

With her abusive husband gone, Molly Bremer is alone in Little Rock during the chaotic years of WWII to raise their children. Her two sons are guilty of avarice and murder. Though painful, Ma Bremer stands by her boys. What else can she do?

Ma Bremer's Boys

By Dale Kueter

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Ma Bremer's
Boys

a novel

DALE KUETER

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First Edition

Other books by Dale Kueter

- *Vietnam Sons*
- *The Smell of the Soil*
- *Motel Sepia*

“Ma Bremer’s Boys”

main characters

fiction

Molly and Jack Bremer, parents of Peter, Bobby, and Hattie

Aliza and Orval Price, Molly Bremer’s parents

Glenda (Goodman) Bremer, Peter’s wife

Rosemary (Hitchins) Bremer, Bobby’s wife

Hogg Mulder, Kansas Prison inmate

Tom Wendling, Cedar Rapids newspaper reporter

Rusty Ragno, enforcer for Chicago mob

Henry Bexler, west Kansas rancher

David Etting, Peter Bremer’s lawyer

Jim Ryan, FBI agent in charge, Cedar Rapids

Norm Effron, Overland Park, Kansas, Chief of Police

Chapter 1

Summer 1975, Iowa

The black Cadillac rumbled down the gravel road, its driver more like the occupant of a hearse than a man on a business trip.

The warnings had been explicit. Reckoning loomed like shadows in a dim alley. Peter Bremer gripped the steering wheel.

“Damn it!” he muttered. “Damn everything!”

The hot August sun, unrestricted by clouds, shot heat waves through Iowa’s verdant landscape.

On the western horizon, he spotted dust boiling skyward, portraying the image of a tiny tornado plowing through emerald fields of corn. To most people, the ascending residue would be an insignificant blot on the serene countryside, but for Bremer it was foreboding.

His eyes fixed on the swirling billow; his mind was consumed by rising panic. It was as if some Mother Nature illusion was taking shape on a Grant Wood canvas. But this was no mirage, and his fears inhaled its full dimensions. For him, the danger was concealed in the unknown. Sweat beaded on his forehead.

Bremer seldom swore, but then seldom had he been in such dire straits. He stared, bound by bad decisions and unthinkable consequences. For a man cushioned in leather seats, he was about as uncomfortable as a person in an electric chair.

Unconsciously, he slowed his car as his gaze zeroed on the approaching speck. It alone ignited the powdery trail that punctured the azure sky. The vast dome over the Midwest was void of any tempest. The only impending storm was that which permeated Bremer’s problematic life. He felt alone. Even success, his long-sought idol, was of no comfort.

Loose gravel ticked off the underbelly of the big sedan; it was the only sound other than the voice of baseball announcer Jack Buck:

“There’s the windup. And the pitch from the Cubs’ fine young right-handed pitcher, Steve Stone. Sizemore digs in, waiting for the pitch. Swing and a miss, and the side is retired.”

St. Louis station KMOX came streaming into Eastern Iowa like a Bob Gibson fastball. But Bremer was oblivious to the broadcast. He turned the radio off.

Tall corn flanked the spiraling beige cloud that rose leisurely like prairie talcum. The dust plume hung almost suspended at times, taking its direction from the vehicle’s propulsion and a nudge of the placid breeze. The only farmstead in sight assumed a peculiar poise, two round silos poking out of the horizon like sunburned fingers.

There was no one to yell to for help. Surely, he thought, there must be a farmer or mailman or county worker somewhere in the area. Maybe a Watkins salesman?

Anyone other than the portent of danger.

Solitude swelled Bremer’s panic. He felt like he was without a place to hide from fear’s dimensions. Unmindful observers would have had no cause for concern, but he was not among that fortunate number. Suspicion and trepidation were his passengers.

Instinctively, he braked the 1975 de Ville and steered into a grassy cornfield driveway. The sleek sedan’s big tires crumpled ragweed, brome, clover, and wild Sweet Williams indiscriminately as it inched forward to a stop. He put the vehicle in park, leaving the engine running.

