

Undercover Soldier

Austin Mitchell

Part Two

Chapter Eighteen

It was one week since they had arrived in Jamaica and there were results to be seen from their work. They had learned their trade in a hard school and had graduated to sell their wares to the highest bidder. Gaskell Burke had negotiated through Ken Stone and had been successful in securing the services of Moses Cartwright and Jabez Buchanan. These two were war veterans. On their return from Vietnam they had teamed up to sell their guns for money. They had killed in New York and in other American cities and had partaken in several gang wars. For them, killing had almost become routine. It didn't matter who the victim was, so long as the money was right, they usually did a good job that left their employer very pleased knowing that his money had been well spent.

Ken Stone had known them in New York. When Burke had outlined his plans to him, he had opted for these two immediately. Burke was pleased with their work so far. After one week these back-street killers, hold up men and chain snatchers were looking like well-drilled soldiers. He didn't have the near impregnable hideout that McCreed had, but in another two weeks that would change.

He would be in control of the majority of the island's drug trafficking. McCreed would be on the run with no support, which would make his killing easier.

He had wanted to turn down Jack when approached, but the dental technician had convinced him that it was well worth the risk. The plan was simple, get rid of King and the three of them would share equally.

The divorce had been amicable; Peggy hadn't taken what had happened to him lightly. There were no longer the dinner or tea parties or the wedding invitations. She wanted to make a fresh start. The courts had granted her custody and him visiting rights to the three children. They had also fixed a monthly allowance for them. Sometimes she would bring them to look for him and they would have a good time.

Since the divorce he had dated other women, that was until he met Nora Simpson. She was a single woman. She told him that she had a few relationships but had never married because none of the men she dated was willing to give her the kind of commitment she wanted from a husband. She had a master's degree in economics from a prestigious United States university and was dedicated to her job as a senior economist with the government. She owned her own house and car. She had a niece and nephew living with her and had taken responsibility for their schooling. She was glad to have a man in her life again. She knew about the trouble he had been in but understood when he explained what had really happened. He wasn't planning on asking her to marry him, not for now anyway. He had told Peggy about her and she had approved, saying that she was glad for him. She in turn had told him that she was now friendly with a doctor and he had wished her well.

Peggy and he had actually started working at the law firm on the same day. They had taken a likening to each other almost immediately.

They had fallen in love and it was the toast of the office. Ambitious young lawyer to marry young, beautiful secretary. He had no regrets about marrying her. His only regret was in allowing himself to be so easily lured into investing his clients' money in those stocks. He couldn't blame Danville because he had lost money too.

He had to look around fast and after years of searching, this was what he had come up with, thanks to Brad and Jack. The latter and he became friends when he defended him and won a marijuana case. He had quickly surmised that he wasn't made of the stuff of which warriors are made. His assessment of Brad was the same. It was when they took him to their new warehouse that he decided that he didn't want these two men around any longer. He had quickly hatched a plot to invite them down to Groves Valley purportedly for a meeting but more to set them up and get rid of them. He had to think, had it not been for the police, those two men would have been rid of. As far as he knew both of them were still in jail as an illegal gun as well as marijuana had been found in the car. The car that had been used in the killing of the man on Old Hope Road had also been traced to them.

"These guys will soon be professionals, Burke," Jabez Buchanan said as he came up to where Burke was sitting under a mango tree, soon Moses Cartwright joined them.

They were athletic looking men these two. Burke guessed Bucky to be a little under six feet in height while Mose looked like he was taller than him by an inch or two. Both men carried thick mustaches. Their faces were clean shaven otherwise, with Mose being bald head. Bucky carried some amount of hair on his head.

From the dossier that he had on them, he knew that Mose was around thirty nine years of age. Bucky was a few months away from his thirty eight birthday.

Both men assured him that when they were finished training the recruits it would take an army to stop them.

"We really looked for these guys and we never stopped until we found the right men," Burke stated.

"Always heard that Jamaica was a beautiful place, was planning to save some money and take a vacation down here sometime. Well, I can't say I'm disappointed, lovely island you got here boss," Mose congratulated Burke.

"Hope you don't think you're on any vacation, Mose, not when I'm paying your wages. The country might look sleepy, but it's a dangerous place."

"I always work hard to earn my wages, Burke. Bucky can testify to that."

He drew hard on the marijuana cigarette.

"This training reminds me of the days back in Nam. That training sure beats the hell out of a man. Those Vietnamese are some of the best guerilla fighters in the world. They would have beaten us had we not pulled out."

"I understand they nearly got you once, Mose."

"They nearly did, was pretty lucky to come away alive. We were surrounded and all of my mates were dying around me. I was the only survivor. I had to lay on the ground and act dead, didn't even move a muscle when that Viet Cong kicked me in my ribs."

"Me, I've done enough fighting for Uncle Sam. Don't figure on doing any more for him," Bucky stated.

"You use this, Burke?" Mose asked as he fished into his pocket for two marijuana cigarettes, he handed one to Bucky.

"No, sir, I only smoke my pipe."

"You should, been using this stuff since I was a kid. Hasn't harmed me none. We used to get harder stuff out there in Nam but I always stuck to the weed. But it was trash compared to your weed," Mose declared.

"First plane should come in next Saturday night to pick up a supply of the weed. They tell me that it's the first time a plane is landing in Jamaica and it's not McCreed's weed it is coming for or one of his other syndicate friends."

