

# Bentley's Revenge

by Joseph Ponder

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*A sample of the opening pages*

## Prologue

POPPA POPPA-BOP was the sound coming from the pistol, as Don Ramon fired numerous rounds out of the driver's side window of his Hummer H-1. "Ahorita hable conmigo," he yelled, knowing that now he fully had everyone's attention. Inhaling on his cigar, he blew smoke into the face of the man nearest to him. "Habla..."

"The man trembled as a frightened child in front of his father. Bentley is his name, said he would rather die than sell his land. He..."

His words ceased when he saw the pistol pointed directly at his head. Flashing lightening illuminated the steady arm holding the gun. This man was a dedicated soldier of the cartel. He was not fearful of the Glock 19 pointed directly at him. His fear was directed at the man holding the gun.

"I sent you on a mission to convince this man to sell his land to the one we serve. You are so incompetent!" Don Ramone said as he crushed the side of the man's head with three blows, causing crimson blood to flow down the side of his face.

Unable to stand and debilitated by pain, the man stammered pleadingly, "Lo siento Don Ramone. Pero... Pero... Pero... He said he would never sell." The man raised his hands to his head, trying to control the flow of blood that pulsated out with every heartbeat.

"What should I tell Lord Javier when he asks about the land?" Don Ramone demanded.

The deafening roar of thunder signaled sheets of rain. Vibrant lightening lit up the countryside of Cali, Colombia. People everywhere were frantically covering up their doorways with anything they could find in an attempt to keep out the rain.

"I'm sorry Don Ramone. I..." the man began pleadingly.

"Sorry is not good enough. You are an incompetent fool!" Don Ramone declared angrily as he brought forth another massive blow to the man's skull.

The door to the ram shackled home opened as the man's wife stepped through the doorway. "Ya! Por favor Don Ramone. Por favor..."

Don Ramone turned and pressed the trigger of the pistol. The gun fire, partially masked by the

sounds of the violent storm, resonated for miles. Bullets penetrated the woman's now lifeless body.

"No! No!" the man screamed as he lunged towards Don Ramone.

His screams served as a warning. Don Ramone brought the pistol around in a sweeping arc and emptied the clip into the man. This man's crime had been letting down his drug cartel employer and his punishment came swiftly.

Don Ramone slammed home a fresh clip and chambered a round. He walked to the nearest house and kicked in the flimsy door. "You," he said to a filthy, unshaven man, "Go get two other men and meet me at my truck right now!" The man, fearing for his safety, quickly obeyed.

Don Ramone walked to his Hummer H-1 as a steady rain fell from the darkening sky. "Let this be a lesson to all of you!" he shouted, "You will do as I say or I will come back with my men and burn this village down!!"

The three men headed over to the vehicle and stood silently at attention. "This Bentley man will sell us his land or else..." he made a slicing motion across his throat with his gun.

## **Chapter 1**

A big black Hummer pulled into Bentley Morales' driveway. A well-dressed man in a perfectly tailored Roberto Cavalli suit approaches the front door and pounds on it loudly, causing it to vibrate. Bentley, a well-respected member of his community, assumes someone has come to see how he and his family are weathering the storm. The community admired the virtues and the traditions that had been passed down from generation to generation in the Morales family beginning with Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Morales. Family always came first. This was the time reserved exclusively for Bentley's wife and children. People knew Bentley did not like to be disturbed so this better be important.

Bentley stood to answer the door but his wife Litsia stopped him saying "Mi Amor, I got it." She arose from her place at the table in their vast 18th century dining room to go answer the door while Bentley began telling his children the story of the lion and the mouse.

"Quien es?" Litsia asks as she reaches the front door. Hearing no response, she again asks the question, speaking more loudly to be heard over the rain that had plagued the Cali countryside for the past three days.

"Don Ramone Senora," said the low toned man.

Litsia was a bit weary of an unexpected visitor at this time of night but she still unlocked and opened the door. A tall blue-eyed man with jet black hair pulled back in a ponytail stood before her. She could see he was wet from the rainfall. Litsia could tell from the cut of his suit and the one carat diamond in his left ear that he was not from this area. Refusing to show fear, she calmly asked, "How may I help you?"

Don Ramone smiled politely and said, "Senora, I would like to speak to your husband Bentley."

"Un momento," Litsia responded as she turned and walked to the opening of her dining room and motioned for her husband to come to the door.

Bentley, noticing the look on his wife's face, wondered if he really should go to the door. Still, he proceeded forward. Litsia, trying to conceal her growing suspicions, informs her husband, "A Don Ramone would like to speak with you."

