

Better days are coming
(a collection of short stories)
by
Austin Mitchell

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Published by

Austin Mitchell

In memory of my mother, Alma Wilson (Miss Lilly)

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Undercover Soldier(novel)

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Uptown Lovers(novel) Book Two

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Better Days are Coming

Short Summary of Stories

Willis' Lucky Escape- Will Willis escape his kidnappers and summon up the courage to testify against them? Read the full story in Willis' Lucky Escape.

No Tears for Sonya- Most persons believed that Sonya was a wicked girl. She had been involved in some bad things in her younger days and even since becoming an adult. Will she find redemption and repent of her evil ways? Read the full story in No Tears for Sonya.

The Serial Burglar- Las and Dalby set out to capture Bender, a wily and dangerous praedial thief. On the way they have to fight the man's sons to get to him. They also have to get out of Lobban's Woods with Bender and avoid Clinch Salmon and his band of cutthroats. Read the full story in The Serial Burglar.

The Troubled School-All sorts of problems were plaguing the school. Will it be able to overcome these problems? Read the full story in The Troubled School.

Wrong Directions-Romain was given wrong directions and robbed of all his possessions. He has remained on the island to find the men who robbed him. Will he succeed? Read the full story in Wrong Directions.

Who wanted Dory Anthony Dead?- Dory Anthony was dead and Dalton Ferguson, her fiance, was charged with her murder. Reece Patterson, a private investigator, is called in. Can he get Ferguson off the murder charge? Read the full story in Who wanted Dory Anthony dead?

The Amateur Investor and Baby Father-Phil lost all his money in a failed investment scheme. His baby mothers have also taken him to the family court for maintenance. He has also suffered a shock at the loss of his money. Will Phil ever get on his feet again? Read the full story in The Amateur Investor.

The Absentee Husband- Alrick got into trouble with his wife when he got nineteen year old Gwen Dacres, pregnant. His wife has left him and he suspects that she is seeing another man. Read the full story in The Absentee Husband.

Delaine's Dilemma-When a woman is as beautiful as Delaine Tennant, men will do anything to get into bed with her. And that's exactly what ex-cop, Clyde Harper, was trying to do. When Delaine dropped her lover, Easton Rivers, also another ex-cop, Clyde thought he was in business, except that he had another guess coming in the form of Marc Evers, also another ex-cop. Also, why was Easton so hell bent on destroying his ex-girlfriend's reputation by labelling her as a worn out prostitute and a harlot? Read the full story in Delaine's Dilemma.

Bad Man's Woman- Was Elroy so infatuated with Carline that he would challenge a Don over her? Or maybe he didn't know who a Don was. Read the full story in Bad Man's Woman.

Willis' Lucky Escape
by
Austin Mitchell

Willis woke up with a headache. He knew that it was after midnight because he had heard the National Anthem being played on the radio in an adjoining room. The room was dark and his hands and feet were bound. As he lay in the darkness he recollected what had happened earlier in the day. After dropping off a female passenger in Queensbury, he had been driving his taxi on Molyne's Road when two men waved him down. It had been about two o'clock. They wanted to go to Papine. His first instinct had been to drive on but he remembered that he hadn't made Bydie's money yet. This was Friday and the man would want his money first thing tomorrow morning. One man came to sit beside him while the other one sat in the back.

They were on Hope Road when he found a knife sticking him in his side.

"Hey guy, we're going to show you which road to turn into. My brethren has his gun with him so don't bother try anything."

"It's not my taxi this, brethren. It's a man I'm driving it for."

"All the better, we don't like to take away anything from people like ourselves."

Despite his pleas to the men, they took him to a lonely road in Meadowbrook Estate. They had tied his hands and feet and locked him in the car trunk. He was highly suspicious that he was in Portmore and that the men had gone on a robbery spree with his taxi.

Willis knew that when they returned, they were going to kill him. They would probably run the car with him in the trunk over a precipice. He felt weak, having not eaten since midday. They had taken away his cell phone, his wallet and all the money he had on him.

Willis wondered what Marlene was doing when she didn't see him come home. He was normally home by eleven o'clock. He would eat his dinner before having a bath and going to bed. He had to be up by six o'clock or even earlier. His two children, ten year old Roger and six year old, Jassette, were bound to ask for him. Jassette, especially, never liked to go to her bed until he came home.

Willis heard voices and suspected that the men had returned. He hadn't heard a car, maybe they had left it down the road.

The door to the room where he was, was kicked open and the light turned on.

"Who are you? The guys aren't here, Vinny," the man said.

"Who are you talking to, Bounce?" the man named Vinny asked.

"I found a man tied up."

"I'll soon be there," Vinny replied.

A few seconds later, Vinny came into the room.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

Willis remained silent. Who were these men, he wondered?

"Two men took away my taxi. They tied me up, left me in this room here. They said that when they returned they're going to kill me."

Willis was sure that the two men were armed. Both of them had their shirts out of their pants.

"We can't do anything for you. You just have to wait on those men," the man named Vinny said and left. The other man followed him. The room was again plunged into darkness.

Willis slumped back into a corner of the room. He wondered who this last set of men were. It seemed that there were enemies of his kidnappers.

One of his kidnappers had a distinct voice that he would recognize anywhere, Willis thought. It had a nasal drift to it. This was the man who had been in the back of the car. He also had a mole in his forehead. The other man, the one who had his knife

sticking him in his side, had a huge knife mark on the right side of his face.

He missed his cell phone and knew that Marlene would have called it several times.

Reggae music was coming from at least two places. He suspected one of them to be Bam's jerk pit over in Braeton.

It must be after one o'clock now, he thought. The second group of men had turned off the radio. Willis stretched out on his back on the floor. He knew he would be killed once his kidnapers returned. Then he thought he heard voices.

The men had returned! He heard footsteps and then the lights were turned on.

"They kicked in the door, Coley," one of the men said.

"Hey guy, anybody came here?" the other man asked.

"It must have been Bounce and Vinny, Clifty," Coley said.

"Let's get out of here. How did they trail us here? They might have told other members of their gang where we are," Clifty warned.

Coley turned to Willis.

"Hey, guy we're going to give you back your taxi. We're going to drive you somewhere and leave you with it. We're going to blindfold you. Do you know where you are?"

"No, I don't know where I am," Willis replied.

"He's lying, remember it's a taximan we're dealing with. He knows everywhere in town," Clifty opined.

They locked him in the car trunk. They hadn't bothered to blindfold him. He knew that there were two cars now. He was certain that the men were going to kill him.

They were driving for about a hour and a half when the car stopped. He was tense, waiting for one of the men to open the car trunk. They opened the car trunk, but from his position he couldn't tell where he was.

The men started pushing the car. He was sure they were pushing it over a gully. He shouted at them, but they paid him no mind. He felt the car rolling, then he himself rolling, and then the car plunged into water then everything went black!

A month later he was out of hospital, but walking on crutches. Six weeks later he could do away with the crutches. Bydie, whom he was driving the taxi for, said that he could get back his job. He said that the car had been written off. He told him that he was lucky as the river the car fell in was very shallow. He had been found the next morning by a farmer who had raised an alarm. He had been flung out of the trunk of the car and lay face down on the river bank. Villagers had untied him and took him to the top of the road where a car had taken him to the Linstead hospital. The next day he was transferred to the Spanish Town hospital.

Willis, not seeing any other alternatives, decided to resume driving as soon as possible. Marlene was fearful for him, but her job could not sustain them as she just worked at a nursing home and they had the two children to clothe, feed and send to school.

So Willis started driving again for Bydie, but he never forgot his ordeal. All his friends and colleagues said that he had been lucky. All the drivers on his route had each other's cell phone number.

"One of the men had a nasal drift in his voice like that disc jockey, Linkman," he told Marlene. This was the man called Coley, who had been at the back of the taxi. He also had a mole in his forehead. He hadn't told any of the other drivers anything about the two men. Cliffy was the name of the other man who had been sitting beside him.

One day he was in the Clock Tower plaza in Half Way Tree when he heard two men talking. One of the men had the same nasal drift like one of his kidnappers. He took a quick look at the man. He had a mole in his forehead and had a flat top hairstyle. Willis knew he had to be brave. He didn't see any policemen about the place. That was how the police were, they were never around when you needed them.

The next week Friday he was again in the same plaza when he spied the man. Willis saw a police party passing by and alerted them and they confronted the man.

“This guy must be a madman. I never took away any taxi for him,” the man protested when he was taken down to the Half Way Tree police station.

The man had no identification papers on him. He told the police that his name was Marvin West and that he was from Portland. He refused to say where in Portland he lived or what kind of work he did.

The next week Willis heard that another of the man’s cronies had been captured. Two weeks later he was called to an identification parade. Despite Marlene’s misgivings he went. It was the man with the telephone cut, Cliffy! He positively identified him. They held an identification parade for the man named Coley a week later. Willis went and was surprised, they had four men, two of them with a mole in their forehead. He had taken a good look at both Cliffy and Coley before they boarded his taxi. So like he had done with Cliffy he had no trouble identifying Coley.

Willis changed his route and began driving on another route. He has given the police a statement. He has heard that Cliffy was caught driving a stolen vehicle. He has also heard that documents belonging to the owner were found in the stolen car. He has heard that both men have been hit with several charges, including attempted murder, kidnapping and car stealing. He is prepared to go and give evidence against both men. The End. Austin’s blog: stredwick.blogspot.com

No Tears for Sonya

by

Austin Mitchell

Chapter One

Sonya Brown was getting ready to go out with her occasional boyfriend, Mickie Harris, when her cell phone rang. Her boss, Chester Guthrie, was on the line. They talked for about two minutes before he ended the call.

“Who was that?” Mickie asked.

“Chester, he wants me to come to the office tomorrow at ten o’clock. He says it’s an emergency.”

“That damn slave driver, what does he want that can’t wait until Monday?”

“You’re still bitter at him for firing you after that detective told him about you and Tanya.”

“That guy was lying.”

“Why did you have to go out with her when you know that she was Chester’s woman?”

“She begged me to go with her for a drink. We never went to any hotel.”

“I still want to know why you did it? I was calling you while you were with her and only getting your voicemail.”

“That was almost two years ago and we’ve gone over it many times since. We don’t know why Chester wants you down at the store tomorrow.”

“Maybe he’s doing some stock taking, but I worked until three o’clock today and he didn’t say anything to me.”

“You think he could have found out.”

Sonya bit her lips.

“About what?”

“The apartment and the three taxis you have on the road.”

“I don’t think it’s that. He can’t prove that I’ve ever stolen any money from his hardware store.”

“Still want to go out again?”

“No, I’m sorry. I want to know what he has up his sleeves.”

“I told you to leave from about four years ago, but you wouldn’t listen.”

“Leave and go where? You know that if I resigned, he would get suspicious. I’ve been with him, since leaving high school almost twelve years now.”

Mickie patted the gun at his waist, hidden by his sports shirt. Sonya also carried a gun in her handbag. It was a Smith and Wesson, Colt. 22. She had completed a firearms instruction course. She had been careful not to let any of her colleagues know about it.

“Do you want me to get Carlos to bump him off? We made him take care of Judy when she got too nosy.”

“Are you crazy? And as to what happened to Judy, you know that I had nothing to do with it.”

Judy Binns had been one of Chester’s assistants and she had begun to ask some awkward questions. One day she saw Sonya writing receipts for customers in an irregular receipt book. She had threatened to go to Chester.

Sonya had wanted to give the girl a good beating, but Mickie had suggested that they used Carlos to beat her up. God, she hated Judy. It was like Chester had set her to watch her. Sometimes she would burst into her office unannounced. She was still in shock when she heard that Judy had been killed in a hit and run accident. She had refused to give Mickie any money to give Carlos.

She remembered Alton West. They had been going around for a year before she ended the relationship. Alton kept turning up at her gate at all sorts of hours, begging her for another chance. He had lost his job, the bank had seized his car, in fact, he was almost bankrupt with credit card debts of over half a million dollars. True, she had helped him run up the credit card debts, but she didn’t want any broke pocket men around her. One night, she had called the police on him. He got into an altercation with them and was shot. He died the next day in hospital. His family and friends had blamed her for his death, but she felt blameless. Nothing came out of the case. The policeman who shot him claimed that he fired his

gun in self defense after the man stabbed at him with a knife. She felt that after eight years, it was time to put the whole episode behind her.

“We don’t know what he’s up to. I think we should wait.”

“What if that detective is spying on us and reporting to Chester?”

“What could he report? The money from the apartment is sent straight to my bank account and remember that you manage my taxis.”

“Suppose he finds out about us?”

“He doesn’t know that I’ve stopped seeing Skippy.”

“I’m tired of this kind of life. We have to be hiding just because of one man.”

“You’ve just got to be patient. Things will work themselves out.”

“It’s like all his employees are slaves. He doesn’t trust any of them. That’s why he fast into their business so much. I’m glad I’m no longer working for him.”

Sonya came and hugged Mickie. She could feel his frustration. Maybe after tomorrow she would know what to do about Chester.

“Let’s go down to Randy Chin’s bar and have a few drinks. It might make you feel better.”

“Okay, but I just feel like going with you tomorrow and let him know about us.”

She wondered what Mickie was talking about. They had too many break ups over the five years they had known each other. She certainly didn’t want anymore relationships with him. She would soon tell him that they should let their relationship remain as employer and employee. That would put him down a peg or two, but she didn’t care.

“I’ll lock up the house and we can go.”

That morning, Sonya left for her work place at nine o’clock. Being a Sunday there was hardly any traffic on the roads. As she drove down, she thought of calling Mickie. He had dropped her

home last night before leaving for his flat. As she neared the entrance to the store on Barnes Avenue in Constant Spring Gardens, she was shocked to see yellow tape and policemen.

A car had crashed into the gate! It was Chester's BMW! The front doors were open and police photographers were snapping away. A small crowd had gathered. She stopped her car on the other side of the road, flung open the car door and rushed out. She dashed across the road. Other police vehicles with their sirens flashing were coming on to the scene.

"Miss, move away from the yellow tape, you're disturbing our work," a young policewoman shouted at her.

Policemen were all over, taking photos of the scene.

"It's my boss' car. What happened to him? Is he injured? Was he shot? I saw blood in his car."

"Miss, move away from the tape," an inspector growled at her.

Sonya did as the inspector ordered.

She saw a security guard and called him over. She couldn't remember his name, their employer changed them so often.

"Just as I came on duty, Miss and Mister Chester drove up, I heard the gunshots. By the time I turned around, the car sped around the corner and disappeared."

"How long ago it happened? Is Chester badly injured?"

"About a hour ago, Miss. It's in his head he got most of the bullets. He looked dead to me."

"You know what colour car it was?"

"It was a white car. Everything happened so fast that I didn't even have time to see what kind of car it was."

Mickey drove a silver colored Nissan Tida. She drove a Suzuki Swift Hatchback.

The guard left and went to stand with a group of onlookers.

Sonya took out her cell phone and called Mickie again, but all she got was his voice mail. She decided to wait around and see what was happening. Within a half hour most of the staff members were there. Chester's wife, Delta and other family members were also

there. Some of them, including Delta and some employees were crying. Watching them Sonya had to hold herself, not to join them in shedding tears too. She got on her cell phone to other staffers whose numbers she had and let them know what had happened. Some of them lived far away.

Everybody left after the police finished what they were doing. Sonya returned home and tried to call Mickie but all she got was his voice mail. She wondered if she had mislaid her gun, but she searched all the places she would have put it, but to no avail.

Two hours later Delta, called her, Chester had been pronounced dead at hospital.

A few mintes later, her cell phone rang again. She picked it up and pressed the call button.

It was Kirk Palmer one of Mickie's friends.

"Sonya, I have to talk to you. We can't do it over the phone. Can I come up and see you?"

"What for, Kirk?"

"It's about Mickie."

"What about him?"

"I can't talk now."

"Okay, so come up then."

Sonya was in tears.

"I can't believe it. Saturday night we were down at Randy Chin's sports bar. Now you're telling me that you dropped him at the airport this morning and he's bound for Montego Bay."

"I heard that Chester was shot dead this morning. Do you think he had something to do with it?" Kirk asked.

Kirk was a former employee of Chester's Hardware, but he had left three years ago.

Sonya started drying her tears.

She didn't know what Mickie running away to Montego Bay meant. She went for her laptop.

Mickie had cleaned out one of the bank accounts. That was the one on which she had made him a signing officer. How he had managed to get into the account without her permission was a

mystery to her. He must have used one of his tech savvy friends to do it. Nevertheless, the bank had a lot of explaining to do, she thought. She checked her investment accounts, these were intact and so was her main bank account. She looked at Kirk.

“At least he hasn’t left the island,” Kirk remarked.

“He must be planning to do that, or why would he go down there?”

“What should I do? I can’t go to the police.”

“Why not? All you have to do is to come clean to them.”

“Kirk, you wouldn’t understand. I have to find Mickie or else I’ll be in big trouble.”

The next day Sonya went to work. The whole office was in turmoil over Chester’s death. Delta came in and took control of everything. Sonya was petrified lest any fingers got pointed at her for causing Chester’s death when she didn’t know a thing about it. She was gravely worried about Mickie and the loss of her gun. As she sat at her desk in the accounting office that morning she wondered what could have happened to it. She should report the loss to the police.

At lunch time she drove up to Manor Park and had lunch at Oscar Chin’s restaurant. When she returned, she saw two police cars parked in the customer’s parking lot. She became petrified and wondered what they wanted.

One of the security guards pointed to the two police cars and told her that detectives were inside questioning the staff. As she went to her office, she wondered what they were going to ask her.

Surprisingly the detectives only talked to Delta. They were locked up in the board room with her for about half hour. They then left. Sonya heaved a sigh of relief. It would give her enough time to find out where Mickie was.

She left work that evening still in a trance. She drove up to her sister, Marsha’s house in Barbican. Her eldest and youngest sisters were in the United States. Marsha was the one she followed. She had a half brother but he was dead. Her parents were both

dead. Her father, in a drunken stupor, fell down a gully in Red Hills, one night and broke his neck. Her mother never recovered from his tragic passing and died two years later.

“My God, so what are you going to do, Sonya?” Marsha asked.

They were in her living room talking.

Marsha was married to a senior banker. He was employed to one of the biggest banks on the island. They had two children, a boy and a girl.

“What I fear is that he could have used my gun to kill Chester,” she told her sister.

“I always told you that I never liked that guy.”

“I never knew that he would behave that way,” Sonya remarked. She knew that she wasn’t telling Marsha the truth.

“Does Mickie’s parents know about him?”

“I think that all they know is that he went down to Montego Bay to do some business.”

Sonya left Marsha’s house that evening feeling as if the whole world was closing in on her. It had begun to rain so she took her time on the road.

When she reached home, she tried calling Mickie again. All she got was his voice mail. She began to wonder if he had skipped the island. It was raining even heavier now. She was glad that there were no leaks in the roof of her small flat in Molynees Gardens.

She went to the office that morning, still petrified at what the police and Delta might find out about her.

Delta appointed her sister’s husband as the new manager. Sonya thought that he looked to be in his mid forties. Delta said that he previously worked as a security manager at a hotel on the North Coast. His name was Norman Minott. He held a staff meeting that morning where Delta introduced him to the staff. After that it was back to work.

By the end of the week the staff was beginning to settle down. She heard nothing about the funeral arrangements for Chester. She knew that it was early and the autopsy hadn’t been

performed as yet. On Sunday she was feeling more relaxed. She still hadn't heard from Mickie. She suspected that his parents were worried about him too.

On Monday a brash young detective visited the office.

He and Mister Minott were in the board room for about forty five minutes before the latter told her that the policeman wanted to talk to her.

She felt that this young policeman couldn't be more than twenty five years of age. She was surprised that such a young man could be a corporal already. It showed that he was smart, so she had better not underestimate him.

He introduced himself as Corporal Dwayne Duggan.

She gave him her name and address. She told him that she was a senior accounting clerk with the organization.

"How long have you been working at Chester's hardware?"

"Over ten years."

"Do you have any idea why he wanted you to come to the office on a Sunday morning?"

Sonya hesitated before replying. If she told him that she didn't know he might feel that she was lying.

"Some new stocks had come in and he wanted me to help him to check them off."

"He and you alone?"

"No, Hal Johnson and Merris Dehaney were going to be there."

Hal and Merris both worked as cashiers at the hardware.

"Do you own a gun, Miss Brown?"

It was like a bomb had been dropped on her. She felt her pulse racing.

She looked him squarely in the eyes before she denied owning a gun.

He left but told her that he would be back with some further questions.

Over lunch with her colleagues, Layne Howard and Nina Holmes, she refrained from saying anything about her interview with the policeman.

They were at Joyce's restaurant, a short distance from where they worked. Layne was a cashier while Nina was a counter clerk.

"I heard that Chester will be buried next month," Nina told them.

"And up to now the police haven't found out who killed him," Layne remarked.

"Well, I'm sure it wasn't I," Nina declared.

"Chester, as all of us knew, had a lot of enemies," Sonya stated.

She was of course referring to the threats she knew he had received from at least three other hardware merchants. They had warned him about undercutting their prices.

Chapter Two

When they were back at work, Sonya was in deep thoughts as she did her work. She knew that she had better keep away from the police. She had never gone to jail, but had several close brushes with the law.

When she reached home that evening she didn't immediately start looking after dinner but sat thinking.

She remembered as a young teenager, seeing her mother rushing out of the house and running down the road. One of her husband's sisters, Elaine, had just stabbed another woman. She later learned that they were fighting after the woman accused Elaine of trying to steal her husband. The woman had cursed Elaine, and told her to leave her man alone. Elaine had retaliated by stabbing her in her right shoulder.

She remembered an incident that happened when she was still in high school. Her father was a marijuana farmer. One day a man accused him of stealing his marijuana and nearly severed his left hand.

She had few female friends as far as she could remember. She kept mostly male friends. She found women to be too difficult to deal with. Some of them could never keep a secret and if you had a lover along with your real man they would be the one revealing your secrets. She doubted if she would ever get married. She didn't see herself being tied down with a husband and babies.

Both at primary and high school, some of her female teachers had been afraid of her and had reported her to the principal for the simplest thing. As a result, she was repeatedly punished. She took her punishment in stride. While other children cried their eyes out she had no tears. No matter what the punishment was, she never shed a single tear. As a result, even her mother and other family members said that she was wicked.

She had beaten up several girls and a few boys in primary school. She still remembered the names of the two girls she had beaten up in high school and the reasons she had done so. The

fight had been over boys. Hugh Allman and she had been friends since Grade nine. Maxine Gray came to fight her for Hugh. She had given that girl a sound beating.

