

## **Angle of Attack**

### **Excerpt**

**by Lee Baldwin**

This is an excerpt from Lee Baldwin's adventure mystery, *Angle of Attack*.

You can find the Kindle edition on Amazon at

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006U5S9HK>.



So I'm sleeping along okay here on Montana's living room sofa around 2 a.m. when I get it I am not alone. A weight compresses the cushions somewhere around my knees. Dark in here but I can see it's her.

"You are such an asshole," she hisses, quiet not to wake her kid. My guess is that she's been having a convo with me inside her head, and she's here to share her conclusions. Then she starts hitting me in the stomach with both fists like I'm her new punch toy.

"Hey!" I'm trying to grab her arms. We're fighting but not being too loud but meanwhile she is majorly wailing on me from some deep reservoir of anger or regret she's stepped on over the years. Hissing out of her mouth are words like asshole, dumb fuck, shithead, and worse things you wouldn't want your mom to hear you say. Why'd you come back, she's asking, why are you even in my goddamn life? Everything was fine now I'm in a big mess with you just when I thought everything was going good.

Of course knowing Montana, she's a complete stranger to any notion she's responsible. She didn't have to take my parole case, did not have to pick up when I called, did not have to give me her personal number for any reason, didn't have to come to my house, or invite me to hers. But no matter, merely the workings of female logic. I finally get both her wrists now I'm holding them so tight she can't hit me anymore. Make no mistake Montana is a strong woman and she hits the gym. This pulls her face right up to mine, shaking and pointing her stink eye stare right at me. She's wearing a long pink tee shirt that says Hello Kitty on it, and panties. Or not. Enough light in here to make out her expression. Her face is feral, full of anger desperation loathing, her teeth bared in a snarl. So why does it cross my mind she is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen? And that's when I get it she is afraid. She is scared shitless about something.

Her hard desperate look bleeds away then we're just gazing at each other in disbelief, all those years gone by. She stops pulling away. On some mutual signal we lunge at each other, open-mouthed.

What happens after that is not really suitable for a family publication. You can look it up online if you want. However I will say that it was just like the old times only hella bettah. We're both more experienced, more mature, and had learned in two decades how to be,

what? I guess you could say more inventive and generous. But deep down, the groundswell of basic distrust is still there.

At least it is with her. All the pleasure we're feeling, seems like she's trying to pummel me to death with her hips. Which is probably why I wake up this morning with that sweet kind of all-over ache, like a zombie, alone in a strange bed that's funky with bodily fluids.

I lie here for a while going over yesterday. Non-stop excitement from end to end. Then, how it was the last few hours, with her. Mated up so tight, completely wrapped together in that sweet refuge of love, we were whispering all the hot delirious things we'd said to each other years ago. No connection with reality, the cold looks she gave me in her office, the shock in her voice when I called. It's like I've felt for years, sex is a kind of temporary insanity. But my images of all that do wake up my junior partner. Hey go back to sleep you're insane!

I look around for my jeans. No dice. I pull apart the sheets, scrounge around the foot of the bed, nothing. And me not a stitch on. Dude where's my drawers? And what the fuck time is it? I have to be at the gliderport at ten for a student. I open the bedroom door, listening intently. The place seems still. I peek down the hall at the kid's door, it's closed, with its sign, *Actual Mother Wanted*. Asleep or gone I decide.

Ears alert, I creep softly toward the living room. I can see the sofa, sheets and blankets on the floor, my jeans and blue work shirt wadded up in the mess. Walk through, reach down and pull out my jeans. Stepping a leg in, that's when I notice I'm not alone. Two girls, make that two young women, peer at me from bar stools in the kitchen. Since I'm halfway into one leg of my pants when I notice this, I just forge ahead, although soon's I get that foot through I pivot away from them, step into the other and I get them all the way up. I reach down for

my shirt.

"Sorry," I say. "You guys were way quiet."

They don't say anything, just stare at me all expressionless. One's a blond, the other kind of auburn haired. I'm about to think that blond one's definitely datable, then I notice she's looking at me with something that could be smoldering resentment. I have a couple stray thoughts. First, where is Montana's kid, second, who is this chica giving me the stink eye? I know one thing for a fact, whoever she is, strangers walking out of Montana's bedroom in the morning could be par for the course. Then I feel damn embarrassed. About last night, the whole thing. Whatever you do, never bring the kids into it.