Bremer removed a .32 automatic from the glove compartment and waited.

His fancy luxury car stood out conspicuously in a rural environment saturated with Chevys and Fords—pickup trucks mostly. The Cadillac was as out of place as Lauren Hutton, donned in

lace and Chanel No. 5, feeding slop to pigs. Bremer, too, dressed in a gray three-piece suit, blue tie, white shirt, and Florsheim brogues, was a foreigner in a denim world.

He checked the gun's chamber. It was loaded. How did it all come to this? True, he had for many years lived a life that rounded curves too fast, failing to consider what was beyond the bend. It was almost as if he were compelled to push the pedal as far as it would go, hell-bent on getting past where he never dreamed of going.

A psychiatrist would perhaps trace it back to his boyhood in Little Rock. He was the smallest kid in his class—from grade school through high school. He was the guy that all the other guys could safely beat up. They called him “Little Pete” or “Beat on Pete” or worse. He could run fast, and his legs frequently carried him away from a prospective bloody nose or black eye.

Often, he would take refuge at his father's gas station, where he would do various chores, including attending the pumps. He was so small he had to stand on an orange crate to reach the cash register. Things didn't improve much at Little Rock High, where he was mostly ignored by other boys. He was always relegated to right field during PE softball games, a position that saw little action and generated less respect. It was the “last guy in” place, under a system that required everyone to get some playing time.

Peter was never good enough to make any varsity sport, though he considered track. Running—his forte and seemingly his lifetime role. Running as a child caught in his parents' quarrels. Running from a lack of close friends, running from diminutive stature, running from loneliness. Now running from bad decisions.

There had been two anchors in his life: his mom and Glenda.

In school he was skillful at math, which boosted his self-esteem and countered the shun factor. He, in turn, ignored most of the boys in his class and despised some. He took his satisfaction by socializing

with many of the girls. Some of them treated him like a cuddly bear cub, something cute that needed shelter. He savored the attention if not the associated belittling.

Even at Arkansas State he had few male friends, and those were fellows who, like him, were interested in economics and the general notion of success. Success as in making boatloads of money. He embraced business books about sales cultivation and personal growth like a Wall Street tycoon fondles the bottom line and stock options.

And now look at him. Even his old grade school antagonists would have to acknowledge his achievements.

But at what price.

The Cadillac's air conditioning kept the car cool inside, an oasis on a ninety-degree day. The dot in the distance had multiplied in size, and the dust column behind it grew accordingly. Whoever was responsible for stirring up the mixture of gravel and grit was plodding along in due deference to the rough surface.

A delegation of crows swooped out of the steamy corn rows, presumably headed for a watering hole that fostered the lofty, relaxing reaches of a willow or sycamore tree. If only life could be so simple, Bremer thought, that he could fly up and away from troubles, leaving potential harm adrift in its own cloud of confusion.

He was thankful for one thing. Glenda, his wife, was not with him. He didn't have to explain to her the reasons for driving on a gravel road rather than a paved highway, parked in bucolic central, worried about whether he would see the sunrise the following day. She was back at their hotel suite in Cedar Rapids—oblivious, he thought, to the intricacies of his financial dilemma.

The approaching vehicle was now a mere 300 yards away. It seemed like a slow-motion scene from the movies. But this was no chase. Neither was the pursued hiding from the pursuer. Bremer was out in the open, unshielded by brush or trees. The big black car was

parked in front of a canvas of green, as vulnerable as proverbial fish in a barrel.

What was it his mother had always advised? She knew young Peter, unlike his brother, Bobby, was the target of bullies. “Never, never, never invite trouble,” she counseled. Molly Bremer was a master at invoking prudence. “Trouble,” she would say, “looks for a place to happen. So, don’t tempt it.” He should have paid more attention to his mother.

She, too, had no knowledge of what he did or how he did it. And Peter wanted it to stay that way. God only knew she had suffered enough from her husband during those years after the honeymoon wore off in Little Rock. She had had enough abuse at the hands of Peter’s father and certainly did not need any more anguish from the reckless actions of her oldest son.