Marge Rodgers came to fight her over Fabian Davis. That girl, had also received a good beating. After that she changed boyfriends regularly and no girl came to fight her.

She remembered an incident with her sister, Marsha. Shortly after leaving high school, Masha moved to Montego Bay to work in the hotel sector. Two years later she got a call from her. She and two sisters were in conflict over a guy. The two girls were planning to beat her up. She had gone down there to help out Marsha.

She was not at all impressed with Odel Ford. He was short, ugly and walked with a slight limp as a result of a motor vehicle accident in his youth. She thought that men must be short down there for women to be fighting over Odel. She wouldn't be caught dead with a man with any form of disability.

However, Marsha told her that he had just passed some big banking examinations and was now driving a Pajero. He was one of the top guys at his bank and was earning top dollars. He had just paid down on a house in a new development just outside Montego Bay.

She had worn thick leather slippers that day. She had used it to beat the two sisters. They had fled the scene after she started raining down blows on them.

She had scoffed at reports a month later that the two girls were planning to sue her.

Friday night she attended a wake at Chester's house in Havendale. This was really a get together by his friends to celebrate his life and times. As far as she knew the set up and funeral were some way off as the autopsy on his body had not yet been done.

She got involved in several domino games. She only drank soup and kept away from any strong drinks. As far as she observed all the staffers were there as well as several hardware merchants. There were whispers around as to who had killed Chester but she kept her mouth shut. She went into the house, greeted Delta, her

three daughters and son and other relatives and friends of Chester some of whom she knew.

That Monday when she reached home, she thought about Mickie again. Marsha had advised her to report the loss of her gun. In a way she missed her brother, Calvin. Calvin was an outside child. Her father was a teen when Calvin's teenaged mother got pregnant for him. By the time he was seventeen years of age, Calvin was already a gunman, credited with several murders, kidnappings among other crimes. Three years ago, he had been cut down in a hail of police bullets.

If Calvin was around, she wouldn't have to worry. Mickie would never dare take any steps with her. Calvin was always warning him to treat her right.

She went to bed, still worried about her missing gun. She wondered if the tears she was shedding was as a result of her getting softer.

Wednesday night she was watching some boxing on television when a car drove up to her gate and stopped. She wondered who it could be. Then there was a knock on the gate. She went outside. It was Mickie!

"What are you doing here, an were you all this time?"

"Can I come inside? I don't want anybody to hear what I'm going to say to you."

"We don't have any secrets that anybody can't hear about. I want to know where my gun is and why did you go into my account?"

She knew he had his gun on him. She decided to let him inside. She didn't want any of the neighbors hearing anything they said to each other.

Immediately they were inside the house, she asked.

"What are you doing in Montego Bay?"

"I was down there on business. I heard about Chester's murder."

"Did you take away my gun? Why did you go into my

account?"

He was sitting in a couch opposite her. She felt like running into the kitchen and grabbing one of her knives or machetes to arm herself. She looked at the ice pick on a side table beside her.

"What happen to your gun?"

"You know what happened to it. When I woke up on Sunday morning, it was missing. The next thing I knew is that my boss is shot dead."

"And you believe that I was the one who killed him?"

"Of course, you killed him. So why did you run away to Montego Bay?"

"I didn't kill Chester. Maybe it was you who did it and is now trying to pin the blame on me."

Suddenly she drew the ice pick and rush at him. He sprang up and whipped out his gun.

"Stab me with that ice pick and I'll be the last person you stab."

He came forward and twisted her wrist and took away the ice pick.

"You dirty fucker. You took away my gun, killed Chester and is probably trying to put the blame on me."

"I didn't kill Chester. Listen, I told Carlos to try and scare him. I was only trying to protect you. I don't know if he was the one who did it."

"Did I tell you that I needed any protection? So where is Carlos now? How much did you pay him?"

"You're going to do the paying. It was you, he was protecting."

"I didn't hire him to do anything. I hope you didn't go calling my name to him. I didn't tell you that I wanted anybody to do anything to Chester."

"You were just going to let him continue running your life forever?"

"I was getting on with my life. Listen, as I said, don't try to get me mixed up in Chester's murder. I'm innocent, I don't know anything about his killing. As far as I'm concerned, you're in this

alone. All I want is my gun. You can have the money, you stole from my account. But everything is over between us.”

She remembered the bank giving her some stupid explanation as to how he managed to get into her account. She had written a letter to the manager of that particular branch and was awaiting a reply.

“So that’s how you want it? Look on the amount of things I’ve done for you and you just want to walk out on me like that.”

“What do you want me to do? Imagine after you dropped me home Saturday night, you disappeared with my gun and cleaned out one of my accounts.”

Mickie looked at her.

“I’m going, but I’m warning you against putting out any hits on me.”

Sonya had to laugh.

“You’re completely useless to me. Why would I put out a hit on you?”

He stood up.

“I don’t have your gun, but I’ll see you around. I might just tell Carlos where you live.”

“What! You wouldn’t dare.”

But her words seemed to have fallen on deaf ears as he simply walked out of the house and drove away.

She went back to watching television. She realized that she should have ended her on again off again relationship with him a long time ago. Several other guys had been after her and she wondered why she had stuck with him. He was a good lover, but maybe it was because he knew how to handle anybody she employed.

She felt hungry and went for a snack. As she had her supper she wondered what Mickie could have done with her gun. After he dropped her home, they had a few drinks before she ushered him out of the house. She wondered if he had put something in her drink. She had to find the gun. She was fearful that it could turn up as the weapon that was used to kill Chester.

Chapter Three

Friday, she was in deep sleep sometime after midnight when her cell phone started ringing. Mickie was on the line.

She felt like not answering, but he would only call again. She pressed the call button.

“Sonya, I’m leaving Jamaica for good. I need some money to take care of some things.”

“So what has that got to do with me?”

“Once I leave Jamaica, you’ll never see or hear from me again.”

“How do I know that you won’t try to blackmail me? How do I know that it wasn’t my gun that was used to kill Chester?”

“Where are you thinking of going?”

She wasn’t aware of him travelling to any foreign countries before.

“I’m going to the United States of course, where else?”

She declined from asking him if he had a visa.

“I’m going back to bed.”

She pressed the call button and ended the call.

He called her back.

“I want some money to take care of some things before I leave.”

“Go to hell.”

“You wouldn’t want me to go to Delta about your secret receipt books.”

“What! You wouldn’t dare.”

“Try me, you wouldn’t want her to know how you got the money to buy the taxis you have on the road and the apartment you have renting out in Old Harbor.”

“You, dirty traitor, so you’d sell me out to Delta? What is she going to give you?”

“I don’t want anything from her. I need some money from you to take care of some things. I told you that already.”

“I’ll see what I can do. All I tell you is not to go to Delta with any stories about me.”

“I won’t if you help me out.”

He ended the call abruptly.

Sonya was taken aback that he had ended the call so suddenly. She was afraid of Delta finding out anything about her. Whether she liked it or not, she had to give Mickie the money to keep him quiet.

She lay in bed thinking. How was she sure that even if he was abroad, he wouldn’t try to blackmail her?

She thought about Judy. She had never wanted the girl dead. All she had wanted Carlos to do was to warn her off. She was horrified when she heard about the hit and run accident in which Judy had been killed. She had chased Mickie away from her when he came to tell her about Judy. She didn’t feel responsible for anything that had happened to her. She didn’t know how Carlos had gotten paid as she had refused Mickie’s request for money to pay him.

Come to think of it maybe the money Mickie wanted from her was to pay Carlos for Chester’s murder. But she didn’t care, what he did with the money after she gave it to him.

She didn’t want anything to do with Carlos. That guy was just too trigger happy for her liking. He had been thrown out of the police force and more than one security company because of how cold blooded he was.

Sunday night she didn’t know when she dropped off to sleep. She woke up in bright sunshine and realized that she had overslept. As she went out to the driveway, she noticed an object, lying in some roses. It was a gun! She rushed inside for a rag. She picked it up and took it inside. It was her gun, she was sure of that. She took out her file with the gun papers, like the permit and compared the serial number with that on the gun. It was her gun, all right.

She put the gun in a drawer and locked it. She wondered if any cartridges were missing. She knew she should take it to the police, but she had to have some questions answered by Mickie before she did that.

That evening she called Mickie. He denied being the person who had brought back the gun. He didn't want to repeat himself that he wasn't the one who took away her gun in the first place.

She was at her house, Saturday evening when he came. This time he was riding a motorcycle. She noticed that he wasn't wearing a helmet. She didn't comment on his need to wear one as she didn't care.

"I got back my gun. Somebody threw it in the garden last night. I don't even know if any of the bullets have been fired from it."

"Why would a thief give you back your gun? Guns are so precious in Jamaica. I don't believe that you really got back your gun."

"You're the one who took it away. Lent it to Carlos to kill Chester and now you're trying to plant it on me."

"Listen, Carlos hasn't surfaced yet. I doubt if it was he who shot Chester. That guy had lots of enemies. It could have been anybody who murdered him."

"Do you have the thing? I'm in a hurry."

"Where are you going, to the airport?"

"No, some other places."

She went into her bedroom for the money. He took the envelope from her.

"I hope it's the right amount."

He opened the envelope.

"Why didn't you change it out into American dollars?"

"You didn't tell me which currency, you wanted it in."

"You know I'm going away. So what am I doing with Jamaican money?"

He hissed his teeth and moved towards the door.

"What are you complaining about? Are you afraid of going to the bank and changing out the money?"

"They ask too many questions. What do I tell them? Sonya Brown gave me some money to change."

He went outside, opened the gate, jumped on the bike and rode away.

As she watched him ride away, she knew she had to talk to somebody. She called Marsha.

She told her about everything that had been happening to her.

“You have to go to the police, Sonya. You have to tell them everything.”

Sonya was taken aback by the girl’s insistence that she go to the police. Marsha had always been a no nonsense sort of person. It was only that she couldn’t fight.

“I plan to go there one day next week.”

“I’ll go with you. You needn’t worry, I won’t let Odel know about any of this.”

“Thanks, Marsha. You’re a real sister. I know that I can always depend on you.”

“I just hope you don’t take too long.”

“I won’t, I just want this thing to be over.”

“Okay, call me when you’re ready, bye,” Marsha said and ended the call.

Sonya decided to go to the police on Sunday and told Marsha so that evening. She hadn’t heard from Mickie. She felt that he had left the island without telling her. Well, good riddance to him.

Just as she was getting ready for bed, her cell phone rang. It was a number she wasn’t familiar with. She pressed the call button.

Kirk Palmer was on the line.

“Sonya, it’s about Mickie, the police held him at the airport. I dropped him there this afternoon. He wants you to come and bail him.”

“He wants me to come and bail him. Mickie must be joking.”

“I thought the two of you had something going on.”

“Look Kirk, Mickie and I might have had a thing going on at one time, but not again. I could never trust him again.”

Kirk sounded as if he was in disbelief. She heard him sigh in the background. She knew that he and Mickie were good friends.

“Why did they arrest him, Kirk?”

“He didn’t have the right papers.”

My God, so Mickie had bought a visa to go to the United States.

“I wish I could help him. But as I explained to you, he and I aren’t on friendly terms anymore. I wouldn’t trust him to bail him. He might just run away and leave me having to pay back the bail bond.”

“Mickie is a fool. I just hope that he gets out of this mess that he’s put himself in,” Kirk opined.

“I hope so too,” she told Kirk before ending the call.

She should have known that was what he wanted the money to do. She was worried, if he came out of jail, he would just pester her about money or try to blackmail her about going to Delta.

That Sunday morning she called Marsha and told her that she was ready to go to the police station.

A year ago Marsha and Odel had relocated to Kingston after the latter landed a big job at a bank in the Corporate Area.

They had rented out their apartment in Montego Bay. Marsha had little trouble finding a job in Kingston at one of the top hotels.

Marsha left her children with her helper at Sonya’s house. She had told Odel that she was going to visit Sonya.

So the two of them went down to the police station in Half Way Tree. When Sonya handed her gun to the corporal on desk duty, the man wanted to arrest her immediately.

“So you lost your gun and didn’t tell the police. Somebody just threw it back in your garden. I wasn’t born yesterday. I think you killed somebody. This gun has to be examined. Pray that no shots have been fired from it.”

“The gun wasn’t fired while I had it.”

“Lady, if shots were fired from the gun, how will we know it wasn’t you who fired those shots? That’s why we always warn people when their gun goes missing to report it immediately to the nearest police station.”

He called a young constable to record her gun and give her a receipt. He told her that she would definitely be charged for not

reporting the missing gun. He said he would soon assign a detective to the case.

Sonya was admonished by the corporal. She had to give copies of her drivers license. The policeman warned her that she would be prosecuted if it was found that she had given the police false information. He told her to make sure she got a lawyer.

She left the police station in deep thoughts. Marsha drove them home.

Sonya cooked dinner for all of them. Marsha told her that she had to take home some of the food for Odel. They went on the lawn to talk out of earshot of Marsha's helper.

Marsha told her that she should take the policeman's advice and seek a lawyer. Sonya wasn't sure she wanted one just yet. They talked some more until Marsha decided to drive home.

Chapter Four

Sonya was there that evening after Marsha left for her home. She envied her sister for having a husband and children. At thirty, she knew that her biological clock was ticking. But she wasn't worried, she could always adopt. She had always been careful, knowing that if she ever was to get pregnant, it had to be for a man who could take care of her and her child.

She went up to Jimmy Chang's sports bar on Holborn Road later that evening. Jimmy, the proprietor and her were good friends. He wanted to know where Mickie was. She told him that he was still around, but things were sort of on hold between them. She got involved in a few domino games. A few of Mickie's friends greeted her and wanted to know where he was. She gave them the same story she had given Jimmy. She saw a few men eyeing her. She knew that she looked good, being of average height and well rounded. Men were always looking at her lovely facial features. Even some of the women in the sports bar were giving her envious looks because of her well sculptured face and body. And she had legs to die for. Right now she was in too many problems to get into any serious relationships with a man.

She had just returned home, locked up the car and was relaxing on her verandah when her cell phone rang. Mickie was on the line.

"Aren't you coming to bail me?"

"To do what?" she asked, perplexed.

"Don't pretend as if you don't know what has happened to me."

"You know I'm not going to do it. So why call me? We're no longer in a relationship."

"You're going to regret this. I just want to get out of here and you're going to see the worst part of me."

"Go to Delta with a story that I was robbing Chester blind. All of those receipt books have been destroyed and I never gave the customers any receipts. So go ahead and see what you'll get."

She had called his bluff.

“Don’t be all that confident. She’ll want to know where you got all that stuff from.”

“You dirty rat. Go on, go to Delta. I won’t bail you and you will never get another cent out of me.”

He ended the call. She wasn’t sure if it was him ending the call or he had run out of call credit.

The next evening when she came from work, Kirk called her. He told her that Mickie had been bailed by his father.

Good for Mickie, she was prepared for him. Wednesday, when she got home from work a car was parked at her gate.

“Why are you pestering me? I gave you more than fifty thousand dollars plus what you took out of my account. Please leave me alone, Mickie, or else I’m going to the police.”

They were on the verandah, arguing.

“I want back my job, managing your taxis.”

“I don’t trust you so how am I going to let you work for me?”

“I used to do those things for you, did I ever rob you?”

“You’re forgetting that you went into my account without my permission.”

“I still want to know how you did it? Did one of your tech savvy friends help you?”

He didn’t answer her.

They were in her living room now.

“We used to be lovers, remember.”

“And you did everything to destroy it. I know you kept other women with me.”

“And you were innocent. I knew that you and Tony Danvers were friends. I heard that Doug Mason used to visit you too.”

Both Doug and Tony were regulars on the party circuit. Doug was in financial management while Tony was an academic. Although she liked both men she had never had an affair with either of them. Doug was in his late twenties and married with two children. As far as she knew Tony was living with his baby mother. She knew that he was in his early thirties.

She laughed and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I won't confirm that I ever slept with any of those two guys you just mentioned, but what did you expect me to do? You were hardly around and I wasn't going to hug up any teddy bear when I wanted a man."

"So are you sleeping alone these days?"

"You won't get that opportunity again. So I don't know why you're asking."

He didn't reply and seemed to be in deep thoughts.

"By the way, who bailed you?"

"What do you care? You refused to do it. If you want to know, it was my father. Sonya, I'm asking you for the last time to give me back my job."

"And I've already told you, no."

"You'll hear from me, but I can tell you that it won't be pretty."

He turned and walked away.

She watched him go. He went to his car and drove away.

She went to work the next morning. By ten o'clock she had completely forgotten about Mickie. She was having lunch down at Mattis open air restaurant on Eastwood Park Road when her cell phone rang. It was Beulah Anderson. Beulah used to work at the hardware, but had left a year ago.

"Sonya, they shot Carlos, last night. I heard that he's dead."

"What! I don't believe you. Where did it happen?"

"Over in St. Thomas. I heard that he went to rob somebody and they shot him."

"Thanks, Beulah."

"I just called you because I tried getting Mickie, but couldn't. You can tell him about it."

"I will. Thanks for calling."

She ended the call. She finished her lunch and went back to work.

After work she tried to get Kirk to find out some more about Carlos' shooting, but her calls went to voice mail.

She was on the phone to Marsha, Thursday evening when a car pulled up at her gate. She ended the call and went out to see

who it was. It was Kirk. She made drinks for both of them and sat on the verandah to talk.

“Mickie left the island last night. I dropped him at the airport. He’s gone to Cayman.”

“What! I don’t believe you. How could he have done that? It was just a week or so ago that they held him at the airport with false papers. He was out on bail. Oh my god, his father will have to pay his bail bond.”

“I asked him about that, but he said he would pay him back as soon as he got some money.”

She refilled their glasses.

“You know that Mickie won’t be doing any such thing.”

He drank some more of his juice.

“I don’t know how he got set up to get into Cayman. I asked him, but he wouldn’t tell me.”

“I hope he stays down there for as long as possible and don’t come bothering me again.”

Kirk finished his drink and stood up.

“Kirk, you know Carlos, Mickie’s friend. They shot him over in St. Thomas last night. The householder, he was trying to rob, shot him.

“I always warned Mickie about keeping friends with that guy. He had a bad reputation plus I felt that he was on drugs, the erratic ways he used to behave.”

Sonia nodded in agreement with Kirk.

“I get the feeling that Mickie might try for the States again. Cayman is too small for him.”

Sonya shrugged her shoulders as they went through her front gate.

“All I say is good riddance to Mickie.”

Kirk didn’t reply. He simply gave her a hug, went to his car and drove away.

She was at home the next evening when a police car drove up to her gate and stopped. She was on her verandah reading one of

the evening papers. She wondered what they wanted. They knocked on the gate. She went out to see what was the matter.

It was the corporal from the station where she had reported her gun missing and two constables.

“Can we come in, Miss?”

She led them on to the verandah.

The corporal came straight to the point.

“You’re Sonya Brown. I have a warrant for your arrest for failure to report your firearm missing.”

Sonya was shocked.

“I don’t want to put these handcuffs on you, so I’ll warn you to come peacefully with us.”

“Don’t I get to make a phone call?”

“There will be time for that when we reach the station.”

“I will have to lock up the house. I can’t leave it like this.”

“Let my two assistants here help you and then we’ll be on our way.”

Sonya knew that it was a precaution he was taking, in case she tried to escape. But how could she hope to escape from three heavily armed policemen?

At the station, she was charged with failure to report her firearm missing. She got to make a phone call to Marsha. Marsha wanted to come to the station that night, but she told her that it would be better to wait until in the morning. She told Marsha to tell Delta what happened to her. She was also to get Lenny Samuels on the case.

So Sonya prepared to spend her first night in jail. She wondered how helpful Lenny would be. He was one of the sharpest young lawyers around. She was also fearful of what Delta would do. That woman was as hard as nails.

She remembered when she started working at Chester’s, Delta was in charge of everything to do with the staff. After employees started leaving, Chester realized that he was losing his best staff, shunted her off to start her own business, a day care center. Sonya could remember her insisting that staff work overtime

if they were late in the mornings or returned from lunch late. She absolutely refused to give any time off.

She was suspicious that a secret audit was taking place. She had seen some well dressed guys coming into the premises, mostly in the evenings. She had also been told that Delta had been there a few evenings too. She was taken to the female section of the jail and given a foul smelling mattress to sleep on.

She was bailed on Thursday by Marsha. Two of her aunts, Lyn and Elaine came down, to give support. Lenny told her that they would fine her. He said that a confidential source told him that the gun had been fired twice. The source had also told him that the bullets which killed Chester came from a higher caliber weapon.

She took the week off from work. The court date was set for the next week Friday. There was a shock for her when Kirk told her that Mickie had been held in Cayman for entering the island illegally.

She was fined for failure to report her gun missing. She paid the fine.

Chapter Five

On the Tuesday after court when she went to work, Delta was there. She called her into the boardroom. The manager of the hardware, Mr. Minott, was there too. So also was Dania Bernard, the accounting manager. Dania had been there a year now.

“Sonya, I’m firing you this instant! Here’s your letter of dismissal! I don’t want to see you back on these premises again.”

Sonya was in shock. She had heard that Mickie would soon be deported back to Jamaica.

“What have I done now, Delta? Why this now?”

“You should know what you’ve done.”

“I haven’t done anything. But you’ll hear from my lawyer.”

“And you’ll soon hear from the police. You’ll soon be in jail again.”

Sonya took up the envelope, hissed her teeth and walked out of the boardroom. She went to her office, took up her bag and left the premises in her car. She didn’t tell anybody as to why she was leaving.

By Thursday of that week she was arrested for fraud. She was astounded at the amount of money Delta was accusing her of stealing from Chester’s hardware. She hired another lawyer, Camille Oxford, a middle aged woman. It was Lenny, who recommended that she hire her as he was busy on some high profile cases. She was bailed by Marsha the next Monday.

Her two sisters, Zania and Kandy, called her wanting to know what was going on. She told them that Delta was telling lies on her. First the woman accused her of having an affair with her late husband and robbing the company of hundreds of thousands of dollars. They both told her that any help she wanted, she could call on them.

The court date was set for a month later.

Two weeks later Chester’s set up and funeral were held. Sonya was at neither event, despite some of her former colleagues urging her to attend one or both events. She felt that with Delta’s

hostility towards her, she wouldn't be welcomed at either event. She later learned that the funeral service was held at the First Baptist Church in Meadowbrook. The burial took place at Chester's village of Salisbury Plains in West Rural Saint Andrew.

Despite her aunt, Lyn, appealing to Delta for leniency she refused, saying that Sonya was a wicked girl who deserved a sentence. She even accused her of having a hand in Chester's murder. Lyn had once worked at Delta's day care center.

In court Sonya pleaded not guilty and the trial date was put off for another two months.