"Gracias mi Amor. Te amo mucho. It will be alright. Please go and watch over the children." Bentley says to his wife.

Litsia had learned to always listen to her intuition. Right now it was telling her that this man who had shown up unannounced in the pouring rain was up to no good.

"Mami, is everything okay with Papi?" the baby girl Peanut asked.

"Si, all is well. Eat your supper." Her mother said as she returned to the dining room.

Before Bentley reached the door, he heard Don Ramone speaking with someone.

"Si, Don Ramone" the voice at the other end of the phone responded.

"This shouldn't take long. I will oversee it to make sure all is in order," responded Don Ramone.

Bentley, thinking there was more than one man standing outside, aggressively pulled the door wide open. Don Ramone hung up the phone and smiled at him. His smile vanished as he placed his cell phone back in his pocket. He reflected on Bentley's wife, marveling at what a beautiful creature she was. That didn't matter though. His only reason for visiting was to talk to Bentley.

"Como estas?" Bentley asked.

Ramone's smile vanished as he realized Bentley was still keeping him waiting in the rain. "I am well but I did not come here to exchange pleasantries. I am here with a proposition for you." Bentley took note of the abruptness of the man's tone. Ramone had been doing this job long enough to know that the man standing in front of him was visibly shaken. Before Bentley had a chance to respond, Ramone added quickly, "I come here to purchase your land."

"My land is not for sale! It is how I feed my family!" Bentley said defensively.

Ramone, fueled by Bentley's response, immediately stepped into the Morales home uninvited. "I do not like the word no. Sell... me... your land!" he says emphatically.

Pointing, Bentley screamed, "Leave my home at once!!"

Don Ramone turned and walked out of Bentley's home. This was going to cost Bentley dearly. No problem though, Don Ramone thought to himself. The solution to this little problem was only a phone call away.

Bentley slammed the door behind him. The echo was drowned out by the sound of rain hitting

the pavement. Blood rushed to his face as he looked up to see Litsia standing there, fear reflecting in her green eyes. He was unsure of what had just happened.

Litsia opened her mouth but could not find words to form a sentence. Bentley, lightly placing a finger over his wife's lips, said, "Mi Amor, it's nothing. Just a disagreement."

As the older children assisted their mother with washing the dinner dishes, the younger ones prepared for bed. Little Jose ran to his father. Bentley, always affectionate with his children, picked him up as the little boy asked him "Papi, you say it's not nice to yell. Why did you yell?"

Bentley was angered that his son was upset. He answered him saying, "No son, it is not good to yell. At times Papi has to yell at people so they can understand."

Little Jose was satisfied with his father's answer and took off running towards the living room. Litsia had heard her husband's explanation to their child and was anxious to find out the real explanation. Bentley, attempting to block out the man who had come uninvited to his home and demanded he turn over his land, focused on Litsia. Suddenly, there was another hard knock on their front door. Expecting trouble, Bentley grabbed the handle with his right hand as he raised his left in a clenched fist. He opened the door to find his longtime friend and neighbor Jose Martinez staring at him with a shocked expression on his face.

"Adalante, Adalante" Bentley says as he quickly ushers Martinez into his home.

"Is all well Senor? I saw the visitor you had. He.." Martinez is silenced by a wave of Bentley's hand.

"We're okay. The man wanted to buy our land." Bentley explained as they walked in the room.

Martinez began to speak nervously, "He came to our home the other day insisting we sell our land as well."

Bentley told Martinez of their heated exchange. "I told him we are not selling. I inherited this land from my father. He had followed his dream and built this house with his bare hands. Trees from the rain forest provided the lumber." Bentley moved to the fireplace and placed two more logs on the fire.

"We have much land here to grow our coffee beans and an abundance of fruits and vegetables. This land is the way I feed my family. It always has served as the source of our family income. We sell our produce and coffee to all the surrounding villages. I will not give in to the drug cartels who want to use my land as their gateway to the North." Bentley expressed himself so vigorously Martinez sank back in his chair.

"I'm just afraid for your safety my dear friend. This man seems ruthless!" Jose exclaimed.

"This land has been in my family for generations. My ancestor is Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Morales. He was an explorer who brought Christianity to the southern continent. " Bentley further explained to his concerned friend.

Litsia, who had been sitting quietly beside her husband, continued providing the Morales family history to their guest saying "It was rumored that great-great-great grandfather Morales drew up a map that provided the location of early Colombian gold and gemstones. This treasure is located on our estate!" she finished proudly, glancing over at her husband.