Peter Bremer, like so many who wander into the perilous companionship of avarice and extravagance, wished many times in recent months to have his imprudent actions erased. While they may have preached forgiveness at the Baptist church of his youth, leniency and compassion were not part of the credo of the crowd he’d been associating with in the last year.

He was all alone in this fight, just like most of his life. Glenda didn’t know. His mother and siblings didn’t know. For that matter, he didn’t even know where his younger brother lived. Bobby was in and out of jail. His sister married and lived in Rochester, Minn. He had also lost track of his father, a situation that caused him neither worry nor grief. He remembered his father as being devoid of love and care—a pathetic paranoid bent on dominance.

Bremer had delayed marriage for more than a year, afraid of commitment. However, after he moved to Cedar Rapids, the long-distance relationship with Glenda bloomed, and they surrendered to a love beyond passion. They married in St. Louis nearly two years ago.

Yet in all this time, vanity and shame trumped love and blocked his ability to confide in her.

Neither did area farmers and local business associates, investors in Riverside Packing Co., have any idea of the perils he faced. None had become his close friends, but he knew many by their first names. This was especially the case for coworkers at Riverside, where he was president and chief operating officer. He was on his way from the company's offices in Cedar Rapids to the slaughtering plant in the small town of Chelsea, forty-five miles to the west.

Bremer was alone with his predicament. Alone, especially in time of trouble, is not a nice place to live.

The vehicle and its dusty aftermath were almost upon him. In a matter of seconds, his future would be determined. He burrowed his small frame deeper into the leather seats, his eyes peeking out the side window. He was ready to shoot or ram any assailant with two-and-a-half tons of steel.

Bremer pointed the pistol upward in readiness.

He waited.

Chapter 2

1952, Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing, Kans.

The guard closed the prison cellblock door, a squeaky prelude leading to the inevitable clank. It was not Bobby Bremer's first time in jail. Would incarceration change him this time? Or perhaps the real question was, did Bobby Bremer want to change?

"Lookie what we have here, boys. Fresh meat. Fresh, tender meat. And ain't he so pretty."

Hogg Mulder glanced at the other inmates in his block at the Kansas State Penitentiary, assigning himself as the man in charge. To say Mulder was odious would render the term deficient several times over. He was utterly repulsive, inside and out, the kind of human that only a mother might suffer. But in Mulder's case, no one would take bets on that.

His dull gray prison garb was highlighted by spilled food stains. His dirty hands matched the limited vocabulary of his foul mouth. It appeared he had not washed or combed his hair since Roosevelt's first term.

"Who wants to go first with this little sweetie? He looks tough, so we may need several fellows to hold down his fuckin' delicate ass, but that makes the process even more attractive and excitin'."

Three weeks after his birth in Medicine Lodge, Kans., Mulder's parents recorded his name as Clemency Kiowa Mulder. The *Clemency*, his father told others, was in honor of a great grandfather, and *Kiowa* was intended to give the newborn the bearing of the Kiowa Indian. The tribe considered the Medicine Lodge area sacred. The Mulders were self-proclaimed atheists, a declaration that in ensuing years was much appreciated by local churchgoers.

In 1947, Judge Ansel Q. Blakeman of the Kansas District Court sentenced Mulder to fifty years in prison for the rape and near-death

beating of the teenage daughter of a Presbyterian minister. Many claimed that the trial, other than a fulfillment of the law's guarantee of judgment by peers, was a waste of taxpayer's money. Mulder had bragged to several alleged friends, "I had my way and more with that chick."

That announcement spread like a prairie wildfire. The threat of public reckoning was thick as Kansas wheat. Mulder's inability to post a huge bond saved him from harm. Judge Blakeman apologized to the victim's family for "suffering such a heinous crime," but angry Kansans said the death penalty would have been a more appropriate expression of regret.

"If ever there was a person who was misnamed, it is Clemency Kiowa Mulder," the judge said in open court. "He displayed no clemency to this young woman. And if the Kiowa Tribe wants to petition to have its name removed from this despicable beast, I will duly consider it."

