

ENTITLEMENT

An Angela Masters Detective Novel

By Mike Worley

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Dedication

To my wife and editor, Nancy, without whose love and support this project would not have been possible.

This is a work of fiction and names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination, or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Other books by Mike Worley:

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One

The informational report on an adult missing person was included in a stack of new cases which Michael Garrison, supervising sergeant of the Santa Rosa California Police Violent Crimes Unit, placed on Detective Angela Masters' desk. The report was just one in a stack which also included a strong-armed robbery and four assaults, a cross section of crime which countered the cool but beautifully clear morning in March, 1984.

Reports of missing adults garner little more than a cursory scan by most detectives. Unless the person has been abducted or has possible mental health issues, an adult is free to disappear from friends and family if they choose to do so.

Angi Masters was not 'most detectives.' She had a reputation as a tenacious investigator who doggedly pursued leads that others might ignore. The five-foot-eight blonde also looked every inch the athlete she had been in college, and her physical stamina was matched by her mental drive.

Every morning, Angi made it a habit to read the 'incident log,' a brief compilation of the various calls which the uniformed patrol officers had handled in the previous 24 hours. The log was mostly ignored by detectives unless they were looking for something specific. To Angi, it was a means to keep tabs on the ebb and flow of crime and disorder in the city.

As she read the missing person report, one fact jumped off the page and rattled her memory - the name of the missing person. Angi dropped the short report on her desk and walked across the room to the wall peg where the clipboard holding the incident reports was kept.

"Interesting," she said as she re-read one entry. The evening before, a patrol officer had been dispatched to a report of an abandoned vehicle on U.S. Highway 101 near the Colgan Avenue exit. The car, a green 1983 Chevy Malibu, was unlocked and the right passenger door was open. The interior was in disarray and the right rear tire was flat. The officer had tried to contact the registered owner, Erica Michelle Roberts, without success.

Moments later, armed with the missing persons informational report and the incident log sheet, Angi Masters knocked lightly on the doorframe of Sgt. Garrison's office.

"Come on in, Angi," Garrison said, looking up from the sports section with a pained expression on his face. The Dodgers had blown another lead the night before.

"Sarge, I have something here that I'd like you to look at." She showed him the two reports, pointing out that the name of the missing person was the same as the registered owner of the strangely abandoned vehicle.

"I'd like to open a case on this, Sarge. I know it's unusual to pull a case number on a missing adult, but something tells me there might be more to this."

Sgt. Michael Garrison respected Angi's opinions and instincts as much as he trusted any of his investigators. If Angi Masters saw something in these two reports, then it was not a factor to be ignored.

"Go ahead. I don't have to remind you that everyone has several cases going right now, so keep your workload balanced."

Angi wanted more information on the car, but the officer who had checked on it would not be on-duty for five more hours. There were other cases demanding her attention too.

Angi first reviewed the other cases she had been assigned that morning and drove to the scene of the most serious, a strong-armed robbery. The victim, the owner of a small boutique on D St. had been assaulted by a masked man as she left her business the previous evening.

The man, who she could only describe as white or possibly Hispanic and five-foot-five to five-foot-nine, had struck her in the right jaw with his fist and then grabbed her deposit bag before running south on D St. She could not describe the assailant any further. The take was \$634 in cash and a couple of checks.

After assuring the victim that she would do all she could to locate the robber, and leaving her card with the victim, Angi returned to her office. The 2:00 p.m. patrol shift was just assembling for its pre-shift briefing.

Angi stuck her head in the door of the briefing room as the officers were taking their seats. "Sarge," she said to the patrol supervisor, "Can I see Jared for a minute?" The sergeant nodded his assent and Officer Jared Hagen stepped into the hallway.

Hagen and Masters had known each other since the academy. Hagen had chosen a career path in the uniformed division, and was considered a tenacious cop by his peers.

"Jared, I want to ask you about the abandoned Chevy on the 101 yesterday."

"Not much to tell, I'm afraid. It's all pretty much in the report. I was suspicious of the mess in the car, but it could have been that the owner was a slob."

"OK, thanks."

Hagen began to return to the briefing room and then turned back to Masters. "One thing though, Angi. This isn't in the report and it's just a hunch, but I think the air was purposely let out of the right rear tire. It was almost flat but I couldn't see any sign of a puncture. Also the valve cap was missing. Not a big deal in itself, but the whole thing seemed hinky to me. I simply ran out of things to follow-up on.

"Also, the car had been there at least a few days. A CHP officer put a warning tag on the windshield three days ago."

"The right door was standing open and he just stickered it and didn't notify our department?" Angi asked incredulously. Hagen shrugged his shoulders.

"Thanks, Jared. So you know, the owner had been reported missing."

"I'll keep my ears open, Angi. You know that."

"Sarge, I want to bring you up to speed on the Roberts missing person," Angi said when she returned to Garrison's office. "I'm on my way to interview the reporting party, the mother, now," she said as she turned for the door. "I'm not drawing a conclusion yet, but I'm not ruling out kidnapping."