

RETRIBUTION

An Angela Masters Detective Novel

By Mike Worley

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Dedication

To my wife, 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.

One

Agenbroad sat silently in the old yellow Honda Civic, contemplating the morning quiet. Steeling himself to what he had come to do, what he had to do, his mind wandered to the circumstances which brought him to this fateful day in April, 1981. Many people would remember this day forever, most with horror and sadness.

Elmont Jacob Agenbroad. "What kind of a mother names her son ELMONT?" Agenbroad had spit out that question a thousand times in his life. His mother. She was the start of all his troubles in life. She started it by naming him "Elmont." Then, to make matters worse, she insisted on calling him "Monty." Monty is a name for a game show host, not a name that would cause people to tremble, he told himself. It certainly was not the name of a boy destined to become a great man, a feared man.

Agenbroad tried to be "Jake" for a while. That was better than "Monty," but still it was not a name that suited a boy of his stature, his future stature. Besides, his father had run off before he was even born, so he was the man of the house. Still, his mother never treated him with the respect due the family leader. She even expected him to do chores around the house but he refused, often threatening her until she backed down. 'Men' like Agenbroad simply didn't do chores. At school, some kids called him a bully. Even some teachers called him that and worse, but Agenbroad didn't mind. To him, "bully" was a title of honor, a title befitting the destiny he saw for himself.

When he was about eight, he was watching his mother's old RCA black and white television when *The Little Rascals* came on. The show, a re-titled series of reruns of the 1930s' *Our Gang* comedies, featured a character that resonated with Agenbroad's personality. The archetypal bully "Butch" was played to perfection by actor Tommy Bond. "Butch Agenbroad." Now that was a name befitting the man he knew he would become - tough, ruthless, feared.

Of course, his mother never accepted his new name. She continued to call him "Monty," even though she had long since accepted his other shiftless and bullying traits. She called him "Monty" until the day she died, almost taunting her only son. In the end, Butch showed her who was in control. His mother would be the first in a long line of victims in his life and it was easier than he dreamed. The planning, the reading about human anatomy - much of which he didn't understand, but it was clear enough - came to fruition one day in August.

As his mother stood at the pink ceramic tiled kitchen counter, Butch slipped up behind her with a butcher knife he pulled from the laminated maple rack on the wall. As she reached forward to rinse some cut vegetables, he plunged the knife between her third and fourth ribs. She screamed as she fell to the floor, but no one in their neighborhood would be rushing to investigate. Someone might call the seven digit number for the local police but Butch had more than enough time to finish the job. He had intended to pierce her heart but missed by a few millimeters. However, the damage to her lung was sufficient for her to soon drown in her own blood. Butch stood over her with a cold stare as she gasped for life until it ebbed from her. He was two months past his thirteenth birthday.

Butch spent five years in reform school, as it was called then, but he was neither schooled nor reformed. There, for perhaps the first time in his life, Butch was a big man. Though younger than many of the 'residents,' his crime, and the sheer brutality of it, gave him the 'rep' he needed. The petty hoodlums, thieves and even the youthful robbers looked up to him, this hardened killer. Hardened killer? No, of course not. A 13-year-old's mind can't form the criminal intent to commit murder. The law even said so. Butch laughed to himself every time he remembered his court-appointed lawyer telling him that. It was particularly funny in light of the carefully laid plan he had devised to rid himself of that incessant, whiny voice chirping "Monty" and his mother's demanding ways. Reform school was a breeze and those years only served to steel his nerve and heighten his development as a man to be feared.

As he grew older, Butch developed charm as well. Always one to talk a good line, he learned to work his way into the hearts of women, especially women who had something he wanted. As for men, his bullying ways had always gotten him what he wanted from them, and that was all that was necessary.

Agenbroad inhaled deeply and blew cigarette smoke against the windshield of the Honda. His old biddy mother-in-law would give him hell when he returned her car reeking of cigarette smoke. One glare, though, would shut her up. He regretted even borrowing her car for this trip. His own new Buick LeSabre would have been much nicer for the long drive, but he had to consider the possibility of detection, however remote. It was better that he not to be in his own car for this mission. Agenbroad contemplated the slowly dissipating smoke, the rays of the now rising sun glancing off the tar particles. Only a little while longer and he could complete the retribution he had waited more than four years to exact.

* * *

His first two wives were easy marks. He targeted them through clubs he frequented. Moderately wealthy with no close male relatives, each had been an easy target for his charms. He wined and dined them, always the perfect gentleman. Only after they married him and signed over all their possessions to his care did the true Butch Agenbroad emerge. With each of them, he liquidated their assets to provide money for his own vices. When the money ran out, Agenbroad forced his wives to prostitute themselves. They committed unspeakable acts to bring in more money for the man who, only a short while before, had been their dream. Agenbroad also beat the women, these wives he had taken a vow to love and to honor such a short time before. When he was done - when these women of his life were used up like a store of meat, he simply abandoned them. Divorce was not in the cards for Butch Agenbroad or the women who had the misfortune to become his wives. That was, until Sharon came along.

Sharon Kelson was a firebrand, with a constitution to match her long, flaming red mane. She fell in love almost immediately with the strikingly handsome and gentlemanly carpenter she met in a local tavern. Butch Agenbroad treated Sharon to breathless nights on the town, nights of dancing and partying until the sun's light was peeking over the eastern mountains. His intensity and temper matched her own, and she found an intellectual bond as well as a sexual one with this rugged but seemingly gentle man.

At 24, Sharon had never been married, although she had her share of boyfriends and a few intimate, if unsatisfying relationships. For his part, Agenbroad professed his undying love for Sharon. He told her how he searched for years for someone like her - never finding her until Sharon's eyes met his that night at The Office Tavern. He told Sharon that, like her, he had never been married and was looking for someone just like what he found in her. At 28, Agenbroad was an accomplished liar.

Four months after they met, Butch Agenbroad - his real first name was "Count" he told her, saying he found that too pretentious for daily use - and Sharon Kelson were married in a civil ceremony. Sharon would have preferred a beautiful church wedding. The money she inherited from her late father and mother would have paid for a nice ceremony, but Butch would have none of that. He demanded a simple ceremony with no photographs or announcements in the newspaper, and Sharon

agreed to his wishes. Giving up a dream wedding to get this wonderful man was a trifle compared to the fairy tale life she thought they would share.

Within five months, the fairy tale became a nightmare. Agenbroad convinced Sharon to turn over custody of all her inheritance to him, citing his own background in financial matters. How a carpenter, albeit an excellent carpenter, became a financial management whiz was open to question, but the thought never occurred to the star-struck Sharon. She trusted this man so completely. Then, as his nights at home became more infrequent and her money allowances likewise dwindled, she began to question him. Agenbroad's fiery outbursts were more than matched by Sharon's and an uneasy peace emerged. It was clear to Agenbroad that this wife would not be as easy a mark as the previous two. To make matters worse, Sharon was now pregnant with his child.

The first time Agenbroad hit Sharon would be the last time in her mind. The next day, she filed for divorce. He was livid. How dare that whore think she could divorce him, the great Butch Agenbroad? But divorce him she did, although he tried every trick he could think of to prolong the judgment while he worked to charm her back into his control. He was wasting his time. Thirteen months after they were married, 13 days after the birth of their daughter, Butch Agenbroad and Sharon Kelson Agenbroad were declared divorced. The moment was forever seared in Agenbroad's mind. She would live to regret her stupidity - live long enough to regret it and not one minute more.