To aggravate matters, Mulder had been drinking the night of the crime. His attorney argued for diminished capacity, but the judge scoffed at such a defense, accepting instead the testimony of a bartender who said Hogg was in his tavern for no more than fifteen minutes. Yet Blakeman, a rock-solid Methodist, took the occasion to expound on the evils of alcohol.

"While I don't believe for one second that this vermin was intoxicated at the time of the horrible act, alcohol may have incited him," the judge said. "And this kind of behavior in the very town where Carrie Nation launched her campaign against the results of fermentation."

Hogg, thirty-four, was assigned his nickname by other inmates of cell block 15 because of his unusually grimy appearance. It was a moniker he savored as a pig takes to mud. "Just spell it with two g's

for emphasis," he ordered when the term was first bestowed. And then he grunted his formal approval.

Mulder's six-foot, 210-pound frame generated a lavish amount of body odor, indicating his scant familiarity with soap. He circled Bobby Dominick Bremer, twenty-two, like a hungry wolf. Some inmates, intimidated by Mulder's size and boorish nature, moved in concert toward Bremer while others acted as lookouts for guards. It had all the marks of jungle savagery. The only chink in Mulder's tough-guy makeup was a high-pitched voice that sometimes skipped into a squeak.

Bremer grew up in Little Rock, Ark. He had a rap sheet almost as long as Lana Turner's inventory of ex-husbands. His grade school mischief added to the trials of his mother, Molly Bremer, who was forced to raise three children by herself during the war years after her alcoholic husband ran off. He was a regular visitor in the principal's office, then juvenile court. He never finished high school.

His latest run-in with the law was an appropriate summary of his history: He stole a car, robbed a country bank in Kansas, and, when arrested, punched the officer in the face. Those capers, when added up, netted him five years in the Kansas State Pen. It would have been more, except his court-appointed lawyer successfully argued that the young Mr. Bremer did not have a gun at the bank heist. Instead, he had stuck his right index finger in a black sack and feigned possession of a weapon.

Bobby, it seemed, was born with a distaste for authority at any level. His older brother, Peter, was svelte by contrast and determined to fight his way through the thickets of the business world.

Now Bobby Bremer faced someone a lot more menacing than the schoolyard bully. He was no shrinking violet, slightly taller than Mulder and with less fat around the midsection. Lansing prison wasn't Bremer's first stop on the jailbird junket. He had physical

disagreements with fellow prisoners before and had left his mark. But this was different. Mulder seemingly had a badass committee behind him.

Mulder stepped cautiously toward Bremer, hoping his menacing eyes would inject fear in his prey. Bremer had his back to the wall, physically and metaphorically. That meant he could see all his would-be attackers. He did not budge. His intimidating glare held Hogg in place. The others stopped too. Bremer motioned with his right hand for Hogg to come forward. His left hand curled around his back as if he concealed something.

“Ah,” Hogg croaked. “Such a big shot. I’ll bet your plump ass still has red marks on it from when your mommy spanked you. I know all about you, have the complete dossier on your miserable life. Your daddy was a no-good drunk who beat on your mommy. You were always in trouble, too dumb for schoolin’. And your brother and sister were always favored by your mommy.”

Bremer retained his pose.

“Boys here tell me you were lucky to get Ds during your so-called education and that you were still readin’ Dick and Jane books in high school.” Hogg, a certified numskull, snorted at his humor attempt. “They figure you majored in dumb. With a pedigree like that, it’s my guess girls shunned you like roadkill. I’ll bet you’ve had more contact with wardens than with girls.

“You left out the part,” Bremer said without a blink, “where I beat the crap out of a scumbag fatso at the juvenile farm who must have been your twin brother. Except he didn’t stink as much. He claimed to have been born indoors. I expect your mother dropped you in a pile of pig shit, and you haven’t improved since.”

“Why, then it’s true. You are a spoiled and snooty asshole,” Hogg shot back. “A brat in need of spankin’. We can do that and more.”