She heard that Mickie had received a six month sentence in Cayman after which he would be deported back to Jamaica.

Marsha told her to try and reach a compromise with Delta. Sonya told her that she was accusing her of being a thief.

Sonya tried to get another job, but failed. She suspected that the notice Delta had put in the papers that she was no longer authorized to transact any business on behalf of the hardware may have contributed to her failure to land a job.

She decided to use some of the money she had saved to buy and sell clothes, shoes, colognes among other things. She only sold on a cash basis. She made sure not to store any goods overnight in her car.

A month before the case was called up, Delta called her.

"Sonya, the only reason I'm calling you is because I know some of your relatives. I'm giving you a chance to get off these charges. But you have to agree to pay back all the money you stole."

"I'll have to talk to my lawyer."

There was a pause. Sonya didn't know what the woman was thinking. She wondered where she was calling her from.

"Don't wait for it to go back to court. I really don't have that kind of patience."

"Okay, I understand, but I don't want to do anything before talking to my lawyer."

"Well, you do that. I'll be waiting."

They both ended the call.

She called Marsha and told her about Delta's proposal.

"I would take her up on her offer if I were you, Sonya."

"I told her that I wanted to talk to Camille first before making any decisions."

"Okay, you do that and call me back tomorrow."

It took about three weeks of negotiations before Delta agreed to a compromise. Sonya had to give up the house in Old Harbor. She had two and a half year's mortgage left on it. She also had to give up two of her taxis.

Her aunts, Lyn and Lois, warned her about how close she came in going to prison. Her other aunt, Elaine, said that she could tell her a thing or two about prison life. Delta has warned her that if she finds out that she was involved in Chester's murder she will tear up the compromise agreement.

Sonya is also worried as Mickie has been deported back to Jamaica. He was arrested by the police upon his return home. She doesn't understand how he got bail again. He has threatened to go to Delta to tell her that she was defrauding the company. She has told him to go right ahead. He has also threatened to go to the police about Judy. Sonya has dared him to do it.

The latest she has heard is that he is back in Montego Bay, scamming. She is fearful that he will somehow implicate her in Chester's murder. She knows that he's a walking time bomb!

In the meantime, she has decided to sell the taxi she now operates, to the driver. She wants to use the money to finance her business.

Sonya is still worried as the police haven't up to now found out who killed Chester although they have identified the gun found on him as the murder weapon. One thing she's thankful for is the fact that her gun wasn't used in his murder. The police are still investigating why her gun was fired. The End

Epilogue-Sonya is now along with a guy from Portmore. His name is Lamar Whilby and he is in his mid-thirties. He operates a fifty acre farm in St. Ann. He is a divorced father of a little boy. She confessed everything to him. Some days she goes to the farm with

him. They feel drawn to each other, but are just taking the relationship one day at a time.

Both Lenny and Camille have assured her that if she was not involved in Chester's murder, then she has nothing to worry about.

Jamaican expressions-meaning

broke pocket-bankrupt, ruined, without any money

That's why he fast into their business so much.- enquire into their business, life or affairs

Other notes: At the time of this story it would take more than one hundred and twenty six Jamaican dollars to buy one United States dollar.

The Serial Burglar
by
Austin Mitchell
Chapter One

Las Marriot was in disbelief that Monday morning in April that his shop and bar had been broken into. He was a medium sized man going on forty. They were living in the village of Keswick down in north east St. Catherine.

“I can’t believe this,” he said to his wife, Vita, who was also looking on in consternation.

Vita, was the same age as Las and was a chubby woman. She had borne him four children, two girls and two boys.

It was about six o’clock in the morning and Vita had woken up to get the children ready for school. She had gone into the shop to get some things to make breakfast. She had turned on the lights and noticed things flung all over the floor. She immediately alerted Las and the children. Juby, their yard boy, had been sent to get the police.

Las could think of several persons who might have robbed his establishment. Two names came to mind, Bender and Latty.

“Las, I don’t think it would be a wise idea to send the children to school today,” Vita stated.

“They must be shaken up by all this. As a matter of fact, we could all be dead now,” Las opined.

The children had gone back to sleep. Las and Vita went out to the front of the shop. They could see where the bars at the top of the two large front doors of the shop had been plied apart enabling a small child to climb through. The heavy doors had been pushed back in. Las regretted putting bolts on the doors instead of padlocks.

“That’s how it happened Las, somebody used a crowbar to widen out the steel bars and then pushed a young boy through,” Vita stated.

Several persons had come onto the scene now.

Jack Distant who lived across the river, came up to them.

"I heard about it Las, last week they went in on Mundle, cleaned him out," he told them.

Suddenly they saw the police car coming up the road. Out of it came Sergeant Whitely, Corporal Morris and Constable Ellis. Dick Lamey, the local district constable, must be the only one left at the station, Las thought. He was surprised as normally the police didn't start working so early. Maybe it was the spate of break-ins that had spurred them to start working earlier than usual.

"What happened here, Las?" Sergeant Whitely asked.

"Vita went into the shop to get some things to make breakfast for the children to go to school when she came upon the break-in."

The Sergeant took out his notebook and began to write.

"There has been a spate of break-ins. They robbed Mundle and Miss Trina and Mister Deacon both had their shops broken into during the past week," Whitely reported.

"We suspected Latty and even went for him, but he had nothing on him. We searched his house, even put Dalby to watch him, but with no luck so far," Corporal Morris reported.

Whitely looked sharply at Morris. He didn't know why Morris should be bleating out that Dalby was one of their spies when he knew of the contempt most persons had for informers and the dangers the job carried with it.

"Let's go into the shop and bar, Las. I'll warn you not to touch anything. I've phoned Spanish Town and they'll be sending a detective up here to do some fingerprinting," Whitely told Las as they made their way into the shop.

Las turned on the lights in the shop. It could be observed that things were strewn all over the floor.

"They took all my cigarettes and all the liquor they could find," Las reported to the policemen.

"You can bet that somebody will buy those things from these robbers," Corporal Morris stated.

“I’ll have to get Dick Lamey to go around to a few of the shops and bars in Keswick, Nelson and Howell’s Content. I’m sure that he’ll pick up something,” Sergeant Whitely said.

They made their way over to the bar and could observe that what Las had said was true.

The three policemen stopped to eat some of Vita’s breakfast before heading back to the station in Keswick.

Las was left in a quandary as to what to do. The next day, he put in stronger burglar bars and padlocks. He was now sleeping with his machete. He had hired Dalby to help him and Juby watch the shop and bar.

Dalby was sleeping in an out-house with a machete. Juby was in another room, also armed with a machete. Las had been encouraged to buy a gun and was giving serious thoughts to doing so.

Two weeks later Las was at home when Dalby came in with the news that Bender had been caught breaking into George Chin’s bar and grocery. Immediately, they set off for the police station. When they reached there they saw people milling around.

“We went to his house, but didn’t find any of your stuff there Las,” Sergeant Whitely reported.

George Chin was also there along with his wife, Alice and their eldest son, Chunkie.

“Police don’t know what they ‘re doing. They have Bender locked up, I’m sure that it was he, who broke into your shop Las,” George said as he drew him aside.

“I think it was he, who broke into my shop and bar,” Las agreed with George.

“He has a lot of children to feed. He uses some of them to help him break into people’s houses and their shops,” George stated.

“I hope the police don’t let him escape this time,” Las remarked.

Bender was slapped with several charges by the police that day. Las didn’t know what the charges were. He heard that they

were going to raid his hideout, which was a cave above the Dawson river.

As Las walked home that evening he knew that it was unlikely that the police would find anything in Bender's cave. The man was known to have a lot of women and children. He knew some of the women. Some of them had been to school and were even working. He wondered how such women got involved with a man like Bender.

Bender was a reputed praedial thief, going into people's fields and stealing their produce. He was also a goat thief. Rumor had it that he operated mostly at nights. He would then end up either in Kingston or Linstead to sell the goods he stole. Rumor also had it that he had a butcher's license. Several persons had reported seeing him selling meat in the Linstead market. Las had been surprised about two years ago to see him with a stall at the same market and he was selling like the devil.

When Las reached home, Vita had his dinner ready. As he ate, he updated her about Bender. A little later that day a police detective came from Spanish Town to take fingerprints. He also took photographs of the shop. Las felt that it was a waste of time. However, the detective said that the robbers' fingerprints were still fresh despite the lapse of time.

Things calmed down for the next few days. Las suspected that the police were doing the paper work for Bender to be transferred to the Spanish Town lock-up.

Two days later Las woke up to the news that Bender and another man named Leslie, had broken out of jail. Las went out to the police station to find out what was going on.

Leslie was even more dangerous than Bender. He was suspected of holding up several buses plying the area. Last year he was the main suspect in the murder of a local butcher, Tooksie, over in Nelson district. He was being held on that charge, Las suspected.

"They dug a hole in the roof and escaped," Denny, a local farmer, told him.

“I can’t understand why they have that kind of material holding up a police station,” Las remarked.

Three days later Las heard that Leslie had been recaptured but Bender had avoided capture by fleeing into the woods of Lobban’s ridge.

“Nobody is safe, while Bender is out there,” Las remarked to Vita.

“What can we do?”

“We have to hope that they re-capture him soon. I think that he was the burglar who broke into our shop and bar last month. I just hope the he doesn’t try to break in on us again.”

Two mornings later, Las heard a strange sound coming from outside the shop. It must be minutes after four o’clock, Las thought. He grabbed up his machete, went to the out-house and woke up Dalby and Juby. They crawled out to the front of the shop. As they reach it, they saw a man and two young boys running down the road. Both Las and Dalby sprinted after them, hoping to capture one of the boys, but they jumped down into a gully. They stood at the edge of the gully and heard them rolling down it. Juby on Las’s instructions, had remained behind to guard the shop and bar.

“Let’s go after them, Las. We could capture one of those boys and let him tell us what they were doing out here.”

They both jumped down into the gully. They ran down to the Keswick river, but saw the boys and Bender floating downstream.

They ran on the banks of the river and waded into the water. Bender jumped out of the water and sped into the bushes.

“Let’s hold these boys, Dalby. We can catch Bender another time. Maybe these boys can tell us what they were doing out here at this time of the morning.”

The two boys were trying to escape, but Las and Dalby were too fast for them. They grabbed both boys and dragged them out of the water. Both Las and Dalby knew the boys. The taller boy was called Lippy and the shorter boy, Fred.

Both boys looked to be the same age, around twelve years, Las thought.

“What are you boys doing out here at this time of the

morning?" Las demanded.

Both boys remained silent. Dalby went for a huge piece of stick lying on the river bank.

"Talk or else I'll beat both of you with this stick," he threatened.

"We'll take them to the police station. Maybe they will get them to talk."

Neither of the boys seemed frightened by his threat to take them to the police station, Las realized. He noticed that the expression on neither boy's face had changed.

"The police can't do us anything. We didn't steal anything from anybody," Lippy protested.

"Why are you guys holding us? We haven't done anything wrong. My father has gone for his gun. He told us that he was going for it. If he comes back and sees you holding us like this, he's going to shoot both of you," Fred warned.

"He's bluffing you, Las. Bender doesn't have a gun as far as I know," Dalby countered.

"We're taking them to the police station."

"Let's beat them."

But Las would have none of it. So they marched the boys up the road. It was still early so they left the boys tied up at Las' house.

Las and Dalby were in for a shock when they took the two boys up to the police station. They claimed that Las and Dalby had kidnapped them. They had gone to the river for an early morning swim and to catch shrimps when Las and Dalby came down there and held them.

Las accused them of trying to break into his shop and bar. He said they and Bender were going to do the burglary. When Corporal Morris asked Las if he saw the boys committing the crime, Las shook his head.

Dalby said that they saw the boys and Bender running down the road.

The corporal told them that there was nothing with which

he could charge the boys. In the station yard both boys threatened to stone Las and Dalby when they were going home.

Las decided to remain at the police station, talking to the policemen. He told them that the boys' real intention had been to break into his shop and bar again. Las felt that the policemen were more interested in capturing Bender. They had no interest in arresting his sons.

Just as he and Dalby came out of the station yard, Dex, a local farmer, drove up and offered them a ride in his pickup.

They had driven a quarter of a kilometer when Las saw Lippy and Fred on a hill, piling up some huge rock stones.

The boys had seen Dalby in the back of the pickup! They started raining down stones on him.

Dex stopped the pickup and rushed out of the vehicle.

"Hey, you boys, are you mad or what?"

He had drawn a machete out of the back of the pickup. Las had also come out of the pickup.

"Fling any more stones down here and mash up my vehicle and see what I'll do to you boys."

"It's Las and Dalby we're after, Dex," Lippy shouted.

"Drive away and leave them to us so that we can hit them down with our stones," Fred advised Dex.

Las and Dalby took a pickaxe and a digging bill out of the van back respectively. Together with Dex, they raced up the hill after the two boys. Lippy and Fred had seen them coming and jumped down into a gully and raced away into the bushes. Las and Dalby threw stones after them. Las doubted if any of the stones hit either boy.

When Las reached home, he told Vita about what had taken place at the police station. He didn't tell her about the confrontation with Bender's sons.

News came two days later that Bender had been sighted but he had again escaped into the bushes.

Las was thinking of going after Bender, himself, but he would need help. He spoke to both Vita and Dalby about it. Dalby was enthusiastic, but Vita was cautious.

"I heard that Bender has a long gun, Las. He will shoot you

with it. I heard that Hep Johnson lost his gun. I don't know if it's that gun, Bender stole. Don't go, Las. I don't want him to kill you."

Las assured Veta that he didn't think Bender had a gun. True he had heard that Hep had lost his gun, but he didn't think it was Bender who had stolen it.

Over the next several days, Las discretely discussed his plans to run down and capture Bender. Several of his friends warned him about the imminent danger in such a scheme. Las assured them that he wasn't afraid of Bender. He told them that he didn't want word getting out to Bender about him trying to capture him.

So Las began to plan the adventure. He decided to take Dalby with him. Dalby was a very fast runner, although he was short in stature. As far as Las knew, Bender was fast like lightning. He had once out sped a police jeep, before jumping down a gully and disappearing into deep bushes.

They planned to leave from that Friday morning and to return by Sunday evening with or without Bender. Las had been a scout in primary school and a cadet in high school. He had therefore spent a lot of time camping. They would take sleeping bags with them, food to last them the three days and cooking utensils.

Both Las and Dalby took a machete and a well cured piece of pimento stick with each of them. They also took a rope with them to tie up Bender should they catch him.

Vita's eldest sister and her two teenaged boys and little girl came to stay with them from Thursday evening. They would help her in the shop in Las' absence. Juby would guard the shop and bar during the three days.

Chapter Two

So that Friday, Las and Dalby set off for the woods of Lobban's Ridge. Lobban's Ridge was about five miles away from Keswick. Las and Dalby had to walk all the way to the Woods.

They had walked a mile when suddenly some huge stones rained down on them.

"What the hell, it's Bender's boys attacking us," Las shouted.

"Let's get behind those trees, Las!" Dalby in turn shouted as they sprinted for a nearby grove of trees.

They made the trees, but the stones were getting nearer now.

"What do we do now, Las?"

"If we don't attack them, they'll keep us penned in here until tonight," Las opined.

"Let's get some stones to throw at those boys. They're two of them as far as I can see," Dalby stated.

They began to gather up stones as there were stones behind the grove of trees. Both Dalby and Las would then throw stones at the boys before darting back to their hideout.

They had thrown several stones before they heard one of the boys burst out, crying. Then another also started crying before they heard running footsteps.

Both Las and Dalby rushed out of hiding intent on capturing the boys and beating them.

They ran to where the boys had been but saw only a heap of stones. They saw the boys jumping down some gullies.

"Let's go after them and give them a beating for stoning us. It's Lippy and Fred," Las stated.

Suddenly they saw two bigger boys running towards them. Both boys were armed with clubs. These boys looked like grown men, Las thought as he and Dalby turned to face the new threat. Nevertheless, they knew the boys' names. The bigger boy was named Boysie and the smaller boy, Delly.

"Las, you dirty fucker, you and Dalby threw stones hitting

down Lippy and Fred. We're going to beat you up for that,"Boysie shouted and attacked Las. Delly attacked Dalby with his stick.

Las and Dalby were fighting the two boys who were holding their own against them. Las knew that they could not afford to let these boys beat them up. If Boysie and Delly beat them, they would almost kill them. They would leave them for Bender to finish them off.

Las began to fight more aggressively and Dalby also began to push back the boys. Suddenly Boysie turned and ran. Delly followed his brother by jumping down a gully. They heard both boys breaking twigs as they raced through the thick bushes.

"We've got to go after them, Las. They deserve a beating for all the trouble they've caused us," Dalby opined.

"Those boys are a distraction. I wonder if Bender is using them to throw us off his trail. We've lost about four hours already. Let's go about what we came here for," Las advised.

"I didn't know that Bender had so many children. No wonder he has to steal so much to feed them," Dalby opined.

Las couldn't understand these women having so many children for Bender. He and Dalby went and got their packs and set off on their journey once again.

They reached the Woods without further incident. Those boys would have realized that they were no match for them. Las had gotten some hard blows in their latest fight and so too had Dalby. Those boys too, had gotten some hard blows. Las knew that they had injured both sets of boys, forcing them to flee.

They reached the Woods at around two o'clock that afternoon. The Woods ran for several miles. There were several rivers and springs all around. There were fruit trees, several such as mangoes and apples were in full bearing.

Dalby climbed an apple and then a mango tree and picked some fruits. He and Las sat in a shade and ate some of the fruits before moving on.

They trudged on, deciding not to cut down any trees or

bushes to give their whereabouts away. Las knew that they had to get to the Dawson river and lay in waiting to capture Bender.

They stopped by a river to have lunch of roasted breadfruit, fried pork and ackee. Dalby climbed the respective trees to pick the ackees and the breadfruits.

After they had eaten and filled their canteens, they set off again. As they moved through the bushes, Las was wondering if Bender had been alerted. They found no signs of the man. He was wondering if they would return empty handed.

Las was also worried about his family. Suppose Bender slipped through and went to attack them at the shop. He knew they couldn't turn back. He was glad that Vita's sister and her children were staying with them, although he knew they would be no match for Bender and his boys. Juby was useful, but he too would be no match for them.

They bedded down in a grove of trees that night. Dalby took first watch. The next morning after breakfast they set off again.

They had gone about a mile when they came upon a larger grove of trees and voices floated over to them. Las signalled for Dalby to remain quiet. They crawled nearer to a clearing. Some men were sitting on some big rocks having breakfast. They were Clinch Salmon and his sons, Welly and Macky! There were two other men there, Fuller and Luddy. So this was where the Salmon gang had its base, Las thought.

Clinch had a huge axe at his feet plus a long gun! Las didn't know what kind of gun it was. Welly and Macky had long machetes, Las wasn't sure if they were carrying any firearms. Fuller and Luddy both carried steel clubs and short machetes.

Las knew that it would be certain death if he and Dalby were caught.

Las believed Clinch Salmon to be in his early fifties and his sons were in their early twenties. Fuller and Luddy were men in their mid thirties. Clinch was a legendary robber and cut throat. He had robbed in all the villages and had even done time for robbery. His boys had grown up in reform schools. Fuller and Luddy were bare faced criminals who had done more than one term for robbery.

“We’ll raid Juville’s and Toby’s places tomorrow and clean them out. That should net us about fifty thousand dollars,” Clinch told them.

“When are we going after Noddy’s place?” Welly asked.

“You’ve seen the kind of stuff, Noddy has on his farm. Lots of goats, pigs, cows plus a lot of produce and tree crops, but he guards them like a hawk. He has about three guns on that farm. We couldn’t go up against him with only one gun.”

“So we’re leaving that one alone?” Luddy asked.

Clinch burst out laughing. He took a huge bite out of an ackee and saltfish sandwich, chewed on it before washing it down with some coffee.

“I never said that. All of you know that I never give up on anything. Either those farmers pay me protection money or else I raid them. As far as Noddy is concerned, once we get some more guns we’ll attack and clean him out.”

Even from where they were hiding, Las and Dalby had to cover their noses. They had to hold their bellies for fear of throwing up their latest meal. The five men simply stank. Their clothes were ragged and dirty. Their hair was knotty and dirty too. With so many rivers around, it was hard to imagine men walking around smelling that way, Las thought. Soap bush was also available. Las hadn’t brought any soaps with him, preferring to use soap bush instead. He knew that Dalby had done the same thing too.

In another ten minutes the meal was over. During this time Clinch and his gangsters revealed a lot of information. They revealed that the gun, Clinch had, was the one stolen from Hep Johnson. Clinch also told them the names of everybody in the village who had a gun. He also revealed that he wanted some of those guns to be in the hands of his gangsters.

Las was waiting for his name to be called as a future victim. That Clinch hadn’t said anything about him, gave him no assurances. Maybe Bender had given him some of the things he had stolen from him.

As soon as the meal was over both Las and Dalby crept away. They were about a mile away when Las spoke.

“I don’t think we can get Bender out of these bushes. I don’t see how we’re going to get past Clinch and his boys.”

“We have got to try. Once we grab Bender, we can move him out at night,” Dalby said.

They continued the trek. About a mile further they came upon the remains of a fire. Las examined the ashes. They were cold and the fire was a small one, certainly nothing compared to that lit by the Salmon gang.

Las had to assume that Bender had stopped to have a meal and it was either late last night or early this morning. They saw some tree limbs cut down and knew that the man was travelling fast and maybe didn’t know that he was being pursued.

They had a late dinner and decided to sleep in a valley. They were so tired that they dropped asleep almost immediately. When they woke up Sunday morning it was in bright sunshine.

Immediately, Dalby set about looking after breakfast. After they finished eating they loaded up with their gear and set off.

An hour later they reached a clearing. There was a man on a hill some distance away. It was Bender!

“Las, it’s Bender!” Dalby shouted.

“We have to leave our gear if we hope to catch him,” Las advised.

“They’ll steal them.”

But Las said that they had to hide their stuff. They hid them in some bushes before setting off after Bender. They had only gone a short distance when they realized that he had seen them and he started sprinting. Both Las and Dalby started after him. Las knew that they couldn’t allow Bender to reach the Dawson river and get to his rope ladder.

Both Las and Dalby were poor swimmers. Las knew that they couldn’t handle that river. Bender was increasing the distance between him and his pursuers. Las was sprinting, leaving Dalby behind. Dalby soon caught up with him. They were a few yards behind Bender when the man flew around a tree, Dalby went with

him, but went over an edge and fell into a spring. Las went around the tree after Bender, but the man sped away.

Las knew that it was he alone against Bender. They were about a mile from the river. Bender was now leading him by about a quarter of a mile. Las doubted if he would be able to catch him. Bender was moving away, but he was tiring and Las was gaining on him.