"I had no idea of your history Senor," Jose confessed as he looked admirably at his host.

"As our family grew, so did our wealth. We transformed this house into the villa design you see before you. The high ceilings and fireplaces in every room, and big bold windows were parts of the re-model. Ours was the first home in Cali to have indoor plumbing" Bentley added.

The villa was surrounded by high stone walls. The backyard served as both a cozy relief from the hot days and an ideal family gathering place. The backyard was filled with apple, peach, pear, and mango trees. There were blackberry and blueberry bushes as well as an herb garden. Litsia took meticulous care of all their lush greenery and used the herbs to accent her cooking. Completing the scene was a large pond where the individual Morales family members went seeking refuge.

Jose Martinez looked at the beautifully lit portrait of the entire Morales family hanging on the wall. There was also a portrait of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado Morales displayed atop a seventeenth century cabinet. Frank Sinatra's voice floated out of the hidden sound system next to the well-stocked wet bar located in the corner of the dining room.

"Where are the children?" Jose inquired

"Nine of the them are upstairs. Bentley junior is staying at his aunt and uncle's house." Bentley answered.

"Well, I must go. I just wanted to make sure everything was alright." Jose said as he put on his rain slicker.

"Be careful driving in the storm." Litsia says.

Jose gives them a wave as he heads to his old, red, Ford pick-up.

Bentley closed the door and walked over to his wife, embracing her tightly as he planted a kiss on her forehead. He wished he could say something to reassure her and lessen her worry.

Outside, as Jose Martinez started his vehicle the long shell of an AK-47 assault rifle entered through the front windshield. The beige interior was instantly changed to red, looking like a scene out of a horror movie.

After everything was picked up, Bentley and Litsia walked from room to room, tucking in and kissing each one of the children good night. Litsia knew it was now her opportunity to ask her husband for details about their strange visitor. "Bentley, what is it you are not telling me?" She asked gently as they prepared for bed. Litsia knew her husband better than anyone. He could never lie to her, even if he wanted. "Bentley, I am your wife. I know when there is something

troubling you. What did that man want??" she asked her husband.

Already exhausted from the day's events, Bentley knew that if he did not respond right away, an argument would ensue. It made more sense to just tell her. He turned on the light, stood up and walked over to the window. It was a cold night. No work had been completed over the past three days due to the constant rainfall.

The darkness seemed to pull the light out of the window. The wind whipped about, blowing the rain sideways as it howled through the cracks in the window.

Bentley walked over to his wife's side of the bed. He took her hand and tenderly stroked her face. He wanted to show her how much he truly loved her and appreciated her being a compassionate wife and mother by making love to her.

"Bentley" Litsia said softly.

He gave her hand a firm squeeze before responding, "Mi Amor, he wanted to buy our estate." There was a pause. All he could hear was the rain pelting against the windowpane. Bentley turned back to face his wife who was now looking at him searchingly.

"Why does this man want our land? Surely he knows that the Morales family has owned this property since the 1800s! Why did you argue with him?" Litsia spoke as a person who has just discovered she has a voice.

Bentley shook his head, signaling his wife to stop asking questions. He wished he had answers for her. The thought of a person walking up to his door, uninvited and unannounced, was unsettling. One of the things his father had taught him was to never let a problem cloud your judgment and to remain focused in order to weather the storm headed your way. "Litsia, I don't think he meant us any harm. He was probably trying to press the issue."

Juanita, the Morales' oldest daughter, rolled over in her bed. Life seemed boring to Juanita. She was sixteen and looked forward to her next birthday. She planned to leave home and relocate amid the hustle and bustle of the big city. The thought of leaving home was keeping her awake. She stared absently at the ceiling while her sister Lydia slept peacefully in the adjacent twin bed. She knew she would miss her family but it was all a part of growing up- a part of life.

Juanita was also thinking about tomorrow. She was going to go in town to meet her boyfriend Raul. They had been seeing one another for the past year. He was good to her, they had a lot in common, and she hoped to marry him one day. Only her mother had knowledge of her and Raul's relationship. Bentley would never condone his daughter's relationship. He was overprotective of all his children. Still, Juanita smiled to herself, happily thinking ahead to tomorrow.

Growing frustrated with tossing and turning, Juanita decided to go to the kitchen for a cup of warm milk. She grabbed her robe as she opened the door. She noticed the light on, thinking someone else must be having trouble sleeping as well.

## **End of sample**

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