"It's Mr. Asshole to you," Bremer said without hesitation, his glare unwavering.

It was the kind of ping-pong moxie that sought credibility in the often-uncivilized realm of prison politics. It is a place where survival is the first item on the agenda. And the second item. It is not unusual for inmates to seek coalition, no matter how unstable that might be. The enemy can be the guy across the table at meals, the guard who ignored his training, or a lowlife like Hogg Mulder.

For most, a challenge behind survival—and one especially difficult for Bremer—was loneliness. Even though he seldom displayed it, he loved his mother. His was an inhibited rapport, short on expression and long on seclusion. He never felt close to his siblings, and he hated his father. Now the absence of family gnawed on him. He would never acknowledge that. Such was the deformity of his character.

Lack of pluck was not one of his shortfalls.

"I don't understand," Bremer said as he motioned to the half-dozen or so inmates behind Hogg, "how your supposed buddies here can stand to be in the same county as your stinkin' ass, much less follow you around as if you were part of the human race. They all look smarter than simply being sheep following a skunk. And I apologize to the skunk for using it as a likeness to you."

Clearly that stretched Hogg's underwear. He stood erect, searching for a comeback. His alleged cohorts registered a look of reassessment.

"I've changed my mind about you," Hogg addressed Bremer after a few seconds of deliberation. "On closer examination, you're not so pretty. Tender, maybe, and certainly you have a cute mouth."

His tenor voice skewed into a Tiny Tim falsetto on the words *cute mouth*, and Hogg's standing suffered with it. He coughed to clear his throat.

“But I think you need surgery.” He fought to regain ranking. “Maybe a carving on one of your butt cheeks, a brandin’ perhaps. Whaddia think, boys, a tiny *K* for Kansas?”

If there were a movie critic on the penitentiary newspaper, he would have found Hogg’s retort on the lame side. It had none of the puff of his opening threats. The entire scene was a study in social metamorphosis.

Suddenly the atmosphere of prison politics readjusted, if ever so slightly. Bremer translated the change in body language like a seasoned parliamentarian. The looks on the faces of some of Hogg’s troops became more benign, and Hogg himself visibly swallowed as to signal a withering of bluster. It had become a virtual standoff, an amazing achievement for an outnumbered target.

The ball clearly was in Hogg’s court. His blowhard bubble was leaking, and he knew it. It was decision time: proceed or back off.

Hogg lunged at Bremer with a shiv he retrieved from the back of his belt, fully aware that a declarative statement was in order—an attempt to reassert his standing. Alas, his fighting style did not match his rage. Belatedly he underestimated the savvy and brawling aptitude of Bobby Bremer.

Bremer grabbed Hogg’s wrist, the hand holding the shiv. Its ragged edge turned into the backside of Bremer’s hand and produced blood. With his left fist, Bremer aimed and successfully landed knuckles on Hogg’s nose. More blood. He twisted Hogg’s shiv hand with such force that Bremer was quickly behind his assailant. The shiv was now penetrating flesh on Hogg’s back. And then there was more blood.

He bent Hogg’s arm with all his strength, a hammerlock that would have gained raves on Saturday Night Wrestling. The smelly one’s eyes began to water—a result of the pain—and Bremer’s eyes smarted from the blend of body odors radiating from his foe. He

considered silently whether part of Hogg's attack plan was his stench. This unattractive dance went on for more than a minute.

With a shout that guards were approaching, the prospects of stalemate, and the burgeoning perils of an assortment of body bouquets, Bremer released Hogg with a stiff shove. Hogg stood with the convicting shiv still in his hand as guards entered the area. His stature as the self-appointed cell king disintegrated like souring milk on a hot summer's day. Hogg was hauled off by guards with a promise of solitary confinement.

"Is everyone here OK?" one of the guards asked. There was mumbling of answers that he interpreted as a yes. Hogg's brief tenure as pack leader was over, and prison protocol determined that none of the inmates were going to make like witnesses and provide testimony about anything.