Dalby had come out of the spring now, but he was too far behind. Las knew that he couldn't allow Bender to reach the low banks of the river from where he could chuck off into the water.

Bender was now a few yards from the low banks of the river. Las knew that he had to make his move. He made a huge dive at the man's legs, but Bender spun away. But just as he was about to chuck off into the river, Dalby dived at his legs. The two men rolled to the edge of the bank and then went over. Las had jumped over the river bank and he and Dalby were holding Bender.

Bender fought the two men, but they finally got the ropes on him.

"You won't get away with this, Las. And you, Dalby, wait and see what I'm going to do to you when I get free. I'm going to murder both of you."

Then he started laughing.

"You boys are really stupid. Clinch Salmon controls this forest. He's my friend. You won't get me past him and his boys. The best advice I can give both of you is to take these ropes off me and try and get out of here before Clinch and his boys know that you're around."

"We're taking you in, Bender. We intend to get past Clinch and your boys," Las told him.

He and Dalby took Bender to where their packs were. They loaded up their packs and moved out, pushing their prisoner in front of them.

Las saw the worried look on Dalby's face. He knew that the man was worried about meeting Clinch and his boys. Bender would be sure to alert Clinch about their presence in the Woods.

They had supper that evening and bedded down by a grove of bamboo trees. Both Las and Dalby decided to take turns watching. In the morning they had breakfast before moving on again.

Las and Dalby, along with the reluctant Bender, moved through the bushes, when they came upon some thick woods. Las went and peered through the trees. There was a building there, it looked like a shack, Las thought.

“You’ve found Clinch’s house,” Bender shouted.

Las motioned for him to shut up, but the man continued shouting.

“Only Clinch, his boys and I know this place. He’ll kill you if he finds you here.”

Las threw the rope binding Bender at Dalby and went to have a look inside the house.

The front door of the house wasn’t locked. Las pushed it open and went inside. He opened the board windows to get some more light. There were four lofts with ladders made for climbing up to them for sleeping, Las thought. There was a table with some roughly made chairs. There were two bancras with clothes sticking out of them. The room was sparsely furnished. Las made his way outside. He signalled to Dalby.

“It’s a hideout all right. If it’s Clinch’s, then we’ve got to get out of here as fast as possible.”

Chapter Three

They loaded up their gear and started out, pushing the reluctant Bender ahead of them. He was shuffling his feet and protesting that he wanted the ropes off him. They had just left another grove of trees when two men jumped down on them. They were Fuller and Clinch's elder son, Mackie.

"What are you guys doing here?" Fuller demanded.

"What do you see us doing, Fuller?" Las in turn asked.

"Las was just at your hideout sneaking around. He says that he's going for the police," Bender told them.

"What! How the hell did he find the shack? You showed them, Bender?" Mackie pointed an accusing finger at Bender.

"Probably sold us out so that they would take those ropes off him," Fuller opined.

"How could I? They have me bound and say they're making a citizen's arrest," Bender protested his innocence.

"Let's keep these boys busy, until Clinch returns. He'll know what to do with them," Fuller said as he and Mackie attacked Las and Dalby with huge pieces of sticks.

Las and Dalby grabbed up their sticks and began to fight the two men. Las knew that they had to beat up the two men before Clinch returned with the rest of the gang.

"Where's Clinch?" Las asked as he bore down on Fuller and hit him on his hand. The man cried out from the blow, but didn't drop his stick.

"I'm going to beat you up, Dalby," Mackie shouted as he attacked Dalby.

Las and Fuller were fighting furiously as were Dalby and Mackie. Las had given Fuller some hard blows and thought that he would soon finish off the man, but the man kept coming back.

"I want to bust you up, Las. Keep you here for Clinch to kill you when he returns."

"You won't be that lucky, Fuller," Las shouted as he rushed the man. Suddenly Mackie shouted.

“He’s broken my hand.”

Las saw when the man collapsed to the ground, groaning.

“Bender’s trying to escape, Las. I’m going after him.”

Las was too busy fighting Fuller to reply. Las was glad as the fights with Bender’s sons had been a real refresher. He knew that he had to beat Fuller soon or risk a fight with Clinch.

Las and Fuller were fighting furiously. Las had given the man some lusty blows and had received some in turn. Las was bearing down on the man, beating him to the blow. Las dummied a blow and as Fuller moved, gave him a mighty blow to his left leg.

“You’ve broken my foot,” the man cried out and collapsed to the ground. Las ran down on him. He saw Dalby leading back Bender.

“You, Fuller and Mackie let Las and Dalby beat you up. Clinch will run both of you out of his gang.”

“Look who’s talking. How did you let them put a rope on you?”Mackie asked disdainfully.

Dalby got some wisp rope and together he and Las tied Fuller and Mackie to separate trees. They then took up their packs and started out again, pushing Bender before them.

About two hours later they stopped to have a rest and to have a meal. They had started to move again when they heard gunshots. It sounded deep in the forest.

“That’s Clinch, he’s probably come back and found his boys beaten and tied up and is letting off steam,” Bender opined.

“Shut up, Bender,”Las told him and waved his stick threateningly at him.

“You go to hell, Las. I know that Clinch will give both of you boys to me to beat.”

Both men decided to ignore Bender’s taunts. Las knew that they had to push on.

An hour later and they could hear the sound of motor vehicles passing by and knew that they would soon reach the road. Las decided to take another breather and have some food.

“Las, my boys are all over the place. They won’t let you take me in without a fight.”

“We fought two sets of your boys already. We beat them up with our sticks. Some of them were throwing stones at us, but we threw back stones and hit down two of them,” Dalby told him.

“I’ll get both of you for what you did to my boys,” Bender threatened as they picked up their gear and started out again.

“Your boys attacked us with sticks and stones. What did you expect us to do, lie back and let them hit us down?”

“Up to now, he hasn’t told us what he did with the goods he stole from you, Las. And why was he, Lippy and Fred trying to break into your house and shop the other day?”

“You’re just a police informer, Dalby,” Bender shouted.

“He won’t have time to hide them. When the police raid his hideout this time they’re bound to find some of those goods.”

“Go to hell, Las. The police will let me go because they aren’t going to find anything at the shack. I’m going to get a good lawyer and sue you. I’d sue Dalby too, except that he doesn’t have any money,” he mocked.

They had reached the road now.

“I hope we don’t meet any of those boys again. I’m tired of fighting them,” Dalby declared as they set off up the road. They had another five miles to walk.

Las was hoping that they got a taxi, but he knew how scarce they were in these areas. He was also wondering that maybe they should wait until nightfall before moving out Bender. If they stayed in the bushes, there was the possibility of being discovered by Clinch and his gang. Las thought that facing Bender’s boys was the lesser of the two evils.

As they walked up the hill both Las and Dalby were on full alert for Bender’s sons. They rounded a corner and saw some boys playing football on a small playfield. Bender shouted to the boys and four of them left the game. Neither Las nor Dalby knew any of these boys.

“Josh and Bissy, you need to get me away from these men,” Bender shouted at the two bigger boys.

At Bender's request, the boys ran and grabbed up sticks. These boys ranged from fifteen to about nineteen years, Las thought.

Las and Dalby found themselves fighting two boys each. Other boys were watching but they were not related to Bender. Las heard Bender asking some of the onlooker boys to cut the ropes, but they refused.

Las and Dalby were fighting the four boys. Las shouted some instructions to Dalby. Bender was shouting instructions to his sons. One of the boys fighting Las ran to get a big stone with which to hit him down. Las promptly gave the other boy a fierce hit on his leg. The boy held his leg, cried out and hopped away. Las dodged the huge stone the other boy threw at him, but then he heard Dalby cry out.

"They broke my hand, Las."

Las saw when the two boys rush down on Dalby.

"Beat up Dalby, kill him, Josh and Beppo," Bender shouted as the two boys bore down on Dalby.

Suddenly a pickup rounded the corner and stopped. The driver and another man jumped out. It was Dex, the other man was another local farmer called Tanny.

The two boys who were beating Dalby ran off when Dex and Tanny ran to take machetes out of the back of the pickup. The boy who was stoning Las stood his ground, but ran off when Dex made after him.

Las explained what had happened. Despite Bender's protests, he was loaded into the pickup along with the wounded Dalby.

But just as they were about to drive off some men burst out of the bushes further down the road. They were Clinch Salmon, Luddy and Welly Salmon!

"Drive, Dex!" Las shouted from the back of the pickup.

Dex started the pickup and they sped off.

Las and Dalby ducked as Clinch fired his gun. Las had to hold down Bender's head. Clinch fired again, but the bullet flew over their heads. They rounded a corner and the shooting stopped.

Dex dropped Las and Bender at the police station. However Corporal Morris said he had summons there for Las and Dalby.

Apparently Fred and Lippy's mother and Boysie and Delly's mothers had taken out summons against them for wounding their sons. The corporal told them the court date and warned them to show up in court.

Las and Dalby were freed in court two weeks later when Bender's sons failed to show up for the trial.

Epilogue-Bender was re-arrested and a battery of charges levelled against him. He received a five year prison sentence. Las and Dalby were able to lead the police to Clinch Salmon's hideout. The police eventually brought his gang to justice with each one of them receiving various prison terms.

Las gave his portion of the reward money for both Bender and Clinch Salmon's capture to Dalby. With this money Dalby and his woman were able to open a shop in a nearby district.

Of Benders ten sons, some of them followed their father's footsteps, but other seeing what had happened to the man decided to follow a different path. His three daughters, all became professional women and are living abroad.

Despite all what has happened, Las is still worried about what will happen when the Salmon gang and Bender leave prison. He has in fact bought a gun and is taking shooting practice as he prepares for that eventuality.

**Jamaican expressions - meaning
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The Troubled School
by
Austin Mitchell

I was in Norma's restaurant in Golden Spring, having lunch when I saw the man come in. I didn't recognize him until he came over to my table. He was a tall, strapping man and looked to be about my age, which was near forty five. I was nearsighted, at least that's what I call it when I can't remember the medical term.

"Boyd Watson, what's going on? It's a long time since I've seen you," he greeted me.

It was Carl Parnel. I was shocked. The last time I saw Carl was in 1980 just after the elections. Carl was twenty two then and I was just turning twenty.

"Carl, what the hell are you doing in Jamaica?"

"I'm just out here visiting the old school."

"Have a seat, Carl. Can I buy you a beer?"

He told me that he'd like a soda so I ordered one for him. I was eating the national dish of ackee and salfish along with rice and peas. I was washing it down with a cold beer. Carl's soda came and he started drinking it.

I was an accountant and auditor, having my own practice in Constant Spring.

"Boyd, I've returned to teach at Keswick," he announced.

"What the hell, do you think you'll make a difference?"

"I'm sure I will, it's been only two months since I've been there and they've made me the dean of discipline."

"What! I can't believe it. I thought Keswick had a dean of discipline."

"They had one, but he just resigned and left for no apparent reasons."

He had finished drinking his soda. I offered him another one, but he refused. I had also finished eating my lunch.

We shook hands and parted. I headed back to work and he I suppose headed back to Keswick about five miles away

Carl and I had been in the same class at Keswick High school. In those days there was no sixth form so we just left school after fifth form. Carl got a job selling insurance and I got one as an assistant teacher.

A week later I visited Keswick to find out how Carl was doing.

“That school is unmanageable. In about six years, they’ve changed three principals. All the boys want to do is smoke marijuana and the girls to have sex,” Delroy, an oldster, who sold food at the school gate told me.

“Carl’s just wasting his time. Those children don’t want to learn. Look at how they go to school. The boys wear their shirts out of their pants. The uniforms the girls wear need a good ironing,” Lorna, a practical nurse from the area told me.

I went in to see Carl. He looked under pressure and it showed in his face.

“Boyd, I’ve never seen anything like this before. This is nothing compared to our times.”

“Based on what the villagers tell me, things aren’t easy up here.”

“We’ve had to call in the police a few times. It’s only when they’re around that the situation is under control.”

I knew that the station was a half a mile away, but according to Carl it seemed like miles away, based on the response times sometimes.

We talked some more before I left to attend to some clients. I was a volunteer at the school, getting some of my friends in the medical profession to give free health checks once every term. In fact, I often brought a full team with me. It included a female gynecologist and two nurses. The school population was slightly short of a thousand students. My team also gave free medicals for back to school.

I had also arranged with the old boys association for a back to school fair every August. At this fair, we gave out back to school supplies for needy students. Some old boys who were in the medical profession even came down and gave whatever help they could.

But despite this, things continued to deteriorate. Carl called me one day to say that he had been threatened by the local gang leader, Cubby. He told me that gangs were now operating at the school. Students had to pay money to these gang leaders for protection. They in turn paid it over to Cubby.

Two months later I got elected to the school board. We had a meeting with the teachers. They complained of being threatened by some male students and even some girls too.

A decision was made to put in cameras on the school's compound and metal detectors too.

Derval Day and Cheryll Malcolm were expelled from the school, thus causing an uproar. Derval was expelled after he pointed his finger in Carl's face and threatened to punch him.

"That guy's poison. He should have been expelled a long time ago," Carl told me.

Cheryll was a different case. She had been absent from school for three weeks. It was discovered that instead of coming to school, she had gone to Negril and Portland with men.

There was another problem. A lot of students attending the school and even some with behavioral problem came from other schools. These students came from rich homes and could afford to board. There were some homes having three or four boarders. Some of these students were booted from some prestigious schools as most times they couldn't make the grade so they sought refuge at Keswick.

Some of the villagers who had boarders insisted that it was the school's fault why some of their charges weren't making the grade. Carl said that they had to stick by the rules and so they couldn't continue entertaining students who couldn't make it academically.

A month later, saying that he couldn't manage anymore, Martin Wint resigned and Carl was appointed acting principal.

"It's a touch and go situation, Boyd. I might just have to follow Martin."

"Martin was weak. I think you're much stronger than him. Take a leaf out of Dick Bell's book and you'll be all right."

Dick Bell had been our headmaster at the primary school and he was a no nonsense sort of person.

Carl had to insist on some strict disciplinary measures at the school. He brought in peer counselors to talk to several boys and girls who were identified as troublemakers.

Sports was identified as a means of improving discipline at the school. The old boys association went on a drive to get in sports gears, including getting funding for coaches. In addition a system of merits and demerits was put in. Students were awarded prizes for gaining a certain amount of merits in any one term, but could be expelled if they exceeded a certain amount of demerits.

An old boy, Dillon East, was brought in to manage the football team. We got support from the school's alumni in the States. Also we got in old boys and girls to manage the other major sporting teams. Carl has said that the school was thinking of entering some of the major school sporting competitions again.

The hold that gangs had over the school was broken when Cubby and three of his men were surprised at their hideout by the police. They were caught with several high powered weapons. At the moment they are in jail awaiting trial.

But it's still a challenge because a lot of the parents aren't employed.

The End.

Epilogue: Carl was eventually appointed principal and I, Chairman of the Board. Austin's blog: stredwick.blogspot.com

Wrong Directions
a short story by
Austin Mitchell

Romain thought they were on the right road to Darnley district. As they turned off the main road and drove on a dirt road they came upon a large tree trunk blocking the road. As the driver and Romain got out in an effort to remove the object in the road three men burst out of the bushes, waving guns at them.

“Don’t move, lean up against the van and you guy from foreign take off your chains and your rings and empty out your pockets,” a big heavy set man ordered.

The two other men opened the van door and began moving out Romain’s suitcases.

“Hey guys, what’s the meaning of this? Is this what Darnley district has come to now?” Romain asked.

One of the men laughed.

“Darnley is about two miles down the road.”

There were no houses around as far as Romain could see. He was stripped of all his jewelry.

“You guys are taking away my luggage, jewelry and money. I’m not giving up my cell phones.”

“Judge, you want us to shoot him?” one of the men asked the heavy set man.

“Big man, we want everything from you.”

Judge pointed his gun at Romain.

“What’s becoming of this country? All the things in those suitcases are things I brought for poor country people and you’re stealing them,” Romain said. He handed the two cell phones to Judge.

All three men helped themselves to a suitcase and set off through the bushes.

“Hey driver, how did you miss your way so badly?” Judge mocked from the bushes.

“What do I do now? How come you told me that you knew the way to Darnley and you brought me so far up?”

But the driver opened the van door, jumped in and sped off before Romain could do anything.

“My God, he was in league with them. He set it up.”

Romain was sitting in a bar having a beer in the village of Darnley two miles away from where he had been robbed. He had hidden some money in his shoes and so was able to hire a taxi.

He remembered waiting on the car that was supposed to have picked him up at the airport. When Beck didn't show up, he had hired another vehicle after the man said that he knew the way to Darnley district.

Maybe he should have been more careful, at twenty five he had left the area for the States fifteen years ago. He should have made Beck send somebody else for him if he couldn't make it.

“I took this guy's van at the airport, only to find out that it was a set up.”

He had described the men to everybody in the village, but they all said they didn't know them. Nobody seemed to know the driver.

The police were also unable to help him. He decided that he wouldn't cut short his vacation, despite what had happened to him.

He got some money to borrow from his aunt and his other relatives. This he used for his food bill and other necessities. He didn't let anybody know that back in the States, he was a deputy sheriff. He would do his own investigations and get those robbers. The man who appeared to be the gang leader, Judge, would be easy to spot because of his size and demeanor. He had already forgotten what the other men looked like.

“You said one of the men looked like a giant. There are several men around these areas who look like giants. You have to come better than that,” a man called Cutty, told him.

“You mean that these strong young men who should be in the fields working, are going about robbing people?” Romain asked.

“Look how the place is overgrown. It looks like a forest, all the young people up here are interested in is to make some fast money,” Cutty remarked.

A police car came driving down the road. It stopped in front of the shop and the three policemen came out. All three men nodded to Romain and Cutty before going around the back to eat in the small restaurant.

“You reported the robbery at the station?” a man called Winty asked. He was drinking a beer and smoking a cigarette.

“They said they didn’t know the guys who robbed me.”

“They’re useless. That’s why crime is out of control in this country,” Cutty remarked.

Romain ordered some more drinks for both men.

“I had to ask my mother to send some money for me to buy some clothes. They took all of my suitcases. I had a lot of things in them for my friends and relatives. I don’t understand, nobody seems to know these guys.”

“People know them, but they aren’t going to talk. Most of them are afraid of those guys,” Winty opined.

“The guy who picked me up at the airport seems to be a part of the gang. After the guys robbed me, he just sped off. He didn’t even stay around to help me.”

Romain remembered now. The driver had stopped at a petrol service station to refill his tank. He remembered seeing him on his cell phone. Maybe that was when he was planning the robbery.

A dance was being held that Saturday night. Romain decided to go along. A girl from next door, Colleen, had invited him to the dance.

“If you see any of those men again, you alone don’t tackle them. Go to the police,” Winty had warned him.

“Those guys are dangerous. I know that in the States you’re a policeman, but you let the police out here deal with them,” Cutty had also warned.

With some of the money sent to him by his mother, he was able to rent a car. So he, Colleen, a friend Tommy and his woman, Carla, went to the dance.

Romain and Colleen were in the dance and they were dancing. So too were Tommy and Carla. An hour later Romain went to get some drinks for himself and Colleen when he saw a huge man leaning up by the bar, drinking a beer and eating a plate of curry goat. It was Judge! Romain was sure it was him.

He went and told Tommy. They left the dance and went to the police station. A corporal and a constable came back with them, but the man had disappeared. Romain was downhearted. His three friends said that the police took too long. All of them said that it was the first time they were seeing the man called Judge. Romain asked around in the dance, but nobody said that they knew the man, he was asking them about.

As luck would have it the next night a bingo party was being held in a nearby village and Romain and his cousin, Pablo, attended. When he looked he saw Judge up on the platform and he was calling out the bingo numbers!

“That’s Judge, what should we do?” he asked Pablo.

“Don’t get too hasty and don’t let him recognize you and bolt.”

So they backed out of the venue and drove to the police station. Romain gave a brief account of being robbed and of now seeing one of the robbers at a bingo game. The policeman looked up the report on the robbery and saw that one had been made.

“The only vehicle we have is out investigating a robbery in Corner Shop.”

That was about five miles away. The policeman had no idea when the vehicle would return. Romain was in despair, but tried not to show it.

“As soon as they return I’ll send them to pick up the suspect,” the policeman sought to assure them.

Romain knew that the he was dismissing them, nor was he sure that Judge would ever be arrested. They returned to the bingo

party, bought tickets and started playing. Romain's intention was to possibly follow Judge and find out where he lived.

It was approaching midnight when the bingo game was scheduled to be over. Neither Pablo nor Romain had won anything. Romain had a worried look as the game would soon be over and the police jeep hadn't yet turned up. He knew that it would be trouble holding Judge until the police came. The man had friends in the room. He wasn't sure if any of his cronies were there.

Romain left Pablo inside and went outside to wait in the car.

Presently Judge came out with two other men and three women. They got on three powerful motorcycles and rode away. They all stopped at a sports bar a mile away. Romain drove his car further up the road and stopped. Neither he nor Pablo came out of the car.

About an hour later they came out of the sports bar and rode away.

Romain debated whether to go after them or not.

"That's the only way we're going to catch them. I've seen some of these guys already, but I don't know their names or where they live," Pablo told him.

"All right, let's go then."

Romain drove off the car. As they rounded a corner, they saw the bikes parked along the road, blocking it.

"What the hell!" Romain shouted as he slammed down on the car's brakes. He and Pablo jumped out of the car and sped down a gully.

The men jumped out of the bushes, firing shots at them as Romain and Pablo raced down the gully. They then shot up the car, rendering it useless. They again peppered the gully with bullets.

"Do you know where this gully leads to, Judge?" one of the men asked.

"Seeing that I don't live up here, how'd I know?" Judge flung the question back at the man.

"Why were they following us?" one of the girls asked.

"I don't know," Judge replied.

"You want us to go after them, Judge?" another man asked.

Judge hissed his teeth before replying.

“I don’t think they’re still in that gully. We can ride around and see if we spy any of them. Let’s split up into three groups. If you see any of them just shoot him.”

Romain and Pablo were at the bottom of the gully. Romain heard the men shooting up the car and wondered why it hadn’t caught fire.

“We can’t go on the road, because of what the men said,” Roman told Pablo.

“He didn’t recognize you.”

“That’s good, it means that he doesn’t know why we’re following him around.”

Several times that night they heard a barrage of gunshots. They were even thinking that Judge might burn them out by setting the gully on fire.

Romain and Pablo spent the rest of the night in separate trees. When they woke up it was in broad daylight.

When they went up to the car there were bullet holes all over and all the tires were flat.

