraid of cops. They immediately moved towards him, separating, so he said nothing, just waited.

The bereft husband seemed friendly, or at least neutral, as he approached, but as soon as he was in reach, he slammed out his hand to grab Paloma by the throat. "Get Celeste and the baby out here, you little faggot. Right fucking now."

The wingman smiled slightly, but was mostly watching the door. Until his attention was distracted by a scream from his *compadre*. Not pain: he'd felt nothing but moisture gushing down his cunts legs. And realized that his cock had been neatly sliced off with a straight razor. He released Palomo's neck to grab his crotch, but the mild gay entertainer held his shoulder as he wiped the razor clean on his shirt, then pushed him over on his back to die on his own time. "Yeah, right," he told him, "Like I never learned how to take care of assholes like you in my life."

The wingman was shocked, but had already produced a .357 revolver from the small of his back when Flaca stepped out with a shotgun and blew his stomach and guts out. He must have turned his face to her as he fell, because she put another load of double ought shot right into his face, propelling him to the gravel in a deluge of blood.

Palomo slipped the razor away and put his hands on his hips to survey the two corpses. Wrinkling his nose at the fluids and stenches Flaca had blasted out of the buddy, he lisped in his campiest tone, "And you say s'M the one you have to pick up after."

MariRosa, with Pucho at her heels, staring at the two assholes as though hoping they'd make a move and he could savage them a little, came out and regarded their two guests. She wagged her finger, scolding Flaca, "*Muy cochino*!" Then the glossy Suburban caught her eye, sitting there with doors open and motor still running, and she lit up, "I get to ditch the car this time!"

Flaca stepped down to take a closer look at the man she'd just eliminated, shaking her head. Pucho sniffed at his entrails, then lapped up some blood off the gravel. "I guess he can't eat him," she said thoughtfully, "Unless we cut him up."

Panchita had also been staring at the body, and drew a deep breath. "I'll pick up a meat grinder tomorrow from the *Mercado*."

MariRosa nodded. "There's so many assholes in this town we might never have to buy dogfood again."

ALICIA

The latest sag-assed boy attempting total nonchalance eased out the doorway of what Alicia Childers thought of as the high school's "counseling closet". He glanced back at her, unsure what to make of this ultra-anglo babe having pep-talked him about the throwdown in the cafeteria. He'd like to throw her down, is what. He nodded at her and vanished.

She sat watching the empty doorway, feeling utterly hopeless and superfluous. A daily treat for her emotional set-down here in the brown ghetto at the border. She hadn't wanted this job, had no choice but to take it, didn't belong in it, had no idea how to do it. Didn't even speak Spanish. These kids would go through their lives imprinted with splatters of blood from their friends and neighbors and there really wasn't a damned thing she could do about it. Maybe spot somebody who was about to come unscrewed and get them some attention from somebody who could do a damned thing about it. Wonder which one had been sown with the seeds of hosing down some other school with bullets ten years from now. She didn't belong here and couldn't escape. Her BMW was covered with gang graffiti, the only man she'd been with in two years was surfer cop, half of the people she dealt with couldn't understand anything she said to them. Her coffee cup was empty.

She broke off her cheerful inventory when Thomas Esquerra stood in the doorway. The principal looked Mexican-American, had the surname, but was actually Filipino. Another refugee here in Barrio Lowblow? She didn't know him enough to have any idea. She stood up, straightened a stack of files on the desk, figuring that he would want them.

What he wanted, though, was to thank her for doing her thankless job.

"I just wanted to thank you for your help on this," he told her. "I wish we had the budget to have somebody with your training full time. But we were glad to have you for...this."

Yeah. This. Alicia smiled at him gratefully. "I wish I thought it was doing anybody any good."

He stepped into the room and sat on the edge of the desk, almost too short to be able to without his feet dangling. He looked at her, his smooth tan face serious under his sleek black pompadour, his glasses almost a design statement about responsibility and educational obsession. "I think they have time on their side, you know. They're young. There's the prom, then summer vacation. By next fall..."

The prom again. Really? "I thought the prom was canceled because of the shooting."

"The kids wanted to have it. They got together and voted on it, pretty much unanimous. So they're going to get it."

"What do the parents think?"

He shot her a look over the thick-framed black glasses, showed her that there was a tough, caring person inside the fussy, submissive person she'd thought she'd been dealing with in the weeks after the shooting. "I don't care what they think. Nobody asked the kids if they wanted it canceled. Why don't we ever ask the kids what they want?"

"Well, having a dance in a room where they'd seen their friends..."

He held up a hand, stopping her cold. And took the glasses off to look at her with a sort of shared misery. "Know where these kids really get killed?"

She awaited the rhetorical answer, knowing she wouldn't like it.

"*Quinceañeras*."

More damned Spanish. "That's some Mexican ritual thing? Birthday party deal?"

"It's a sort of coming-out party for fifteen year old girls. They wear sexy little formals and the boys come in wearing tuxedos. And get carried out if there were boys there from some other gang."

Even with over a year in Lobo, Alicia was shocked. Murder in teen-age tuxes? "And… this happens a lot?"

He didn't give her any looks that might come from a community social worker being unaware of a leading cause of death in her community, just nodded sadly and said, "Lots of them had more friends shot at parties in three years than were killed in the lunch hall. They just gun each other down."

"So they dress up for a dance and go get killed?"

"And they live with it. How can I say this? The prom isn't about death, it's about life. It's the way things are supposed to be. Healthy young things dancing. Does that make sense?"

"I'd say it does."

He was looking past her, past the little office, the crumbling school, the embattled neighborhood. "You can't lock yourself in, crouch in fear," he murmured. "This school is going to dance for the same reason people have always danced. To celebrate being alive."

Alicia could have kissed him. Instead she wordlessly stepped over and put her hand on his shoulder and gave him a smile that would have broken the heart of a man who didn't get a daily ration of human breakage. He smiled back, took the folders from her, and left.



First Book In Series

The initial novel in the Borderland Series introduces principal characters, establishes the setting—two barrios divided by the Mexico/California border—and sets things in motion: some resolved in this book, other arcs what will continue to come into play in future books. This isn't the typical border novel full of drug lords and star-eyed immigrants: it's basically about my old neighborhoods and my neighbors.



"Spin-off"

Same settings as "Mary of Angels", some of the same people... but also some different people in this series spin-off.

The main new character being Nan, a high-priced escort paid to marry local kingpin Gaspar so he can have conjugal visits while in prison. When he's attacked by the Americas' toughest gang, Nan surprises everybody by savagely defending him. And, it's quite a surprise.

LinRobinson.com
Sign Up For My News List