"Hey, young fella," the guard moved toward Bremer. "It looks as if your hand is bleeding. What happened here? Want to talk about it?"

"Cut myself shaving," Bremer replied.

Everyone got the message, and Bremer quickly elevated himself in the pecking order of cell block 15.

Whether or not his successful confrontation with Hogg was Bobby Bremer's informal indoctrination into the prison canon, it certainly was the latent baptism for his future. He casually strolled past the other inmates and felt their newly granted respect as surely as if they had cast ballots for him. It provided him the kind of regard he believed he had never received in school, at home, or anywhere in the outside world.

Growing up, Bremer was afflicted by the notion that, as the youngest sibling, he suffered the least attention rather than the customary most. He inherited some hand-me-downs while his older brother, Peter, mostly got new things. He was troubled by the belief

that his father regarded him as a tag-end burden, an extra kid who further stretched a limited household budget. His father essentially ignored him, the worst affront.

Molly Bremer sensed his hurt and tried to compensate for it. But she could not repair the deep emotional scars left by slaps along Bobby's head, strikes administered when her husband's alcohol-stewed temper ran out of control. A mother's salve goes only so deep. At school, too, he believed he was largely discounted, a factor in his disinterest.

When he was not in trouble of some kind with authorities, young Bremer held several odd jobs. Longest was his work at a pawnshop, where he learned the craft of deal-making and became familiar with guns. Many guns brought to the owner's shop, especially pistols, were suspected as stolen. Their value was thus reduced, and they were resold at a discount.

The pawnshop tutored him in one other skill: the art of opening a safe. Then he met a young man with a matching attitude and proclivity for trouble. Ignoring his mother's pleas, Bobby expanded his beer drinking to the point of weekly bouts of being sozzled. One Saturday in June 1952, the pair hot-wired a 1950 Chevy near a tavern where they had been drinking and departed for unknown parts with three cases of Schlitz beer.

They wound their way through the Ozarks, repeatedly paying tribute to the beer that made Milwaukee famous. Half out of their hops-soaked heads, they impulsively decided to wobble into the Baxter Springs, Kans., Merchants Bank and, with slurred instructions, asked a teller for money. The savvy bank employee stepped on an alarm and handed Bremer a bag of a couple dozen dollar bills and a stack of blank deposit slips.

The robbers gleefully departed only to be met by a committee of law enforcement officers outside the bank. As the debacle unfolded,

a police officer who immediately deciphered the abundant ineptness of the two drunks began to laugh. Bremer caught him with a left uppercut. He was arraigned, tried, convicted, and sentenced by the end of July.

“Mr. Guard,” Bremer called as he headed down the hallway a few days later. “Could I make a telephone call to my mom, let her know that I arrived here in one piece and that I’m OK?”

Courtesy to a guard is almost as rare as a sirloin steak served by the warden. It turned out to be one more element of Bremer’s prison education, his growing encyclopedia of how to get along on the inside—what to do, what not to do, who to associate with, and who not to. His previous jail time was cut short by good behavior. Being polite did not come naturally for him. The surprised guard led Bobby to a phone booth near the visiting room.

“Ma. It’s Bobby. I just want you to know that I’m OK up here in Kansas.”

His mother was astonished. Her mind was a mixture of gratitude and disbelief that her son was considerate enough to call.

“Oh, Bobby,” Molly Bremer joyfully sang. She wiped her hands on her worn apron and pulled a kitchen chair to the telephone stand. “I’m so happy you called. It’s wonderful to hear your voice. They never let you say much during the trial. I know you didn’t mean to hurt that policeman. You—”

“Ma. It’s all right. I did what I did. I ain’t makin’ excuses. I’m sorry for again causin’ you grief. This Lansing prison isn’t such a bad place. While it’s been less than a week, I’d say the food is better than at the other places, but not like your collard greens and sweet tea. Your cooking is the best, Ma,” he said softly. “And I found out they have a nice library.”

She was pleased with Bobby’s apparent change.