They went up to the police station and reported the incident, including the shooting up of the car. Judge was identified as the caller at the bingo game. His right name was Sam Judson. He lived four miles away in Bramble River.

The police didn’t find Judge at his house when they went to look for him. It took another week for them to find him.

“I don’t know this guy and I never stole anything from him. I never shot up his car or shot after him,” Judge protested.

However, when the police searched his house, a suitcase with Romain’s name tag on it was found there. Judge denied ownership of the suitcase and said that it was a man who gave him to keep. However, several other suitcases were found in a secret compartment in the house. Judge was arrested on a battery of charges. At the moment he and one of his accomplices are in jail awaiting trial. The other one is still on the loose. Romain knows that he will have to return to Jamaica to give evidence against Judge and

his accomplice. The End.

Who wanted Dory Anthony Dead?

by

Austin Mitchell

Chapter One

Dory Anthony was dead. The woman he was going to marry was dead. He had plans of getting engaged to her in June and then marry her a year later. Dalton Ferguson sat looking into the sergeant's face.

"You said that you and the young woman were due to be engaged later on this year. So why did you bash her head in?"

Sergeant Bingham was questioning Dalton in his duty office at the Duhaney Park police station.

"Don't tell me. I know the answer. She rejected your proposal and you got angry. I know how you young men nowadays behave. You can't have the woman, then nobody else will."

"I'm not saying anything more to you until my lawyer gets here."

"Your fingerprints are all over the piece of iron pipe. You must have slipped and fell after you killed her. You were lying beside her unconscious and holding the murder weapon in your hand."

"I could prosecute this case myself. I've never seen anything so clear cut. It's a pity they've stopped hanging murderers."

"I didn't kill her, that's all I can say," Dalton replied.

"Why did you kill her, Ferguson? Did she confess that she had another lover and you in a jealous rage, bashed her head in?"

Dalton remained mum.

"How long did you know this young lady, Ferguson?" Barton Reid, Dalton's newly appointed lawyer, asked him.

A swarthy looking man, Dalton judged Barton to be in his middle fifties. Like himself, Barton was of average height.

“About two years,” Dalton replied.

“Was everything all right with the relationship? I mean were you intimate? These are questions the prosecution is going to ask.”

“Everything was okay with the relationship and we were pretty intimate.”

“Okay, so the two of you were there in her living room Sunday evening. Then you woke up with a headache and saw that your girlfriend had been murdered.”

The murder had taken place in Dory’s rented two bedroom flat in Duhaney Park.

“That’s about it.”

“What did you do when you realized that she was dead?”

“I called the police.”

“How long did they take to respond to your call?”

“They came almost immediately.”

“The police believe that they have an open and shut case. They’re just about to charge you with murder and they believe they can make it stick.”

Dalton’s head was bowed.

“Did she ever mention any former boyfriends?”

Dalton remembered her telling him about a boyfriend, whom she had broken up with a year before they met.

“Yes, but I can’t remember a name.”

“Okay, tell you what, I know a former detective. He runs a private detective agency. If you agree, then we can hire his services to probe into this woman’s background some more.”

“Why should we do that?”

“Unless you aren’t telling me the truth, you woke up beside a dead woman with your fingerprints all over the murder weapon.”

Dalton didn’t want to be reminded about that.

“Okay, but aren’t his fees, high?”

“Pretty much so, but he normally does a good job and in as short a time as possible.”

Two days later Dalton was charged with murder. He got bail with his parents and his employers standing surety for him. He was

also given two weeks compassionate leave by his employers, Standard Management Services, software developers. Reece Patterson, the ex-police detective, visited him at his house at Bridgeview in Portmore.

They were seated on Dalton's verandah.

"Barton gave me the notes from your interview with him. Is there anything else you can add? There isn't much I can go on. Remember that you're on a murder charge. I want all the information I can get to get you off the charge."

As he had said before, Dalton wasn't able to add more than what he had told Barton.

Reece decided to check Dory's relatives. He had heard that she had two older sisters and a younger one. Her parents were still alive.

"Dor had many boyfriends. She was young and beautiful. She loved partying," Lesa Gilbert said.

From the information he had gathered Dory Anthony was twenty six years of age. Dalton, he guessed was about thirty years old.

Lesa was indeed a beauty. He had never seen any pictures of Dory, but if she looked anything like Lesa he could understand why men were pursuing her.

"What about the guy, who was found unconscious beside her dead body?"

"I've never met him, but he wasn't the only boyfriend she had."

Reece was furiously taking notes.

"Who are you anyway and why all these questions about my cousin?"

"I'm just interested in the case. None of her sisters wanted to talk to me."

Dory's parents had chased him out of their yard. It was a lucky thing Lesa had been there. He just had enough time to give her

his card before driving away from the Anthony's house in Arlene Gardens.

"Why should they? Dor behaved like an angel around them, but I knew what she was like."

"You mean that Dalton wasn't the only guy she was seeing. But they were due to be engaged later on this year."

"That guy must be dreaming or something. As far as I know nothing like that was in the works."

Reece wondered what the hell was going on. Was it possible that Ferguson was making up the whole engagement thing?

"Okay, can you tell me those two guys names and I'll be off? I won't bother you again."

"Listen, I don't want anybody coming to look for me. How do I know that you can be trusted? That you won't tell these two guys that it was I who gave you their names."

"If these guys are innocent then there is no reason to fear them. Anyway, why should I tell them who told me about them?"

"Okay, so I trust you. Their names are Trevan Warsop and Darlan Watson."

She was able to tell him where both men worked.

"I don't know anybody by the name of Dory Anthony," Trevan Warsop replied.

"Don't lie to me, Warsop. A friend of hers showed me a picture of you and her dancing at Ruddy's nightclub three months ago."

"Why come to me? As I said, I don't know anybody by that name. Listen, Patterson, you put away Carlton Senior. You lied to get him convicted. You can't do that to me."

"Come straight with me, Warsop or by God I'll make you regret it."

"I wasn't the only guy, she was seeing. I saw her out with other men."

"Do you know their names?"

"You're an ex-detective, you should be able to find that out quite easily."

“Why were you denying that you knew her, Warsop?”

“Because I don’t know why you were asking me about her.”

“I think you have something to hide, but I’ll find out very soon, you mark my word.”

“You’re just trying to make a case to get that guy off. I don’t know if it was he who killed her. If it was, then he deserves to hang.”

Reece didn’t reply. Things weren’t adding up. He knew he had to talk to Ferguson again. Nothing had come out of his interview with Darlan Watson. The man was as evasive as Warsop had been.

He went to Dory’s apartment in Duhaney Park. Luck was with him because he met her landlady, a middle aged woman, Mrs. Palmer.

“How can I help you, sir?”

“My name is Reece Patterson. I’m a private investigator into Dory Anthony’s murder.”

“I should turn you away. The police have combed this small house looking for whatever clues they can find.”

“It won’t do any harm if I take a look around. You know that they’ve charged her boyfriend with her murder.”

“I only met him once but I don’t believe he did, but you’re welcome to have a look.”

Reece took out his camera and took pictures of the yard, the verandah and the living room.

Mrs. Palmer told him that the apartment had been rented furnished to Dory. She said that it had only been rented to her for eight months before that fateful night. Reece thanked her and left.

That same afternoon he called Ferguson and told him that he wanted to have a meeting with him.

They were meeting at Reece’s office on Hagley Park Road, Friday afternoon.

“Come straight with me, Ferguson. Your story isn’t adding up. The way I understand it, the young woman had other boyfriends.”

“Where did you get that information from?”

“Stop playing around, man. I don’t have time for that. Come straight with me or by God, I’m going to pull out.”

“Okay, what do you want me to tell you? So she wasn’t really my fiancée. I was trying to get her to be engaged to me.”

“Based on what you told me and Barton, she was practically your fiancée. Listen, Ferguson, you go home. I’ll have to talk to Barton. If he gives me clearance to continue then I will, if not you’ll have to find another investigator.”

Later that afternoon Ferguson called Barton and told him to pull Reece off the case. The next day Barton called Reece and they agreed to meet at latter’s office.

Chapter Two

“The girl had several boyfriends. Ferguson has been lying to both of us.”

“But Ferguson said that he was her main boyfriend,” Barton countered.

“He was just imagining things. As I said the girl was going out with several other guys.”

“You said that you visited her apartment. What did you find out?”

“Not much, I’m still studying the photographs I took.”

“Okay, I’ll call Ferguson and arrange a meeting.”

The next day Barton called Ferguson to arrange a meeting at his office at two o’clock on Monday.

“I wasn’t the only guy she was seeing. There were other guys, but I thought she preferred me over them.”

Reece was shaking his head, while at the same time taking some notes.

“Do you know any of those other guys?” Reece asked, but Ferguson shook his head.

Ferguson went on to tell them that while at the house on that fateful night, a car had driven up to the gate and Dory had gone out to speak to the driver. He didn’t remember her coming back inside before he was knocked out. Reece didn’t know whether to believe him or not.

Barton said that the girl was killed by the same blunt instrument that Ferguson was found with. He then dropped a bombshell on them by revealing that she was pregnant! Ferguson said that he didn’t know anything about that, he doubted Barton’s story. Barton told him that was what the autopsy revealed.

Reece left the meeting confused. When he reached home his wife who doubled as his secretary asked him.

“Are you making any progress in the Dory Anthony case?”

“Ferguson, the guy they are accusing of killing her, has turned out to be a perfect fool. He claimed they were in love and were supposed to be engaged, but the girl was seeing other guys.”

“My goodness, and they’ve charged him with her murder.”

“Barton delivered a bombshell today. According to the autopsy she was at least a month pregnant. Ferguson said that he doesn’t know anything about that.”

“What! I think there’s more to this than meets the eyes.”

“Ferguson is just a sucker. Whoever killed that girl knew that he could pin the murder on him.”

“I can see your frustration, dear. Have you tried her workplace? By the way where did she work?”

Reece looked at her. He hated being made to look stupid in front of his wife. He hung down his head.

“I think you’ve been barking up the wrong tree, dear.”

Reece thought over what she had just said. They were sitting on the verandah of their four bedroom house in Bridgeport. Their two children were both on working vacations abroad. Both were university students. Reece was a man in his late forties while his wife was a woman in her middle forties.

“I don’t know why I started the way I did. The girl’s parents chased me away from their yard. I left my card with her cousin. She gave me the names of two guys she was seeing, but both of them were very evasive.”

“I think you should try to see as many people who know her, if possible. That way you can start eliminating possible suspects. She must have had friends at her workplace who knew about her social life. They’ll probably know the guy she got pregnant for.”

“That’s why I find the whole Ferguson episode so strange. He claims that on the night of the murder he was there with her when a car drove up to her gate. All he knows is that she went out to the driver. The next thing he knows is that he wakes up beside her dead body.”

“And you don’t think he could have done it?”

“Of course not. I’ve already described the guy to you.”

“If the girl was pregnant, then she must have had another intimate boyfriend apart from Ferguson. She must have been pressuring that person either for money or not to tell his wife about her pregnancy. Finding that person could give us a clue as to her murderer.”

Reece thought over what she had just said.

“I don’t know what I’ll find at her workplace, but it’s worth a try.”

“She must have had a friend, who knows her secrets.”

That made Reece wonder if he would ever find that person. Lesa Gilbert hadn’t come clean to him. He was sure of that.

It took two days for Hal Rowe, his assistant, to get the information he needed. Dory was a senior clerk with Vinny’s Auto Sales and Parts on Red Hills Road.

“How may I help you, sir?”

“My name is Reece Patterson. I’m investigating the murder of one of your former employees, Dory Anthony.”

“I’m really sorry about what happened to Dory, but I’m afraid I can’t accommodate you. We’ve been over that with the police already. They’ve interviewed practically every member of my staff. That and Miss Anthony’s murder have been very stressful.”

“I just want to ask a few questions.”

“As far as I’m concerned, the police have asked all the questions already. All of us will be much happier when her killer or killers are brought to justice,” Vinny Garth said before ending the call.

Reece was surprised at the suddenness with which the man ended the call. He wanted to interview some of the staff members who knew Dory. He couldn’t get into the establishment without Vinny Garth’s permission.”

On Wednesday, Garth agreed to see him.

“We’ve done all we could for Dory and her parents.”

“Did you know that she was pregnant?”

“She was a young woman and she had a boyfriend. Listen, we don’t pry into our employees’ affairs. I don’t know where this is all leading to. Look, as I told you I’m busy,” he said, ushering Reece out of his office.

Just as Reece was leaving, a young man barged into the room. Reece couldn’t help noticing the resemblance between the two men. He had put Vinny’s age in the middle fifties; this man would be just about thirty he thought. He had a gun in his waist and looked gung-ho.

“This is my son, Gareth. He’s my right hand man.”

Reece shook hands with the young man.

“This is Reece Patterson. He’s a private investigator into Dory Anthony’s murder.”

“Sad affair that, that guy they held, looks guilty to me based on what I’ve heard.”

Reece remained silent, only shook the two men’s hands again before departing.

Barton managed to get the case put off for another two months. Reece updated him on the progress of his investigations.

Realizing that he wasn’t getting anywhere with Vinny Garth as the man was refusing him access to any of the murdered woman’s colleagues, he decided to get in touch with Lesa Gilbert.

They were meeting at Reece’s office.

“I think you are hiding a lot of things from me. Did you know that Dory Anthony was pregnant?”

“What! I don’t believe you. She never told me any of these things.”

“You were very close to her. How come she never told you any of these things?”

“Dory had her life to live and I have mine. There are a lot of things she didn’t tell me.”

“So you don’t know who fathered the baby, the Anthony girl was having?”

She shook her head.

Reece was feeling a bit exasperated. He decided not to show it.

“The manager where she used to work is barring me from speaking to anyone there. Do you know any of her friends who worked there?”

The girl hesitated before replying.

“Listen, I’ve helped you all I can. Okay, Opal Keane and Renae Dennis were her best friends. They both work at Vinnys.”

Chapter Three

Lucky for Reece she had both women's cell phone numbers. He called Renae Dennis on Monday, but she was abrupt with him and wouldn't answer any questions.

Lucky, Opal was more open, but confessed that she didn't know much about Dory's personal life.

"Dory was a very secretive person."

"Did you know that she was pregnant? Nobody seems to know who got her pregnant."

"My goodness, I didn't know that. There were several guys who claimed that they were her boyfriend, but she absolutely refused to tell us who she was sleeping with."

"I knew Dalton was around. She might have been sleeping with him, but he wasn't her real man. But like I said before she kept that secret well guarded."

Reece ended the call feeling like he was at a dead end.

He had to go to Lesa again. He felt that information was being withheld from him. He was nowhere nearer solving the case than he was when he started.

"I want to know whose child she was carrying. That's the clue I'm looking for," he told Lesa as they sat in his office that afternoon.

"So neither Opal nor Renae could give you a clue. I think they know, but they're afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"They'll suffer the same fate like Dory."

"Are you hiding something from me? Why don't you come clean with me?"

"I've told you all I can. I know she was meeting a guy, but she refused to tell me his name."

Reece knew she was lying. Some vicious killer or killers were out there and these girls were all afraid.

Friday, he took the day off when Renae Dennis called him. He wondered what she wanted.

“I want to talk to you. I can’t come to your office. I think I’m being watched.”

Reece had to think fast. Archie Lewis’ place came to mind. Archie was a lawyer and one of those he did investigations for. Archie had an empty office that he had used sometimes with at risk clients

. His place was on Hanover Street, Downtown, Kingston.

“I have somewhere, when can we meet?”

“It’ll have to be after work. Say about five thirty, I leave work at five o’clock.”

Reece gave her the address before ending the call.

“I’m putting myself in grave danger by even agreeing to meet you here.”

“You haven’t told me anything that would put you in grave danger.”

“I don’t know if I want to go through with it again.”

Reece knew that he had to be careful lest he scare this young lady and she would shut up and not say anything.

She would be about twenty eight years of age. She was good looking, he thought with a compact body.

“We can’t let Miss Anthony’s murderer go free. At the moment they’re holding a completely innocent man on the murder charge. All the circumstances indicate that he was the murderer, but I know otherwise.”

“Mr. Patterson, I have two young daughters to think about. I don’t want them to get hurt.”

“In my profession, confidentiality is one of our greatest attributes. I have never revealed my sources to anyone.”

She was silent for a few minutes. Reece thought that she was in deep thoughts.

“Dor was in an intense love affair with Gary.”

“Who is Gary?”

“Gareth Garth, that’s Vinny’s son. She was just using Dalton Ferguson. She only had use for him when her car was down or she wanted to go out and Gary wasn’t available.”

Reece was furiously taking notes.

“The autopsy revealed that she was pregnant. Did she say who was responsible?”

“I didn’t know that she was pregnant. She never told me that.”

“Is there anything else you can tell me.”

“I know Dalton, I couldn’t bear to see how Dor was treating him. But he seemed to be okay with it.”

Reece didn’t want to go over the fact that Dalton wanted the girl to be his fiance.

They ended the meeting and Reece called a taxi for her.

He decided to call Lesa again. She told him that she was busy and couldn’t talk to him until later that night. He decided to call her before she left for work on Monday.

Saturday, Reece and Barton attended Dory Anthony’s funeral, Ferguson wasn’t there.

“Okay, so she told me that the baby, she was having, was for Gareth. But he refused paternity and she was threatening to tell his wife about them,” Lesa told Reece over her cell phone.

“So you believe that he had something to do with her death?”

“Based on what I know I think he was responsible in some way or other.”

“He had a motive, but he might have an alibi. Maybe he hired a hitman to do it.”

Reece sat thinking. Gareth Garth looked like a hard man. Based on what industry insiders had told him, Vinny Garth’s business was in serious trouble. Gareth’s father-in-law, Ken Matthews was shoring up Vinny’s failing business. Gareth was married to Ken’s youngest daughter, Ruth-Ann. Ken was a man

owning several hardware stores around the island and he was known to be very wealthy with several real estate holdings to boot.

It was possible that Dory was threatening to tell Ruth-Ann about the baby she was having for Gareth. This would put him in trouble with her. So he certainly had a motive to shut her up.

Reece's friends in the used car business had proved useful once again. It was through them that he got the lowdown on Gareth Garth. He had been the shooter in the Midway Night club in Stony Hill shooting. Six persons, two women and four men had been shot that night in June 2010. Gareth had somehow gotten off those charges. There were other incidents with him involved in road rage several times. In each case his father's influence and money had gotten him off the charges.

As a beat cop in the nineties, he remembered some things about Vinny Garth. He had been drinking in a bar on Princess Street, Downtown, Kingston one night when a group of men attacked him about his political affiliation. Vinny had fired shots, killing one of the men and injuring two others. He got off those charges when he was able to prove self defense.

There was another incident when Vinny had splashed a group of students one evening. The students had stoned his vehicle. By the time he got out of the car they had disappeared except one little boy who had just come on the scene. Vinny had fired shots injuring him. The vehicle had only suffered superficial damages, but again he got off the charges. There were other instances where his high priced lawyers had saved him from doing jail time. It seemed as if Gareth had taken a leaf out of the old man's book.

Reece called Gareth Garth about a meeting, but the man refused to meet him. He told Barton about it and he said that he couldn't do anything.

The next day Lesa dropped a bombshell on him by announcing that she had a recording of Gareth threatening Dory. He went to meet the girl for the tape when men in a speeding car fired at his car. Reece fired back, but the men escaped. He reached

the meeting spot to see police sirens blazing and the area yellow taped. It was then that he realized that it was Lesa! She had been shot and wounded!

A week later he got a call from a girl called Sue Mason. She claimed to be both Dory and Lesa's friend. She claimed to have a copy of the tape. Reece went and listened to the tape. While he was driving on the street returning from the meeting, two men on separate motorcycles rode up. The men brandished guns. Reece stopped the car and fired at them. He dived out of the car and sprinted to hide behind an empty sidewalk shack.

"He's hiding behind the shop, Reds. Let's finish him off."

"West, remember it's a policeman we're dealing with."

Reece fired several rounds at the two men. Then there was silence. Then he heard the men cranking up their motor cycles. He put a fresh clip into the gun and let off another barrage at them. Then he heard the roar of the bikes as the two men sped off. He figured that his accurate shooting had scared them away.

Reece kept a check on Lesa. He sent her a get well card and flowers. He had been told that it was a shoulder wound.

Monday he went to see Barton and played the tape for him to hear.

"Let's go and see Superintendent July at Constant Spring. We don't play the tape."

"But what else have we got but the tape?" Barton asked.

July wasn't convinced that they had a case. What he said he wanted were witnesses. He still believed that Ferguson was the murderer.

Faced with no other alternatives, the two men confronted Vinny Garth and his son with the tape.

"You made up the whole thing, Patterson," Gareth Garth shouted.

"Take it easy, son. Patterson, you're accusing my son of murder. All you have is a flimsy tape that for all we know could have been doctored. How much money do you want for it?"

“No deal, Vinny. I have a client staring at the death penalty while the real murderer walks free.”

“Okay, get out of my office both of you.”

“You’ll hear from us, Vinny. This won’t be the last.”

July heard the tape, decided that the police needed to do some more investigation. He was disturbed over the shooting of Lesa Gilbert and the gun attack on Reece. Luck was on Ferguson’s side because in another week a man who was shot in a confrontation with a police party confessed to Dory Anthony’s murder.

Gareth Garth denied having anything to do with her murder. In court the hit man accused Gareth of paying him to kill Dory. However their high priced lawyers were able to prove that the man was a habitual thief, liar and drug addict. Gareth got off the murder charge when the jury returned a not guilty verdict. The End.

Epilogue-Ruth Anne Garth filed for divorce three months after her husband was freed of Dory Anthony’s murder. Ken Matthews decided to stop shoring up Vinny’s failing business. Ruth Anne also complained to her father about the threats she was receiving from her estranged husband. Ken decided to call in the two loans which Vinny owed him.

One late night Vinny and Gareth were at the company when they got into an heated argument and pulled guns on each other. The police had to be called in and both men’s guns were seized.

At the moment Vinny has scaled down his operations considerably after paying off Ken Matthews. Gareth Garth was shot dead one night outside a night club in New Kingston. Speculations are that it was Dory Anthony’s murderer who did him in. It was also rumored that he still owed the man money on that hit job. The police caught the man a few days later.

The Amateur Investor
by
Austin Mitchell

Philbert felt relaxed as he lay in his sofa in his rented small side of house in Cassia Park Gardens. It was a Saturday morning and he had eaten his breakfast already. His woman, Yasmin, had gone to the market, Downtown, Kingston, to buy food. Phil didn't think he was the marrying kind. He had three children with three different women. He didn't know how he could be relaxing when he had to virtually support three other women besides the one he lived with. None of the women who had children for him was working. Though they had children for other men he knew that he was the only one who was giving them anything substantial for his children. His cell phone rang and he picked it up and pressed the call button. Sedeka was on the line. His daughter, Dekka, with her was three years old and going to basic school.