The auburn haired chica blurts out, apropos of nothing, "I've seen you somewhere." She smiles a little. Pretty. But given the circumstances I don't know what she finds familiar. Features, or fixtures?

Nevertheless I look right back at them. Now I've got my shirt buttoned, I start folding the sheets and pillowcases one by one, putting them in a neat unobtrusive pile with the blanket. Last item at the bottom of the tangle is a pair of pale green lace-trimmed panties. How nice. I get an arm under the pile of bedding, carry everything into the bedroom. Stack it neatly on the corner of the bed, close the door and walk back in the living room.

They're still looking right at me, motionless as deer, completely silent in front of bowls of what's maybe granola. Not being one to run and hide, I come right up to the kitchen counter where they're both sitting.

"I'm Clay," I say. "Sorry to come in that way. She said you all were leaving early. The place was way quiet."

Up until now they could've been statues, but now they move. I notice a couple

backpacks by the door.

"I'm Twyla," says the auburn chica. After a couple of beats she smiles again, bigger, putting her eyes into it. My apology may have fixed things up some. She is still looking like she's trying to place me.

The other one is still staring at me, stony-like. "I'm Tharcia. I didn't know my mom was having guests last night."

This explanation sounds to me like there's an agreed household etiquette: don't bring dates home when daughter is here. Or at least, not in front of daughter's friends. That's when I connect: Montana's kid is actually this blonde girlie. Nice.

I smile at her. "Would you be Montana's daughter?"

She looks at me head-cocked. "Who is Montana?"

"Oh right," I say. "Old nickname we had for her. Hannah."

Comprehension comes into the girl's clear blue eyes. "You must've been friends a hella long time ago. Nobody calls her that." She looks at me levelly.

"Ah. Right. We know each other from high school."

Now it's her turn to look shocked. She shakes her head minutely from side to side like she's trying to get a ball to drop in a hole. Her blonde hair, long but pulled up in a casual-messy runway model look, follows the movement.

"You know my mom from high school, from maybe twenty years ago?"

Now it's my turn to be confused. This Tharcia babydoll is looking at me with even more intensity than before I put my pants on.

"Yeah," I say. "Lost track of her after grad, though. Just ran into each other yesterday."

Now she looks really disappointed. "And so the two of you just had to..."

Her voice trails off, kind of vague, but her meaning is clear. She is not impressed with her mother much, or with me.

"Would there be such a thing as coffee?" I ask, hoping to derail this spazz convo. The way these two girl-women are staring at me makes me wish I'd looked in the mirror once and maybe even washed my face. I can see behind them on the counter there's actually a coffee maker with maybe a couple of cups. But I wait.

Finally the blond one, the daughter, says "I'll get you some." All family manners now, but it's just a veneer. Swings herself off the stool and walks to the cupboard. She moves her hips just like Montana, only slimmer. Hip hugger skirt over black stretch tights, killer.

"Milk and sweetener?"

"Black, thanks." She sits. So now were back in our stiff but lifelike little tableau. But at least I have some life-restoring fluid in front of me.

"You guys go to school together?"

The auburn one, Twyla, nods, working on her granola. "We have classes together on Thursday so were driving together."

"In Twyla's hot new car," Tharcia says. What, can this mean she's actually thawing?

"What classes?"

"This morning it's Journalism and the New Media," Twyla offers. This afternoon it's study group then internship seminar."

"What school?"

"San Jose State."

I'm watching the blond one, now it's me thinking I'd seen someone before. At the same time Twyla is checking me out like will I ask for a date. Expectant look on her face. Yah right

she already took inventory.

Tharcia jumps off her stool and takes her dishes to the sink.

"Move your butt Twy."

So I get a chance to sip my coffee while these two bustle around collecting odds, ends, backpacks, out the door. I check my phone and see it's just after eight. Time to find a breakfast place and get over to the gliderport. I definitely need to catch up with the twins. And I need a shower. Been trying not to scratch too obvious with ladies in the room but now it's game on.

The door bangs open and Twyla comes rushing through and into the daughter's bedroom. I leave off with the pocket pool. On her way out she stops to ask with a smile if I'm going to be back tonight.

"Don't think so," I tell her. Her face registers faint disappointment as she turns to split but she keeps smiling.

"Later," she says gaily, and out she goes. She's taller than the daughter and has a nice - but hold up pervo, I tell myself, these girls may be underage. Even if not, one of them's your parole officer's daughter. There would be no question about Montana murdering me.

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