“Gee, Bobby. I wish you were back here in Little Rock. I’d serve you roast beef and mashed potatoes with those collard greens. And right now, I’m baking your favorite: cherry pie.” She began to cry.

“Ma, please don’t cry. If I knew you were going to cry, I wouldn’t have called. Things will be OK. I can take care of myself. I’ll write to you in a couple of weeks. They don’t allow many phone calls here.”

“You won’t forget?”

“I’ll write, Ma. I’ve gotta go.”

“Be sure to brush your teeth, Bobby.”

“Yeah, Ma. Goodbye.”

“Bobby?”

“Yes, Ma.”

“Be nice to the people there. Try to make friends.”

“Right, Ma.”

“I’ll try to come up and visit you some time. It’s not that far from Little Rock.”

“If you say so. I’ll let you know about visiting times.”

“Your sister is doing fine. She is dating a boy from Minnesota. Guess she couldn’t find one in the whole state of Arkansas. So, she’s seeing this northern guy. Met him in school. He seems nice.”

“Mom, someone else is waiting for the phone.”

“They won’t mind. Tell him you are talking to your mom. He’ll understand. Peter is still at Arkansas State. I think he likes it there. Says business is his thing, so I hope he does well in that. He plans to take some additional courses after graduation.

“I hope you’re not bothered by that persistent sore throat. You’ve always been prone to sore throat, Bobby, more so than your brother and sister. I should send you some goose grease to rub on your neck at the first signs of a sore throat. Do they have Vicks VapoRub up

there? That's good too. Try to stay out of drafts. Do you have enough covers on your bed?"

"Ma, the guy wants to talk to his girlfriend."

"OK, then. I guess girlfriends are more important than moms. You be sure and write now."

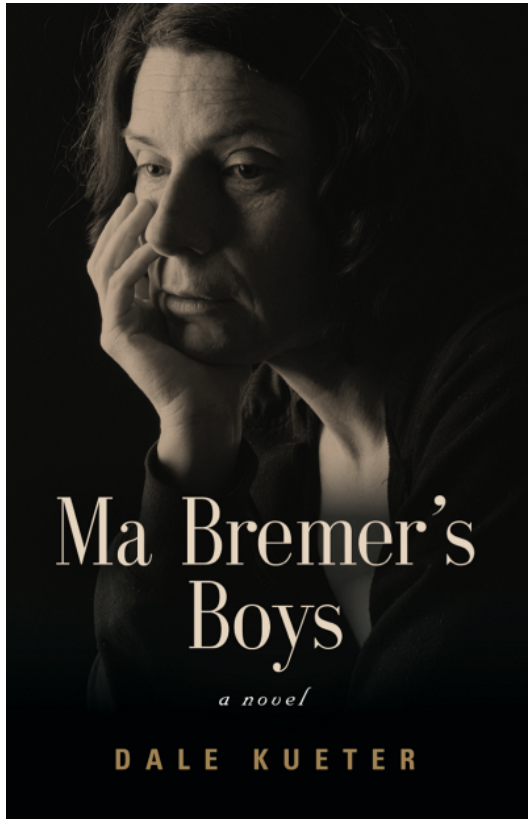
"I will. Goodbye, Ma."

"Goodbye, Bobby. I love you."

Bremer turned over the phone booth to the fellow waiting and decided to stop at the prison library before it was time to eat. He thought again about his mother back in Little Rock. She was alone now in that little house on Cumberland Street. She had friends from work, and of course her parents, who lived nearby. But he suddenly formed a glimpse of what goes on inside a mother.

He stopped in the hallway and stared at nothing. A fissure of a smile interrupted his granite-like face. It was one of those situations where life sometimes unfolds in a way that even surprises one's self. His grandfather, ever the subtle one, would have inquired if he was having a brain spasm.

Bobby Bremer, in a matter of seconds, realized for the first time the complexity of mothers.



With her abusive husband gone, Molly Bremer is alone in Little Rock during the chaotic years of WWII to raise their children. Her two sons are guilty of avarice and murder. Though painful, Ma Bremer stands by her boys. What else can she do?

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