“The little money, you gave me finish already.”

“It was supposed to last for two weeks. How come it finished so quickly?”

The money had lasted five days to be exact.

“Mean guy, you are spending money on your other children. I'm not going to stay and let Dekka go to school hungry and without clothes or books.”

“You'll have to wait until I get paid in two weeks time.”

“What will happen to her in the meantime?”

“You should have thought of that before you spent off the money.”

“If I don't get some money from you by Monday, I'm going down to the family court,” she threatened.

Yasmin returned from the market just as Cassie called. He went to the back of the house to answer her.

“Worthless guy, the little money that you gave me finish already. When can I come for some more?”

“I don’t have any money and I won’t be getting paid until month end.”

“So what do I give Kira to eat until month end? Why do you go about the place getting women pregnant and you know you can’t afford it?”

“You knew how many children, I had before we started talking.”

“So, now you’re blaming me. I’m coming for some money and I’m bringing Kira with me. If I don’t get the money, I’m leaving her,” she told him and ended the call.

When he came around the front, Yasmin asked.

“Who were you talking to on the phone?”

“Nobody, that would interest you.”

“It’s my money I have to be spending to buy food for the three of us. Ariela isn’t your child and you’ve never given me anything to give her. Sometimes I’m tempted to go to Wayne for money for her. It’s only because I don’t want anything more to do with him why I don’t do it.”

“I give you enough money. It’s you who don’t know how to spend it.”

“That little money can’t do a thing. I’m sorry I took you up with all that baggage.”

Phil hissed his teeth and went to sit on the back verandah. He was in deep thoughts as to what would happen to his investment. When his mother died seven years ago she had left him and his brother her house in Pembroke Hall. He and his brother were always at odds. They had agreed to sell the house and share the proceeds equally. This was completed eighteen months after her death.

A year later Phil heard about Dickson Chung Investments. He checked it out and realized that in another three or four years he could double his investment. So he had taken the plunge and was please that he had take the plunge and invested in Dickson Chung.

He was in negotiations to buy a house Uptown, but the sale fell through when the owner who lived abroad, said she wasn't ready to sell as yet.

People had recently become very jittery after several such schemes had gone under. Only last month Notice Investments, reputedly one of the best run schemes on the island went under. When he went up to Dickson for his money they told him to come back in a month's time.

Sedeka, Raine and Cassie all threatened to take him to the family court. In fact they threatened to bring the children down to his workplace unless they got money for the week.

Raine actually brought her son, Dominic, down to his office. He had to whisk her away, borrowing some money from one of his co-workers.

When he got paid that month-end the women were down on him for their allowances.

On Monday of the following week there was a bombshell announcement. Dickson Chung Investments had gone under! The next morning when Phil woke up, he was in a hospital bed. He was on a drip and his head hurt like hell.

Visiting time, Yasmin and Ariella came to look for him as well as several of his work colleagues. Yasmin gave him the good news, he hadn't suffered any psychological trauma and would be okay.

Lying in his hospital bed he had time to reflect. After the house was sold and he got his part of the money, everybody told him that Dickson was a good prospect. So he had put all his money there. Within two years friends were urging him to pull his money. But the turnover was huge and he knew that if it stayed another two years he could buy two houses. That was what he had always dreamed about, having a house in Portmore and one Uptown.

He was released that Thursday and was back at work by Monday. He showed no ill effects and for that he was thankful.

Sedeka and Cassie took him to the family court. The female judge admonished him for having so many baby mothers. She ordered that a social inquiry be done.

Two weeks later he was back in court.

“You actually have three baby mothers. What’s the matter with you, young men? Why are you fathering so many children?”

Despite his protests the judge set the payments so that he could barely survive. She paid scant attention to the fact that he was just a junior broker at Daniel Wesley Insurance Brokers.

“That judge is a wicked woman. Those girls have children for other men. I can bet that you’re the only one giving them any money.”

Just like the judge, she blamed him for getting so many women pregnant.

The weeks came and went until one day he was called to the offices of Dickson Chung Investments. The clerk gave him a check for just about twenty percent of his money.

“When will I get the balance of my money?”

“I can’t tell you that sir, the best person to talk to is Mr. Chung and he’s off the island.”

Phil took the money, he wanted to see Dickson in person to call him a thief.

Just as he was getting into his car, he heard a car horn behind him. The car pulled in front of him. It was Junklin, his brother. They hadn’t spoken to each other since the bust up over their dead mother’s house. They shook hands.

“So how is it going, Phil? I was coming to look for you, but I heard that you had left hospital.”

Phil didn’t know whether to believe him or not.

“I’m all right. What happened to me with Dickson Chung was a real shocker.”

They were now having a beer at a nearby beer joint.

“I have five taxis on the road. I’m still working, we have a small office and Veinice manages the fleet from that office.”

“I lost all my money in that crook, Dickson Chung Investments. I just got back some of it today.”

He told Junklin how much money it was.

“Why don’t you come into the taxi business? With that money you should be able to get two units to buy.”

“I heard that it’s a difficult field because you have to pay off so many people.”

They had another beer before they parted. Phil told Junklin that he had to do some more thinking before he made his move. Junklin told him the amount of money he was making from his taxis on a daily basis.

It took Phil a month before he made up his mind. For all intents and purposes, he wasn’t going to get any more money from Dickson. The man had run away to the United States and was living under a false name over there.

Junklin put him in touch with a man. It took him another six weeks before he got two drivers with clean police records, good driving records and experience. Within another three weeks he had to change one of the drivers.

Phil knows that the taxi business will be a hard grind. It’s hard out there and the drivers no matter their background and demeanor are hard to deal with.

Sometimes he wonders why he was not like Junklin. Venice was his high school sweetheart and they were actually building a house together and would soon be getting married.

He knows that he is caught in a vicious trap and blames it on his father. Though the man never fathered many children he had always seen him talking to many women. Before her death, he had always heard his mother quarrelling with him over the amount of women he was keeping with her.

Sometimes he is tempted to go after other women and has in fact gone out with a few of them. He always uses protection as he doesn’t want any more baby mothers. A few of the girls object to him using a condom, but for Phil it’s that or no sex.

Another thing worrying Phil is that his baby mothers have found out about his taxi business. They’re always complaining that

the money they're getting is too small and that they want the court to set a higher amount. Phil has voluntarily increased the amount he is giving each of them, but he's fearful about the future as the children grow bigger.

Yasmin has decided to stick around, but she says, no children until they have their own house and both of them are married. Phil knows that it will be some time yet. He's hoping to get out of the taxi business in another five years or so and buy a tour bus. He has heard that that's where the money in the transportation business is. The End.

The Absentee Husband
by
Austin Mitchell

Part One

Alrick Dunn was born in 1920 in the little district of Friendship in Trelawny. He came to Kingston when he was seventeen. He got apprenticed to his uncle Gladly Wilson as a welder. He lived in Franklyn Town and met several women. Alrick had three children before he was twenty-five with three different women. It was a shock when he met and married Maisie Dillon in 1947. The union produced six children and by that time he was a driver of heavy duty vehicles as the government stepped up its road building program.

"I'm going to work in a place called Keswick, Maisie," he told her one day in 1959.

"Since you've been going all over the island on these jobs it has come to my attention that you have many women, Alrick," she accused him.

"I have six children with you, three boys and three girls, now why would I be going out there looking other women?"

"Alrick, don't tell me that I'm lying. Look how many nights you're gone and it's me alone looking after the children. I've never once thought that I'd cheat on you. I don't even know what you're doing with those women you had children with before I met you."

"You've been tempted many times, though. And I give those women their allowances. They're all married or living with a man."

"Of course, I have been tempted, many times too. Which woman wouldn't, after her husband only comes home, maybe once or twice a month?"

"I'm a truck driver. That's how I make my living. The government is doing a lot of road building all over the island. So they employ me. Whenever I come home, I bring money for the house. You don't have to work."

“You’d want me to go out and work and look after six children?”

Alrick was thirty nine while Maisie was thirty seven and their children’s ages ranged from four years to eleven years.

She was sitting in a chair on their verandah while he stood near the verandah railings. They were living in a self contained four bedroom house on Dexter Street in Allman Town.

“Have I ever told you to go out and find work?”

“Don’t you worry, Alrick. I can always find work. Don’t forget that I was a postal clerk once.”

Alrick didn’t reply and Maisie continued.

“What I can’t seem to understand is that sometimes I look after enough clothes to last you a week, but often you stay for more than the week and your clothes always look crisp and clean.”

“There are women who do washing and ironing all over the island. You know many of them in Kingston.”

“How do you live when you go to the country to stay? You’ve never said a word to me. Suppose something happens to you, who should I contact? Suppose something happens to one of the children how will I get in touch with you?”

“Okay, I’ll write down the name of the place where I’m staying and where I can be contacted.”

So that Monday morning, Alrick left with his truck for Keswick. He had lodgings at Vernal Powell’s house. He had rented him the small side of his house. The Powell’s children had gotten big and migrated overseas. Alrick loved Keswick, there were a few local bars where he drank with his friends. There were some very beautiful girls in Keswick.

One Thursday afternoon he was going for a load of gravel when a young lady waved him down.

“Can I beg you a lift to school? I’m already late.”

She had some difficulty climbing up into the truck. She wasn’t a really tall girl. He had to stretch over to the passenger seat, grab hold of her hands and draw her up into the truck.

“What’s your name?” he asked as he drove off the truck.

“I shouldn’t be telling you my name. But it’s Gwen Dwyer.”

“What’s the name of your school?”

“Keswick All-Age. I’m going to evening classes.”

He let her off at the school gate and she went inside.

He was along with a woman, Sylvia Wright. She was washing and cooking for him and some nights she would come and sleep with him. Her boyfriend, Benny, was on the farmwork program. She told him that she had to return to him when he returned in two months time.

He continued giving Gwen rides to school in his truck till he definitely knew she was making it a habit.

“I don’t feel like going to school today. Can’t I just ride around in your truck until it’s time to go home?”

“What would people say if they saw you riding in my truck all day?”

“Why don’t they mind their own business?”

“They would tell your parents on you.”

He had a hard time persuading her to get out of the truck and go to school.

He was still sleeping with Sylvia but she was getting fearful as her man would soon be home and he had written her a letter asking some very awkward questions.

He went home every two weeks, but the relationship between him and Maisie was breaking down. That young lady, Gwen was filling up his head. She was a big woman with full breasts and a wonderful body. He longed to possess her, but didn’t want any trouble with her parents.

He had heard that her mother, Miss Della, was a very difficult woman to deal with. She had taken several persons to court for just telling her a bad word. Her husband, Butty, was a quiet man. Alrick understood that he never spoke a great deal. He had heard that they had two older children, a boy and a girl. Both were living in the States.

Gwen seemed stuck on him. All the other workers had found women in Keswick. Some even had women pregnant for them.

A tractor driver called Morris, confronted him one day.

“Alrick, you’re probably the only big man who doesn’t have a baby mother up here.”

Alrick laughed.

“I can’t do like you guys, besides having a very miserable wife I have nine youths already.”

Morris opened his mouth, but the shock he was in couldn’t make the words come out.

Alrick merely grinned and went back to his truck. He couldn’t take Gwen to the Powell’s house as he didn’t want them to know that he was seeing her.

Syd Hamilton had a one room house with a kitchen and bathroom. Syd sometimes spent months in Clarendon, working on various projects. He would leave his keys with him. So that was how Alrick and Gwen became lovers. By this time Sylvia’s husband had returned to the island and she had gone back to him. Alrick wondered about the letter he had written her. But two weeks later, he and Gwen were down at Syd’s house when he heard a hard knocking on the door.

He went out to see who was there.

“Benny turned me out. He heard about us. Can you put me up for tonight? Get rid of that little hussy, you have in there. Come out, Gwen, you’re pushing yourself on Alrick. I’m going to report you to your mother and let her give you a backsideing.”

She had a bankra with her, with all her clothes inside, he thought.

Gwen pushed away Alrick’s hand and rushed outside to confront Sylvia.

“What do you know about me and Alrick, woman?”

“He was sleeping with both of us at the same time. Look at me, a big woman having to be competing with this little girl. Have you asked her how old she is?”

“I’m over eighteen years of age, for your information, Sylvia.”

“What a feisty girl. I’m Miss Sylvia to you, Gwen. You’re over eighteen, of course you are. I bet that Alrick wasn’t your first man.”

Alrick intervened.

“Sylvia, I told you that I can’t put you up.”

Sylvia flew into a rage.

“I know why you want to get rid of me and it’s because of this little girl. But she isn’t as innocent as she seems. Ask any of those young boys around and even some of your fellow workers.”

Gwen let out a huge bellow.

“Benny kicked you out, because he couldn’t stand it any longer. Every time, he went away, you had a new man.”

“I’m going down to your mother to complain about you. She’ll know what to do with you. You should be in school rather than be at a man’s house.”

“Sylvia if you ever go and tell any lies on me, you aren’t going to like it.”

“So you’re threatening me too.”

Sylvia grabbed up her bag and set off in the direction of Gwen’s house.

Gwen went inside, took up her bag and set off after Sylvia.

Alrick heard the next morning that Gwen’s mother had marched her up to his house to warn him off. He was probably asleep and didn’t hear them calling him.

“My mother is just miserable. She thinks you’re too old for me.”

“I told you that she’d say that.”

“She wants me to talk to one of those little guys around. But I don’t like them.”

They were sitting in his truck talking.

“She found out that you’re married.”

“I’m married to a very miserable woman.”

Two months later, they were talking up at Syd’s house. They had just made love and were basking in its afterglow.

“I missed my period last month. I think I might be pregnant.”

Alrick looked at her. He remembered what Sylvia had said about her. He could tell her that if she was pregnant, he wasn’t to blame.

He wasn’t her first man, but she refused to tell him anything about any of her previous lovers,

“I’ll give you some money to go to the doctor.”

Gwen went and did the test, she had to wait another two weeks for the results.

She told him that although she hadn't gotten back the results, she was sure she was pregnant. She had to be hiding from her mother as most mornings she was throwing up.

Alrick didn't know how to treat the news, two weeks later that she was pregnant.

"What will your parents say?"

"My mother called me all sorts of names. My father wants to talk to you."

"About what?"

"I'm having a baby for you. My father wants to know how you'll support me with this baby?"

"You know that I have other children. One of my daughters is working but all the other children are in school."

"Are you saying that you made a mistake in getting me pregnant?"

"Of course, not."

"Listen, Alrick. I never tricked you. You're more experienced than me. You should have known what to do in not getting me pregnant."

She took up her bag and stormed out of the house.

That same night he was down at Willie Ivey's bar in Keswick drinking with some of his colleagues when Son Son Whyte, a local barber, told him that Gwen was outside with her mother. He decided to ignore them. Fifteen minutes later, a local woman, Jasmine, came to call him. He decided to go out there and talk to them.

Gwen was there with her mother. She had a huge bankra. It was drizzling slightly and they both had parasols covering their hair.

"Alrick, what have you decided to do about my daughter? You put her in the way. You never denied it."

A small crowd was beginning to gather in spite of the drizzle. Alrick marched off to his truck and drove away.

In bed later on that night, he thought he heard them calling him, but he decided to ignore them. That morning just as he got into his truck Gwen appeared with her bankra.

“What are you doing here?”

“Funny, you should be asking me that after last night. My parents have put me out. And since you’re responsible for what has happened to me, I’ve come to stay with you.”

“I told you that I have a wife. She’s coming to look for me this weekend.”

“What has that got to do with me? Okay, let her stay with you. I’ll stay down at Syd’s house.”

“People will tell her about you. It won’t look good. Come, I’ll drop you home and have a talk with your parents.”

“It seems as if all of a sudden, you’ve gone deaf. What’s the matter with you, Alrick? I told you that my mother has put me out of her house.”

They finally agreed on a compromise where she would stay at Syd’s house. She was nearly six weeks pregnant.

Part Two

“Where is she, Alrick? The little hussey, who says she’s pregnant for you. So you’re hiding her from me. That’s why you don’t want to come home. That’s why you’re shortening my money.”

Maisie hadn’t entered the house before she started shouting.

“Shut up, what’s the matter with you? Every time you come up here, you have to make a ruckus. Can’t you understand that it’s only decent people live up here.”

“Don’t tell me to shut up. So I’m not decent? I’m going to show that little girl how decent I am. I just want to find out where she lives.”

Alrick jumped into the truck and drove away. He heard Maisie shouting after him, but he couldn’t make out what she was saying. He stopped at Syd’s house to warn Gwen that his wife was around. She hissed her teeth and said that she wasn’t afraid of her. He had to give her money to buy food. She offered to cook and bring food for him. He refused, saying that he always ate with the other workers.

That same evening he heard about a ruckus in Keswick. It was between Gwen and Maisie. How the hell had Maisie found out where Gwen was?

“So I found out about your girlfriend. She’s carrying a big stomach for you, Alrick. That’s what you’re up here doing. I should have listened to your mother. She told me that you came from a wild breed.”

He nearly fell into a trap by saying that her stomach wasn’t all that big. But he caught himself at the last moment. He wondered if she had been setting a trap for him.

“Did she tell you that she was pregnant for me?”

Maisie burst out laughing.

“She boasted before me and several other women and even some men. She claimed that she has you now and I’m not going to get you back.”

“That’s why you came up here?”

“Alrick, you’re my husband. What’s wrong if I come up here to look after your welfare?”

“Nothing’s wrong, except that you’re listening to a lot of rumors.”

“Swear to me Alrick, that girl, Gwen, isn’t pregnant for you.”

But he walked away. She followed him.

“I heard that it’s another man’s baby she’s carrying. She was sleeping with every boy in the village and even some grown men too. When none of them would own up she put it on you.”

“How do you know so much and it’s the second time you’re coming up here?”

“People tell me lots of things. They’re laughing at you behind your back. Imagine, a big married man like you is making this little girl twist you around her fingers. Go and tell her to go and find the father of her baby. If you don’t want to do it, I will.”

He looked at her.

“I see, you’ve come up here to make trouble.”

“Trouble, how am I making trouble? I’m trying to protect you from a gold digger. That girl is a liar. Alrick, I will do her something before I leave up here.”

She stormed off into the house. When he came to bed she was already snoring. That morning she packed her bags and went out into the village square and took a bus into Kingston.

The next morning as they lay in bed down at Syd’s house, Gwen said.

“Your wife said that I was giving you a jacket. I don’t even know the boy she was accusing of fathering my baby.”

“She was just trying to be nasty. I know what I did.”

He felt her stomach. She was now three months pregnant. Alrick was worried as Syd would soon be back for his house. Already he had begun seeking to rent another one bedroom for her. He didn’t want her to stay with him as that would only enrage Maisie some more.

“I can’t believe that very soon, I’ll be giving you a bouncing baby boy.”

“How do you know that it will be a boy?”

“I just feel so. I hope your wife doesn’t come up here again. I don’t want to be in any tracing match with her.”

“I can’t stop her from coming up here.”

Soon they fell into a deep sleep.

Later that day, against her protests, he left to look for Maisie. Gwen cursed him and even threatened to leave him.

“So you’ve come home Alrick? Or is it your clothes you’ve come for?”

He had just parked the truck near their gate and gotten out.

“What the hell’s the matter with you, woman? I live in this house too or have you forgotten?”

“You’re an absentee husband. Ever since you’ve met this Gwen, your mind has changed towards me. But you can stay with her because as far as I’m concerned, everything is finished between us.”

She stormed off into the house. Alrick watched her go before heading to Larry Brown’s bar, a short distance down the road to drink a beer and greet some of his friends. He was on his second beer when he felt a hand touch his shoulder. He turned around to see who it was. It was Sully, a local laborer. At first he thought that the man wanted him to buy him a drink or to find out how the work in Keswick was going on.

Alrick stepped outside.

“Bindy is at your house nearly every day.”

At first he was going to slam the man for trying to slander his wife. But then he remembered something about Bindy. It had been widely rumored that the man had gotten a mother and daughter pregnant at the same time. He had run away from the community, although proclaiming his innocence. However, everybody who saw the boy and girl agreed that they were Bindy’s children.

“What the hell are you saying, Sully?”

“Ask anybody, Alrick. I’m not telling you a lie.”

He bought a beer for Sully before heading back to his house. Maisie was on the verandah looking out.

“You’ve come home early.”

He sat in a chair opposite her. She was swaying in a rocking chair.

“So Bindy has been visiting you almost every night.”

“Have you heard that he has been sleeping in your bed too?”

“So what has he been doing here, just talking to you?”

“What do you expect? You’re gone for two weeks at a time.

What’s wrong if I talk to Bindy?”

He finished drinking the rest of the beer he had brought home.

“I don’t want any man visiting my house when I’m not around.”

She had stopped rocking in the rocking chair.

“You’d like me to stay in the house and only talk to the children, wouldn’t you?”

“I didn’t say that. Okay, are you seeing any other man while I’m away?”

She looked at him.

“You’re a wicked man. You left me here with six children to look after. You expect me to keep a man on top of that.”

But Alrick was still not convinced. Sully would never have come to him with such a story if he hadn’t seen something to arouse his suspicions.

He stood up.

“Listen, I’m going back to the country.”

“At this time of the night? You’re rushing back to Gwen?”

He didn’t answer her. He simply went inside the house, took the clothes he needed. He went and jumped into the truck and drove off. She was still in the chair, rocking herself.

That night he stayed up at the Powell’s house and didn’t go down to where Gwen was.

He made his own breakfast that morning. He made some fritters, and cooked ackee and salt fish. He washed it down with some coffee.

Around eleven o'clock he went to have a bath in the river. He and some other men went fishing. He paid a woman who was washing clothes in the river, to clean the fish for him. He used a piece of string to tie his fish together. He cooked all the fish that evening. He roasted a large breadfruit and ate some of it along with two of the fishes. He decided to let the rest stay for later and for his breakfast in the morning.

Later that evening, he went up to the village square. He got into playing some ludo and domino games outside, Bigger's bar. He left the bar at ten o'clock that night.

He walked home to see Gwen waiting on him. A teenaged girl and a little boy were with her. He knew that they were her relatives.

"What are you doing out here at this time of the night? Aren't you afraid of catching a relapse?"

She brushed aside his questions.

"You came back up here last night. Why didn't you come and stay with me?"

She didn't give him any time to answer.

"You make me wonder, what have I done to you?"

"You haven't done me anything."

"Oh, it's your wife. You and her are having problems because of me."

"I told you already, that it's nothing like that."

She shook her head to show that she didn't believe him.

"You don't normally return from Kingston until Monday morning. It's the first time since you're up here that you've ever returned from down there on a Saturday evening. And you ignored me the whole time."

"I wasn't ignoring you. I just wanted to be by myself."

"Listen, Alrick, I disgraced myself when I got pregnant for you. My mother is still upset with me. Single girls aren't supposed to

get pregnant until they're married. Look what I did, I got pregnant for a married man."

"Seems to me you're putting all the blame on me."

"I'm taking myself out of your life, Alrick. I'm going to live with one of my cousins. All I ask is that you support my baby."

And without giving him a chance to reply, she wheeled and stormed away. The boy and the girl ran after her. He heard them talking, but he couldn't make out what they were talking about.

Before he went to bed that night he sat thinking. What the hell had he gotten mixed up with that little girl for? He hadn't been lonely. He had to admit that she had pushed herself on him. Was he so weak that he couldn't have resisted her?

Had Maisie gotten frustrated with him and sought out another lover in Bindy? He wasn't going to put up with that. When next he was in Kingston he would confront Bindy about it.

Thursday evening he drove home. He reached Kingston at around seven o'clock. All the children were surprised to see him. He had brought things for them like sugar cane and ripe bananas. Maisie wasn't at home. His biggest daughter, Wendy, said that she had gone to visit her sister, Hilda, over in Vineyard Town.

He drove to look for his daughter, Cindy, who lived with her mother, Agnes, on Oxford Street. He gave her money and some of the things he had brought from the country. Cindy said that the area was getting bad and her mother was looking somewhere for them to go. He left, promising her that he would check around to see if he could find somewhere for them. She was working at a department store on King Street.

It was the same thing with his son, Sam, on Maxfield Avenue. The area was getting bad as men from outside the community were raiding the area, robbing the mainly Chinese grocers. He gave him some money and warned him not to get into bad company. The youth assured him that as soon as he finished his apprenticeship he would be looking a job. Alrick told him that he would check some people he knew.

He asked him about, Max, his other son who lived on Mountain View Avenue. Sam said that it was about two weeks now

that he hadn't seen Max. He also understood that the area was getting bad. He gave him some money to give Max before he drove back home. He knew that Max was going to technical school.

When he reached back it was about nine thirty. Maisie was in the living room, eating some food and watching their small black and white television set. She was also drinking a soda.

"So your baby mother let you go for one night. It must be because her belly is too big for you to do anything."

"Is there something wrong if I come home to my family on a weekday?"

She jerked back her head and laughed.

"That's not the way I heard it. The girl has moved out of Syd's house and is living with one of her cousins."

"You're living in Kingston. How come you know so much about what is happening in the country?"

"Because I make it my business."

They continued to argue until it was time for bed. Outside it had started raining. Although they slept in the same bed there had been no physical contact between them since the upheaval about Gwen began.

Alrick returned to the verandah to watch the rain. He hoped that it wasn't falling as hard in the country as that could produce landslides making it difficult for big vehicles like his truck to pass.

.....
In July, Gwen had her baby. It was home delivered as was the custom those days in the country areas. He went to look for her the next day. All of her relatives in the yard that day said that the baby resembled him very much. Miss Della, was in the yard, but she didn't speak to him.

The next week when he returned to Kingston, Maisie gathered all the children in their living room.

"Dennis, Wendy, Iris, Jason, Debbie and Sean, you have a new baby brother in the country. What's his name, Alrick?"

He didn't answer her, but went to sit on the verandah. She came out there after him.

“Does the baby resemble you? My spies tell me that he’s the dead stamp of you.”

“You know it was a mistake I made with that girl.”

“You’re just saying that. But we’re already living separate lives. You can go back to her as far as I’m concerned.”

They spent the rest of the evening quarrelling. When he reached Keswick that Monday morning he was in a sour mood.

In September of that year, he and Gwen started talking again. Three months later, Alrick didn’t know how it happened, but she got pregnant. When Maisie heard she was up in arms. She swore that they were not going to live in the same house. She went to live with her sister over in Vineyard Town, taking the three smallest children with her. She swore that she wasn’t coming back to the house.

Gwen had her second baby in September of the next year. It was a girl. Alrick was now living with her full time. He had gotten a house to rent from a man called Ambrose Gray. So he had moved from the Powell’s house. Syd had come back and was occupying his house.

Alrick decided not to have any more children with Gwen. He knew that her brother was filing immigration papers for her. Two years after she had her last baby she left for the States.

August 7,1963

2305 Mason Avenue

Apartment 16A, 10666

Bronx, New York

United States of America

My dear Alrick,

You will realize that I have reached safe and sound. The plane ride was very nice and we got good food to eat on the plane although it was small. I have my own room. My brother’s wife, Melanie seems to be a nice person. His two children, Jessica and Justin are very nice. They say they can’t wait to meet Alicia and Pablo. My sister

came down to look for me on Sunday. She brought her husband and their three children and we all had dinner together. We all had a grand time.

My brother has found me a job as an assistant in a nursing home. He has promised to take me in the mornings until I know which train to take.

Bye for now.

Love, Gwen.

Although he was living in Keswick, he heard that Maisie had moved back home. He went there to give her money for the children.

He was beginning to miss Gwen when he decided to move again and live with Sylvia. Sylvia was living at her late parent's house in Nelson a mile from Keswick. She had two children with Benny but they were living with him and his new woman.

She had in fact took Benny to court over the custody of her children. She lost the custody case when it was proved that Benny was in a more stable relationship and was better able to take care of the children than her.

Gwen wrote Alrick a letter cursing him off. She sent for her children and he let them go. He was already aware that she was having relations with a man over there.

Gwen had two more children before she got married to Coby Anson, a railroad worker. When Alrick heard he was devastated. Sylvia managed to calm him down. Her parents had about six acres of land. Thirty nine year old Sylvia, had a baby boy for him in 1969.

Alrick sold his truck, bought a pickup and he and Sylvia would go all over the island selling produce from the farm. He's still living with her as Maisie has refused to give him a divorce.

Alrick was proud of his three biggest children. Cindy was working at a clothing store in Parade as a supervisor. Sam was working as a mechanic with a company that imported motor vehicles into the island. Max was working in a bank on Duke Street.

Of his children with Maisie, Dennis was now a soldier. Wendy was a teacher at an all girls school in Cross Roads and Iris

was at nursing school. The three younger ones were all in high school.

One thing which is still a mystery to Alrick is the fact that he has heard the names of other men being called as Maisie's lovers. All these men, including Bindy have denied the claim. But Alrick is still mystified that in all his visits to the house he has never seen Bindy or any other man there. He has discussed the matter with friends. Some have advised him to use a detective on her. Others have said that is the mystery about a woman.

The End.

Jamaican word-meaning

backsiding-beating, flogging

bankra-clothes basket

in the way-pregnant

parasol-umbrella

Delaine's Dilemma

by

Austin Mitchell

Chapter One

Delaine Tennant was the most striking woman Marc Evers ever laid his eyes on. She was about five feet six inches tall and copper colored. She had long beautiful legs and her hips and bust were the envy of most women. Marc sold insurance for Midland Life and General Insurance company. Easton Rivers had a liquor and gambling outfit in the Half Way Tree area and that was where he first saw her. Like himself, Easton was an ex-policeman. Marc heard that he also had a security firm. During his visits to the sports bar, he had never seen Easton with a gun, but suspected that he might have one hidden away on his body. Marc had never applied for a license to carry a gun. He felt he didn't need one, although there were times when he had been tempted.

Marc had spent ten years in the force before quitting at thirty years of age. He had been selling insurance for five years now and had no regrets about his change in profession.

Marc would stop by mostly on Wednesdays and Fridays to buy the lotto and cash pot and play a few slot machine games. Delaine would stop by mostly on Fridays and play a few games too. She was with two other girls, Candy and Sandra. One thing Marc always noticed was that there were two guys who were always around Sandra and Candy but Delaine always travelled alone. Then he learned that she was Easton's woman. He guessed her age at around thirty and Easton would be about fifty years. Marc had heard that he was married. He was sure that he had seen his wife at the establishment on more than one occasion. Two children, a boy and a girl were always trailing behind her. Maybe grandchildren, he thought.

"Hello, Marc, is that your right name?" Delaine asked him one evening.

“Sure it is and I know you’re called Delaine. Can I buy you a drink?”

“Thanks, but I’m okay.”

Marc looked over his shoulder and saw Easton watching them.

“I’ll see you around,” Marc said as he went back to playing some games.

An hour later and Marc looked around for Delaine and her friends, but they had disappeared. He saw Easton coming over to him.

“Marc, I want you to have a drink with me. I want to put a proposal to you. Can we go outside.”

Marc didn’t reply, but looked quizzically at the man.

Both of them stepped out of the bar.

“One of my daughter’s getting married and she wants me to come up for the wedding. I want you to give an eye on this place for me.”

“I don’t understand you, Easton. You have many other friends in the Force, why not ask one of them?”

Easton drank some more of his rum and milk. Marc drank some more of his beer.

“I don’t trust any of those guys. If I could do better I would keep them out of here. I have to be giving them money and free drinks all the time.”

“Okay, so what do you want me to do?”

“Just keep an eye on things.”

“What about, Delaine?”

“What about her?”

“Is she your woman?”

“I’ll tell you about her one day.”

“Exactly what do you want me to do?”

“Lorrie Reid will be running things while I’m away. I know she’s friendly with Clyde Harper. I don’t want him to come here and go behind the counter.”

“Clyde’s an ex cop like both of us. Why don’t you trust him?”

“He’s screwing my chief cashier. I don’t know how much of my money she’s stealing to give him.”

“Don’t you check her off every evening?”

“I do, but it could still be happening. Anyhow, when I return I’ll get my internal auditors to go over the books.”

Easton left the next Saturday and said he’d be back by the end of the month.

Marc was at Easton’s establishment at least three days per week. The first week, Delaine came in on the Wednesday.

“Did Easton leave you to give an eye on me?”

That evening she had on a gray pants suit. Several men couldn’t take their eyes off her.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Nothing, except that he’s over there worrying about me. I told him not to worry. I can take care of myself.”

Now he remembered that Easton was supposed to give him the lowdown between him and this girl, Marc thought.

“He thinks that Clyde Harper and I are friends?”

“Are you?”

“Of course not. I don’t like him, he’s too forward.”

“What did Easton tell you about me?”

“That like him you were once a policeman. Why did you leave the force so early?”

“Let’s say I always go where the grass is greener.”

“Won’t you buy me a drink?”

He called the barmaid over and ordered a canei for her and a beer for himself. Then he noticed that she had become tense. He looked around and saw Clyde enter the bar. He came over to where they were.

“Well, if it isn’t Delaine and Marc Evers playing around because Easton is abroad. I’d stay away from Easton’s woman if I were you, Marc. Easton didn’t build up his reputation sitting around a desk.”

“What the hell’s the matter with you, Clyde? Can’t you keep your mouth shut for once?” Marc asked, backing off the stool to face his former colleague.

“What did I say to get you riled up like that?”

“Why don’t you leave me alone? So I’m Easton’s woman. So what if he’s twice my age? Can you come with me to my car, Marc?” Delaine requested.

Marc accompanied her to her car. He could hear Clyde laughing behind them.

“I think you’re a great guy. I have never seen you out with your woman. Are you married?”

They were standing beside her car now.

“I was married once, but it didn’t work out.”

“I hope you haven’t given up on love.”

“I have a woman in Cayman.”

“You must be wondering why I’m seeing Easton? Can we go somewhere else where we can talk?”

“If I left with you, Easton would hear about it almost immediately.”

“Okay, how about us meeting somewhere else? You don’t have to go down to the sports bar every evening.”

“I guess I don’t; I only go there about three days per week. Where should we meet?”

“We can meet at Randy Chin’s sports bar on Westminster Road.”

“Okay,” he told her and the two of them parted.

Marc was drinking a beer while he waited on Delaine. He was in the bar for twenty minutes when his cell phone rang.

“Marc, I can’t make it again. My mother is very ill and I have to rush her to the hospital.”

“Want any help?”

“Thanks, I’ll manage, two of my cousins are going with me.”

Marc decided to hang around after he finished talking to Delaine.

He was on his second beer when he saw a girl named Suzanne coming over.

Suzanne was of medium height and very beautiful. She was a regular visitor to Easton's sports bar.

"Marc what are you doing here alone?" she asked.

"Just hanging out. Why can't a guy hang out alone?"

She laughed and her face lit up.

"I think you're either waiting for a woman or she came already and you couldn't agree and she went her way.

"Come to think of it I was supposed to meet a girl here, but she had an emergency."

The moment he finished speaking, he knew he had said too much. Suzanne knew Delaine and might eventually put two and two together and come up with an answer.

"Maybe I know the lady who came and had the emergency."

"I don't think so," he said as he finished his drink and went to his car.

He heard Suzanne calling to him, but he paid her no mind.

He had just reached home when his cell phone started ringing. Delaine was on the line.

"Marc, how are you?"

"I'm okay, so is everything okay with your mum?"

Outside it had started drizzling.

"Bad news, Marc! My mother just died."

He heard her sobbing in the background.

"What! I can't believe it. When did it happen?"

"A hour ago, I just left the hospital."

"I'm really sorry about that, Delaine."

"Thanks, Marc, I'll see you around. I have some calls to make."

They both ended the call. Marc went and took a beer out of his refrigerator when his cell phone started ringing again.

Easton was on the line.

"Marc, what's going on? I heard about Delaine's mother."

He told Easton that she just told him about it.

“I’ll be back before the funeral, Marc. So how is everything out there?”

“Everything’s okay. Things are running smoothly. I haven’t seen Clyde for a few days now.”

“Good, I hope he stays away from my place as long as possible,” Easton said before they ended the call.

On Monday he was down at Easton’s establishment when Clyde Harper came on the scene.

“Well, look who’s here, Marc. You wouldn’t like Easton to know that since he’s been away you’ve taken over Delaine.”

“I haven’t taken over Delaine. I don’t know where you got that from.”

Clyde was drinking a beer, so too was Marc.

“You and Easton will soon be fighting over that girl. She looks innocent, doesn’t she? You don’t know anything about her and neither does Easton.”

“Easton is your friend, why don’t you go to him if you know so much about her?”

Clyde laughed and drank some more of his beer.

“I think you have it in for that girl. Maybe she spurned your attention that’s why you’re so bitter.”

Clyde slammed down his beer on the table.

“I wouldn’t be interested in that girl, not after what I know about her.”

He finished drinking his beer and walked away. A minute later Marc heard him drive off.

Marc hung around the establishment just observing things. Just as he was about to drive off his cell phone rang. Delaine was on the line.

“How are you, Marc?”

“Okay, I guess. But how are you keeping up, with your mother’s death and all that?”

“She would want me to stay strong, so I’m doing that for her.”

“I’m glad that you’re keeping up.”

“Are your parents still alive, Marc?”

“Only my mother, my father died about five years ago. There was too much rum and cigarettes in his system.”

“Oh, I’m sorry about your father. Mine died about seven years ago, but it was in a motor vehicle accident. So how is your mother doing?”

“She’s very spiritual. She’s involved in so many activities at her church that you’d believe she was the one running the whole thing.”

“I’m glad to hear about your mother. Marc, there is something I want to tell you, but it will have to wait until after the funeral. I’m going now,” she said and ended the call.

Marc was at the bar every other day, but there was no sign of Clyde Harper. Delaine came around, but she didn’t stay long. Marc could see the strain in her face. They talked a bit, but not much. She told him that she was going through the funeral arrangements with her three other siblings who were all abroad.

The next week Easton returned.

“I’m breaking up with Delaine. I’m just waiting to tell her after her mother’s funeral.”

Marc drank some more of his beer. Easton took some more of his rum and milk.

“I don’t know what to say.”

“You’ll hear everything after the funeral.”

The funeral wasn’t held until two weeks later. Marc attended as did Easton and Clyde and several of the employees from the bar.

On Tuesday after the funeral, Delaine called Marc.

“Easton and I are no longer together.”

“I thought both of you were in a long term relationship. So what does this mean?”

“It simply means that I’m no longer seeing Easton. As a matter of fact, I’m going to remain single for a long time.”

Marc digested what she had just said.

“I’m sorry about you and Easton, though.”

“Thanks, I’ll tell you more later on,” she told him and ended the call.

“That girl is no good. She used to sell her body. Just a worn out prostitute that’s what she is.”

Marc hung down his head as the bitter words coming from Easton sank in. He drank some more of his beer while the man drank some of his rum and soda.

“She was fooling me all along, but she can go to hell.”

Marc left the bar in a confused state of mind. Easton was a man he respected. It wasn’t only because he had been his senior in the police force or the age difference between them. But he had always respected the man over the years and always took his advice.

Easton had left the Force with the rank of Superintendent. Both Marc and Clyde had served with him in two of the toughest police divisions in the island.

He decided to avoid Delaine after that. He thought that he didn’t have to worry because if she and Easton were no longer together she wouldn’t be frequenting the bar. He was wrong, she still came by with her friends. They said hello to each other, but he tried not to be in any long conversations with her. He started avoiding the bar on the days he knew she would be there.

Marc had just reached home from the bar when his cell phone rang. Delaine was on the line. He wondered what she wanted. She came straight to the point.

“Why are you avoiding me?”

“I’m not avoiding you.”

“Of course you are. Did Easton poison your mind against me?”

“Okay, would you mind telling me the reason you and he broke up?”

He heard her sobbing in the background. After a while it appeared that she had regained her composure.

“That ex-cop, Clyde Harper went to him with a story that I was very wild when I was a young girl. I’m not denying it that I’ve had several boyfriends, but I never sold my body.”

“So where did Clyde get that story from?”

“Ever since he met me that guy has been pressuring me to go to bed with him. I suppose going to Easton must be the payback for me not sleeping with him.”

“So that’s why he’s going around spreading rumors about you.”

“Yes and I suppose that he has convinced you that I’m a bad girl.”

“Who would be convinced by Clyde. He’s just a loud mouth guy.”

“Marc, I’m going to bed now, but I’ll call you again. You can tell me if you don’t want me to call you.”

“Of course not, I don’t know why you should think that way.”

“Bye for now, Marc, I’ll see you around,” she said and ended the call.

On Friday he was outside the club having a drink when Clyde drove up and parked beside his car. He greeted Marc and went inside the club with the young girl he had brought with him. A half hour later he came out of the bar.

“Hey Marc, I know who you’re out here waiting on. It’s Easton’s former woman, Delaine. That girl tricked Easton. She got an apartment and a car out of him.”

“Why are you telling me these things?”

“Because, I think you’re interested in her. She’s hot, but also dangerous. Easton had to leave her or else he’d end up as a pauper.”

“I’m not interested in her. She’s Easton’s former woman. Why would I be interested in my former colleague’s former woman?”

Clyde brushed aside his remarks. He took some more of his drink. His girl came outside for him, but he told her to go back inside. He followed the girl inside. Marc decided to remain, obviously, Clyde had a lot to talk about.

Fifteen minutes later he was back. Marc refused his offer of a beer. Clyde drank about half the bottle of his new beer before he spoke again.

“Did you know that Delaine has two children for some guy in Montego Bay?”

Marc was taken aback by the new revelation.

He wanted to jump into his car and drive away, but he didn’t know why he hung around.

“She was along with Russell Henry and Graham Hughes? She was seeing them along with Easton.”

“You must have been following her around to know so much about her.”

If he was offended by the remark, Clyde didn’t show it, he merely took some more swallows of his beer.

Marc knew about Russell Henry and Graham Hughes. Both were young men and very ambitious. They were on opposite sides of the political fence. He suspected that in another few years, both men would make it to parliament. He knew that a lot of women hung around politicians for one reason or another. He was astounded that Delaine was one of these women.

Clyde went back inside to check on his girl, so Marc decided that he didn’t want to hear anything more from him, so he jumped into his car and drove home to Goldson Villa off Washington Boulevard.

Once home, he had time to think. He decided to avoid Delaine totally. It seemed that she was one of those girls who threw themselves at every man they met.

The next week he went to the nine night for her mother. Apparently they were holding it because they hadn’t held a set-up. Marc avoided Delaine the whole time he was there.

The following week she called him.

“The whole time you were at the nine night, you were avoiding me.”

“I was just taking things easy. That’s all.”

“Marc, if you don’t want to talk to me again, that’s all right,” she said and ended the call.

Two weeks later he was down at Randy Chin’s sports bar when he saw her come in with a group of friends. He had to admit

that she looked good in jeans and a white blouse. He wondered if he was doing the right thing by ignoring her.

She left the sports bar without even acknowledging his presence. The next day he called her but didn't get her. He got her later that evening.

"What's the meaning of this call?"

"I want to apologize for the way I've been behaving towards you."

"That's all right, you're not the only one. But thanks for calling, I've got to go now."

"Wait, don't go yet. Can we meet somewhere and talk? I think we've got a lot to talk about."

"I don't think so, Marc. Your mind is already made up about me. There's nothing I can say that will change your mind."

"So you're just going to brush me off like that?"

"Well, if you continue to listen to people like Clyde Harper, what else can I do?"

"We could meet somewhere and talk."

"Have you got anywhere in mind?"

"Dunny Hall's place in Barbican. He has a back porch where we can sit and talk."

"Okay, but you'll have to tell me when and give me directions."

"How about the day after tomorrow. I'll call and give you directions."

She agreed to the date before ending the call.

"I was never a call girl, prostitute or harlot or any of those names, despite what Clyde Harper or Easton might say."

"I never believed any of it despite what Clyde or Easton said."

He had bought drinks for both of them.

"Yet you sat around and listened to them."

“I thought it would have been impolite to walk out on Easton or cut off his calls. I don’t know why I stayed around and listened to Clyde.”

“I have one young daughter. Zoey is seven years old. I know he told you that I have two children. Tonya is ten years and is my sister’s child. They both live with my aunt in Montego Bay. People saw me with both of them and just assumed that they were both mine.

Marc had bought them two more drinks while she was talking. He drank some of his next drink.

“You know that my son is in the States with his mother.”

“Oh how selfish of me. How is he doing now? And you told me about your girlfriend in Cayman.”

“He’s doing okay over there. He’s in kindergarten. But I should have told you about Janice and me. We broke up a few weeks ago. I found out that she was seeing a Scottish guy over there.”

“I’m sorry to hear.”

She took some more sips of her drink.

“You must have heard rumors that I got my car and apartment out of Easton. Those are lies. Easton just gave me some gas and money to cook food for him most times. I’m twenty nine years this year and I’ve worked hard for everything I have. As a matter of fact I still owe money on the car and my apartment.”

Marc took some more of his drink.

“That was an ear full. I’m glad for this meeting. At least some of the cobwebs in my brain have been cleared.”

She smiled, then laughed.

“As for that Clyde Harper, I never went to bed with him despite him pressuring me. He even threatened to go to Easton with all sorts of stories about me. I don’t know how he found out where I lived. One evening I came home and found him parked at my gate waiting on me.”

“Why didn’t you call Easton?”

“I didn’t think Easton could manage him.”

“It was then that he threatened to call Easton and tell him that he was at my house.”

“How did you get rid of him?”

“It was only after I called one of my female cousins to come and stay with me that he left.”

“Has he ever come by again.”

“No, he knows that I’m serious. I told him that if he does that again, I’ll call the police on him.”

They finished talking a few minutes later but decided to meet again.

As Marc sat on his verandah that night after his meeting with Delaine, he couldn’t help thinking as to what to do about her. He knew that everybody has a history. He wasn’t interested in digging up her past. There was nothing he could change.

He was having a beer when his cell phone rang. Easton was on the line.

“Marc, how are you, Easton here. I heard that you and Delaine are now together. Is that true?”

“Nothing like that, Easton.”

“I’m warning you off that girl. One of her friends told me that she was seeing Russell Henry while we were together.”

“What! I can’t believe it. So all this is now coming out.”

“Yeah, and I expect more. Those girls don’t like what she was doing to me so they’ll tell me everything.”

“I’ll be around tomorrow, Easton so you can fill me in on anything more,” he told him before ending the call.

What the hell, Marc thought. It must be all over the place. That girl was no damn good. The quicker he got rid of her, the better. He remembered that he hadn’t asked her about those two politicians. He might as well call her and tell her what Easton said about her. He didn’t care now, if she didn’t want to talk to him again so be it. Unlike Easton he couldn’t go to any of her friends asking them about her. Those girls would certainly tell her and in all possibility she might not want to talk to him again. He called and

told her what Easton said about her. He also mentioned the two politicians.

“I only stayed with Easton because I didn’t want to hurt him. He was a good lover at first, but then he gradually deteriorated. No young girl would stay with any man who wasn’t satisfying her sexually.”

There was a pause before she continued.

“As for those two politicians, I had nothing to do with them. People probably saw me talking to them, but they were just looking votes for their party.

You know what Marc, I think it will be good for both of us not to meet again. That way you won’t get your head full up of lies about me.”

“Don’t go yet, I want to talk to you some more.”

But she had already ended the call. He tried to get her several times that night, but his calls kept going to voice mail.

He went to Easton’s bar. He saw both men there. Neither of them asked him about her and he was glad. He saw her friends, they didn’t say anything to him which he found strange. He decided not to ask them anything about her.

By the end of the second week, he was beginning to miss her. He called her, but as soon as she heard his voice she would end the call.

The next Friday he was down at Randy Chin’s sports bar when she came in with some friends. He gave her time to settle down before he went over.

“I want to talk to you.”

“Why?”

“I think we should talk, or else I’ll create a scene.”

“Go right ahead.”

But she got up and followed him to where he was seated.

“What the hell’s the matter with you? Why won’t you take any of my calls?”

“Don’t shout at me, Marc. You’re behaving like a little boy. Everything that Easton and Clyde Harper tell you about me you believe.”

“You and Easton were in a relationship up to a few weeks ago.”

She pushed back her chair and jumped up.

“I’m leaving.”

“Sit down.”

“Don’t order me about the place, Marc.”

“I’m doing no such thing.”

She finished the drink she had brought with her. He bought a malt beverage for her and one for himself.

“So we just stop seeing each other, you’re okay with it and I’m supposed to be too. Well, I’m not.”

She sat down and had some more of her new drink. Marc drank some more of his drink.

“Do you think we should stop seeing each other?”

She blushed and took some more of her drink.

“It depends on you. I’m quite okay with my daughter. It’s seems as if I’m trouble. I don’t want you to have to abandon your friends because of me or thinking of what they might be saying behind your back.”

He took some more swallows of his drink.

“That’s foolishness, I don’t have to go to Easton’s bar anymore. I don’t owe him any obligations.”

“Neither do I, but each time he sees you he comes up with a different story.

“Both Easton and Clyde must have run out of stories by now.”

She laughed and both of them left the sports bar together.

A week later Marc and Delaine were sitting on a towel in Emancipation Park, talking. They both looked around, it was Clyde Harper, jogging! Marc didn’t recognize the girl he was jogging with. Delaine hid her face in a smaller towel. Marc had to laugh at her. He knew that the man had seen them. He jogged around the track a few more times before he disappeared, probably gone to his car.

“So it’s official now. The two of you are going around. That girl won’t get off so easily. She owes Easton two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He owes me half of that money. I won’t get my money until she pays up. I can use my police friends on her. So unless you want your little darling to be locked up you had better tell her to come up with the money.”

“I don’t believe a word of what you’ve just said. I’ll tell her not to pay you any mind. It’s just because she’s a woman why you’re picking on her.”

“Why don’t you give Easton a call and find out?”

“Easton would laugh at me for calling him.”

“He’s laughing at you now.”

“Go to hell, Clyde,” Marc shouted and ended the call.

Half an hour later he was drinking a beer when his cell phone started ringing. Delaine was on the line.

“Marc, can you believe it, Easton is pressuring me to pay him back all the money he gave me.

“Who called you about the money, Easton or Clyde?”

“Clyde.”

“And you believed him. I don’t think Easton would sink so low. If I were you I’d ignore him.”

“He threatened to go to the police.”

“Do you owe Easton any money?”

“Of course not.”

“Then, if I were you, I’d ignore him.”

“Okay, I’ll do that. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Go to bed and don’t lose a wink over Clyde’s threats,” he told her as they both ended the call.

They met several times after that until one night he got an urgent call from Delaine.

“Marc, Clyde is here with several policemen. He’s seizing my things for the money he said I owe Easton.”

“What! Hold on, I’m coming down there right now.”

He ran to his car and jumped in. He hoped he’d get there before they left. Delaine lived in Molyne’s Garden, half a kilometer from

wgere he lived. What the hell was Clyde playing at? He must know that he couldn't get away with what he was doing.

Twenty minutes later he was there. Clyde was leaning on his car. A woman was beside him, but Marc didn't know her. He didn't see Delaine. She must be inside the house, he thought.

Marc got out of his car and marched over to Clyde.

"What's the meaning of this?"

"We're just following Easton's orders."

Delaine came out of the house.

"Easton never asked you to come here and do this. You're just a big liar," Marc opined.

The Sergeant who was leading the three constables came out of the house.

"Sarge, what's the meaning of this? I was in the force up to a few years ago. I don't know what it has come to now."

"Don't pay him any mind, Sarge."

Marc whipped out his cell phone and called Easton. He told him that he had a little problem he wanted him to help solve.

Delaine came to stand beside Marc.

"Who were you calling?"

"Easton."

"He set up the whole thing. God, I hate him."

In another fifteen minutes Easton arrived. The policemen despite Delaine's protests had put the seized goods in Clyde's car trunk, which was still open.

"What's going on here?"

"Ask Clyde," Mark told him.

The policeman had driven away upon Easton's arrival.

Delaine pointed at Clyde.

"He told me that you said I owed you. He was only acting as a bailiff."

"Don't get me mixed up in this. I never ask a woman to give me back anything I've given her."

"Clyde if I were you I'd give up these things."

Easton went to his car and drove away.

Marc went and began taking the things out of the car trunk and put them on the lawn.

“Hey guy, who told you to go into my car trunk?” Clyde shouted, dipping his hand into his pocket for his gun. The woman who was with him held on to his hand.

“You’re just fucked up, Clyde. An ordinary policeman and a failed businessman.”

Clyde got into the passenger seat of the car. The woman was in the driver’s seat.

“I’ll catch you one of these days, Marc. You’re just running down a worn out girl.”

The woman started the car and they drove away.

Marc reached for Delaine and hugged her. She was sobbing slightly.

“It’s all right, baby. You have nothing to be afraid of.”

“I want you to spend some time with me Marc.”

She helped him take back her stuff inside. They were a component set, a laptop computer and a thirty inch flat screen television.

“I don’t think Clyde will be back to trouble you. I think he has caused enough trouble for one night.

She came and hugged him.

Marc went home in the early hours of the morning. They spent the night talking before she told him that she wanted to sleep. He helped her lock up before leaving for his house.

Marc and Delaine met regularly after that and started a relationship. Marc knows that they will have to give it time to work, but he is confident that their love will blossom into something meaningful. He and Delaine have also decided to avoid going to Easton’s bar and anywhere else they know that Clyde Harper usually hangs out. The End.

Epilogue: Marc and Delaine were married two years later. By that time she was already six months pregnant. She went for her daughter and they’re now living together in Old Harbour Glades.

Bad Man's Woman
A short story by Austin Mitchell

My friend, Elroy Reid was relating to me what had happened between him and his longtime girlfriend, Carline Weston. They had been friends from high school. They lived just a kilometer apart in Keswick. It all started when Carline decided to go to a commercial school in Kingston.

"I told her to take the morning bus and come back with it in the evenings."

"So what did she say?" I asked.

"She said that she wouldn't get any time to study."

"Maybe she's right. She would have to get up too early in the mornings and come home too late at nights."

We were sheltering under a shopping plaza as it was raining cats and dogs.

I was getting the impression that maybe Elroy didn't want Carline to go and live in Kingston. Maybe he feared that she would find some other guy down there.

Anyway, above strong objections from Elroy, Carline went to live with her aunt in Kingston. Elroy swore that he wouldn't have anything to do with her, but changed his mind when she started coming up on weekends. Elroy couldn't be happier and they went to dances and parties together. Carline would stay at his house as he had built a one bedroom addition to his parent's house coupled with a small kitchenette and bathroom. So they had their own convenience.

But it all ended about three months later. Carline would still visit her parents, but it would be every month.

"By the time I hear that she came to the country, she's already gone," he told me one day.

That was because Carline would come up on a Saturday or Sunday morning and return the same evening.

He told me that she was working and going to school part time.

Elroy was now operating a shop in an adjoining district. One of his uncles had recently come from England and bought a thirty acre farm nearby. I understood that it was this uncle who had given him the money to open the shop. Elroy was operating both businesses for him. He bought a pickup and would go to various towns to sell produce from the farm. When he was returning, he would buy things to sell in the shop. He was especially generous to Carline's parents. He would give them loads of produce from his farm. All in vain I thought as Carline wasn't coming back to him.

I remembered seeing him one day. He was driving his van with produce to sell in Linstead. As he wasn't passing, Carline's parents, Hepburn and Miss Fay's house, he asked me to take some goods to give them on my bike. Among the produce was a huge bunch of ripe bananas which I took for myself. A month later he gave me the largest breadfruit I ever saw plus two dozen ackees to give his supposed in-laws. We did make a feast of that breadfruit and those ackees. My two brothers and I all agreed that anything Elroy gave us to give Carline's parents, we would keep most of it for ourselves. This continued for another six months or so.

Somebody told him about what we were doing. He cursed us off. He even threatened to go to the police. We scoffed at that, we hadn't taken all the things he gave us for his supposed in-laws. So as not to raise suspicions we always gave them some of it. Elroy was stupidly accusing us of causing Carline to leave him. Of course, nobody believed him.

Elroy's farm was so fruitful that he could throw some tomato seeds outside his windows and be picking tomatoes the next morning. The girls were rushing him, but he ignored them. He believed that Carline would return to him.

I saw one of Elroy's friends one day and he said to me.

"Butler, I think Elroy is wasting his time hoping that Carline will come back to him."

"I believe Carline has left him, Vance."

We were drinking beers in Chappie Chung's bar in the Keswick Mountains.

"That guy's too stupid. How can you still love a girl, who doesn't want to see you again?" I asked.

A girl, Viviene, had joined us. She was an assistant teacher at the primary school. She was short and round. I bought her a soda.

"I thought you and Elroy were going to Kern's dance tonight, Viviene."

"Elroy and I, no sir. He still loves Carline. I don't know when he's going to get over her."

Another young lady, Lita, had joined us. She was a clerk at the local branch library. Vance bought her a soda.

"Carline is along with a Don, that's what I heard," Lita told us. That's what I had heard too.

"That's what I heard too. But Elroy won't believe it," I said.

Elroy did believe it because he started going around with Justine, a practical nurse, at the local clinic.

As he and my entire family weren't on speaking terms after he accused us of stealing his goods, I didn't get to ask him any question. I only heard those stories on the grapevine.

"I hope Elroy isn't using my daughter. I have a feeling that he'll leave her if Carline comes back to him," Miss Julie, her mother, said to me one day.

"Don't say that I told you so, but Carline isn't coming back to Elroy. She's along with a Don in Kingston."

"What!" Miss Julie expressed her surprise. She knew all about Dons and their reputation. She had spent her early years in one of those inner city communities. As a matter of fact, she still had relatives and friends living there.

"I knew that girl was no good. Look who she has gone and picked up. My God, I wonder if her parents know."

"I doubt it," I told her as we parted. I could see her holding her head in disbelief at what I had told her about Carline. But I was apprehensive that she would spread it all over the village.

My apprehension proved correct when Elroy confronted me in the village square a few days later. He called me a liar and accused me of spreading rumors about Carline. I told him that I had gotten the rumor on the grapevine. He asked me for my source, but I refused to tell him.

Elroy was still fooling around Justine. Although he was sneaking around with other women. I'm not condemning him or play self righteous for as young guys we all did it.

Easter was rainy and we had to keep all our festivities indoors. The cricket match planned for Easter Monday was rained out. We had to be content with playing board games like dominoes, ludo and checkers. We managed to borrow two table tennis boards from the local high school and staged a tournament. In the night we had a huge dance where two heavy weight sounds from Kingston clashed. So that was how we spent that Easter.

As far as Elroy was concerned, things came to a head that August. Carline's uncle, Stanley was a promoter of dances. In fact, that was how he made his living, when he took a break from operating his taxi. It was he who had put together the festivities in Easter. So Stanley had placards printed advertising his dance that Independence Day. There would be a cricket match followed by the dance as two heavy weight sounds would clash. One was from May Pen and the other was from Port Antonio. We understood that both sounds had a huge following. The cricket match and dance would be held on the grounds of the local high school.

Stanley and Elroy were mortal enemies. I wonder if I'm exaggerating. It all happened because Stanley, although in his late forties still considered himself something of a ladies man. He had fathered six children, but only two with his wife. He had this girl whom he was sending to school. She was doing a six month cosmetology course. One day in late May he had just driven off his taxi with a load of passengers when he saw her getting into Elroy's van.

I took another drink of my beer. We were in Diana's beer joint up in the Keswick Mountains.

"After I let off my passengers, I drove to her school, but everybody I asked said that they hadn't seen her."

I took some more swallows of my beer. Stanley was half way through his beer.

"When I saw her later that evening, she told me that he had taken her to pick up some things."

"She said that she came out there and didn't see my taxi so she begged him a ride."

Dorene, the girl he was talking about was around twenty five years of age. She had a five year old son living with her.

"So what do you plan to do?"

"I'm watching the situation. Right now she's depending on me. If I find out that she and Elroy are friends, I'm going to drop her," he said as he finished his beer and left to do some more trips.

In June, Stanley and Elroy nearly had a confrontation over Dorene. In July they had a punch up and persons had to part them. Stanley swore that he was going to do Elroy something bad if he didn't leave his woman alone.

And so August came around and we couldn't wait for Independence day and the festivities. The day would fall on a Monday. So at last the day arrived and we all attended the cricket match. It was being played between our local club players and a team from St. Mary.

After the match was over we all returned home to get dressed and head out for the dance.

We went to the dance in our best clothes with our girls. We paid our fare and went inside. Surprisingly, neither of the gatemen were known to us. One of my friends, Washy, said that they were from Kingston. Both men had long knives in their waist and had bandanas tying their head. They were both smoking marijuana cigarettes and drinking roots drinks.

By ten o'clock the dance was almost full. Things were really

nice. The two deejays on the mikes were belting out some great lyrics. They were Howie and Kong. Drinks and food flowed as patrons streamed into the dance. The two deejays kept the dancers on their feet with some lively music. Kong was playing the better set, although Howie wasn't far behind.

At around eleven o'clock I was outside urinating when I saw three vehicles drive up and stopped. Some well dressed men and women came out of them. Carline was among them! A tall man with a gold tooth in the middle row of his upper jaw, had his arms around her waist. This must be Zacky, her reputed boyfriend and the Don of the area where she lived. He looked to be around thirty years of age. Carline was about twenty three years of age, two years younger than both Elroy and I. Carline was wearing a jeans pants, a white blouse and matching sweater. She was wearing high boots. She was even more beautiful than when I last saw her two years ago. She and her boyfriend were wearing matching felt hats.

I must say that even in those days I had always admired her, but somehow she had always preferred Elroy. I don't know why. At six feet I was two inches taller than him. I was better looking than him too. Although we were both slim men, women were always telling me that I had a good body.

Anyway, I was behind them as we all trooped into the dance. Elroy was dancing with Justine. My girl and I were dancing nearby. I could hear noises from outside. Sometimes it would be the gatemen arguing with patrons. Other times it would be the crown and anchormen slamming down their cups on their tables.

About an hour later I heard Elroy and Carline arguing. He had apparently confronted her about bringing her man to the dance. He was also irritated that she had refused to dance with him.

"My boyfriend and I are here. You have a girlfriend Elroy, go and dance with her."

"So is this the way you're treating me? Look what I've done for you. You're very ungrateful."

"I've never begged you anything yet, Elroy. Most of the

things you used to give my parents, just stayed there until they were rotten and had to be thrown away. What didn't spoil and got rotten, they gave away to their neighbors."

I couldn't help smiling. Imagine Elroy thought that he was helping Carline's parents when all he was doing was making a nuisance of himself.

Zacky had now returned with his and Carline's drinks.

"What happen, babes," he greeted Carline before giving her her drink.

"Hey, guy!" Elroy shouted and rushed at Zacky.

Some of Zacky's crew members held him.

"Who is he, Carline?"

"A little guy I used to know up here. It's over two years now since I last saw him."

"So all of a sudden I'm a little guy," Elroy protested.

Zacky grabbed him.

"Hey guy, you know who you're dealing with?"

"Zacky, don't bother getting yourself into trouble."

"Elroy, where I live, I have to have a bad man protecting me. I am a bad man's woman. You're just a little boy."

Zacky pushed Elroy away from him.

Elroy literally flew out of the dance.

I ran out of the dance a few seconds after Elroy. The two deejays were now in their element. There was no sign of Elroy. A man called Zeb came up to me.

"He's gone for Strats and his gang. Says he's going to hire them to beat up Zacky and his crew."

Strats was a known bad man in these parts. If you wanted somebody warned off or given a good beating you could always recruit him. Of course he charged a fee. I had once hired him to beat up a guy who was fooling around one of my girlfriends. A few days later I saw the man, his body was covered with bruises and his right hand was heavily bandaged. I gave Strats a bonus as the man stopped fooling around my girl after that.

I recognized some men who had come out of the dance as belonging to Zacky's crew. They were armed with all sorts of implements. It was obvious that they were looking for Elroy. Stanley had also come outside too. He was armed with a short machete. A light drizzle had begun. Stanley was swearing after Elroy. He was threatening to make mincemeat of him if he mashed up his dance.

Stanley was soon joined by his younger brother, Neville.

"Where is the boy, who wants to mash up the dance?"

Neville asked. He was liable to become a raving lunatic when drunk.

"Elroy has gone for Strats and his gang," a man named Duffus shouted.

"Any man who mash up my dance, is going to feel something tonight," Stanley warned before returning inside.

I returned inside, as did most persons who had come outside.

I was inside dancing with my girl some twenty minutes later when I heard shouts from outside the dance. I ran to have a look.

Strats had arrived with his crew. Elroy was with them.

"A man disrespected my brethren. He has to come outside and deal with me," Strats declared.

Zeb had come outside of the dance as did Stanley and Neville.

"Strats, are you trying to mash up my dance?" Stanley asked.

"A man in the dance beat up my friend. We want him to come outside and deal with us."

Neville turned to Elroy. Elroy had his arms folded against his chest.

"Elroy, it's you who caused all this trouble. You saw Carline with her boyfriend and you got jealous," Neville accused him.

Clearly he wasn't as drunk as I had at first thought.

Still Strats insisted that Zacky come outside for them to beat him.

The dance was still continuing as the soundmen were oblivious as to what was happening outside.

Then, before anybody knew it, we heard some heavy explosions all around.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Gunshots!” persons shouted and we all rushed for cover. I ran inside the dance, I saw my girlfriend and we ran and hid behind a wall.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The gunshots continued. I thought it was Zacky or Strats’ crew who were firing the shots. After about twenty minutes peace reigned. I returned outside, but there was no sign of Elroy or Strats and his crew.

“It’s Jumpy who was firing all those shots,” Zeb said.

I realized that Jumpy had been firing the shots in the air to calm things down. I had seen him in the dance, dancing with a girl an hour or so ago.

This wasn’t the first dance that he had shot up.

People were streaming out of the dance. There was still no sign of Elroy. Stanley and Neville had also come out of the dance. Both men were cursing Elroy, the police constable and Strats and his gang for spoiling their dance. The dance was now half full as several patrons had gone to another dance a mile away.

I didn’t see Zacky and his crew or Carline inside the dance. However, when we got to the other dance we saw them there. There was still no sign of Elroy, Strats or his crew. Zeb said that maybe they realized that they couldn’t beat Zacky and his crew so they had given up that idea.

Persons were alternating between both dances as they realized that it was Jumpy who had been firing all those shots.

A week later I saw Stanley. He said he had lost close to ten thousand dollars on the dance. He had lodged a complaint against Elroy and Strats. He had also complained to the Sergeant who headed the station. However, the Sergeant said that Jumpy’s action was justified as he had prevented a fight and possible bloodshed. He couldn’t do anything about Elroy and Strats as they had done nothing physical to impede the progress of his dance.

Epilogue:

Elroy and Justine broke up soon after the dance. He is now

along with Dorene who left Stanley after she finished her cosmetology course.

Eight months later, Carline had a baby for Zacky. She moved to another inner city community after he was shot and killed six months after she had her baby. She is now along with the Don from her new community.

Dorene is running one of Elroy's two wholesales. He converted both of his shops into wholesales as he felt they would be more profitable. He had also given her father a taxi to operate and they would share the profits. Stanley knew that he couldn't match that plus he didn't want to get into trouble by beating up Elroy for taking away his woman from him.

There were plenty of young girls around willing to offer favors to any man willing to take care of them. He didn't have to look very far before finding a first year student nurse from a nearby community to take care of.

If you enjoyed reading this book I would be grateful if you could send a review to Amazon.