"Sure seems as if he's got the market all tied up. Did you have much of a scrap with him before we got here?" Mose asked.

"Not much, we killed one of his men and wounded two others. Our men shot up their car and it ran into a lightpost."

"Looks like we didn't miss much action, Mose."

"It's a good while now our syndicate is around, but we just start to put the show on the road. We aren't waiting for McCreed to come after us, we're going after him."

"Who is this McCreed? I've heard so much about him since

I got here. Is he some sort of a tycoon?" Mose asked.

"Old time mob hit man, came back down here several years ago and set up himself. He controls a sizeable portion of the market."

"Know him personally, Burke?" Mose asked.

"I've never met him, but I've heard about him."

"Must be some character, then, to have gotten rid of so much of the opposition," Bucky declared.

"I'm not afraid of him. The men, with whom we were in partnership, seem to have been scared of him. I told them to set up their boss, but he escaped. They were coming to meet us and we had a trap set up for them, but the police arrested them."

"From what I've heard, those two men were useless and probably would have been better off dead," Mose put in.

"When I reflected on what took place I have to agree with you."

"When do you plan for us to attack Mc Creed?" Mose asked.

"We will attack him next week Sunday. We're going to attack his garage first. One group will attack him there, while the other will destroy his house at Coopers Hill."

"Are these places heavily guarded?" Bucky asked.

"They have guards at the garage on Windward Road. I've heard that his house isn't guarded. His gang's headquarters is at Wareika but we aren't touching that. The army has tried two times already and failed."

"Not much of an army they got out here that lets a few amateur gunmen run them off. When Mose and I rip into them they're gonna holler for mercy."

Mose looked at his watch.

“Leisure time up Bucky, time to go back to work. Are you coming to watch us, Burke?”

“Think I’ve watched you enough, I just remembered that I have a meeting this evening.”

The three men stood up; the two fighters headed for the camp while their boss headed up the hill to his car.

At the camp it was a bustle of activity. Mose and Bucky each had six men under their command. The training started at five in the morning and there was a break at eight o’clock for breakfast. Lunch was at noon. They stopped training at six o’clock and turning in time was at nine o’clock.

Both Bucky and Mose were experts at unarmed combat as well as being weapons expert.

That night after the recruits had turned into their bunks, Bucky and Mose sat talking under the big mango tree over a marijuana pipe that one of the trainees had taught them to build.

“That man, Burke, looks wealthy, wouldn’t mind doing another job for him,” Mose said, after blowing the last of the marijuana pipe out of his nostrils.

“Nice country out here, Bucky. Haven’t gotten around to meeting the women yet, but I hear they’re the best. Sure wouldn’t mind working for him again. Maybe after the way he’s seen us lick these guys into shape, if ever he’s in trouble again, he’ll be sure to send for us.”

“More than likely he’ll have his own people working for him by then.”

Mose took some more blows off the marijuana pipe.

“Bucky I made a date with two women for Friday night. There’s going to be a dance and they want us to come along. Should be fun.”

“I could do with a woman myself, Mose, but I would prefer to see this job through first.”

Bucky had hardly finished talking when they heard a shout.

"Who are you?" came the gruff demand from the guard post.

The two trainers whipped up their rifles and vanished into the darkness.

"It's me, Ken," came Ken Stone's voice.

"Sounds like Ken to me," Mose said. Both of them returned to the mango tree as Ken came up to them.

"Thought you were supposed to be in Miami, Ken, arranging to pick up the stuff," Bucky remarked.

"I was," Ken replied, taking a seat on one of the tree limbs.

"But I came down here to see how things are going. Burke tells me that you're doing some good work."

He took a long marijuana cigarette from Bucky and lit it.

"Better mind you go loco on this stuff, Ken. It's the best I've ever smoked," Bucky told him.

"That's why I teamed up with Burke. We aim to let more people make their living out of it again."

"Talking with Burke it does seem as if this McCreed is really big. Does he have Mexican or Colombian connections?" Mose asked.

"I don't know, it's now he's going to feel pressure. After we get rid of him, we're the ones, who are going to be running things."

"One shot could do it all. Why train twelve men to fight against him?" Bucky argued.

Ken Stone drew on the last of the weed before throwing it away.

"The guy runs a big organization, we have to get our fighters in place before we move against him. Lots of men have challenged him and have failed. Our aim is not to make the same mistake."

"Right now you're down here, and you have to watch out because they have a lot of men working for them. If you catch anybody spying on the camp you know what to do."

“This place is pretty isolated. Burke was careful in choosing it. Anybody who comes sneaking around will get a shallow grave,” Bucky sounded out a warning.

Mose and Bucky were rolling more marijuana leaves to smoke.

Ken Stone had no doubt that these two men would carry out their threats. He had seen them kill already and understood why their reputations as top-notch killers were chronicled in the American underworld.

The night was black, as there was just a sprinkling of stars in the sky. The big mango tree, on which they now sat, had been uprooted sometime earlier, failing by a few meters, to destroy the house with its heavy branches.

The old house was in a valley, only a foot-track led to it. Two men guarded this track. They did six-hour shifts around the clock. The two men had two M-16 assault rifles. All the men had been trained to use these guns.

Ken Stone had migrated to the United States a year after leaving high school, when his sister filed for him. He spent two years in college before dropping out and hitting the streets despite his family’s pleas and his sister’s pleadings. He moved slowly into the drug trade, taking his time to know the business. Now he was a real professional with bases in New York and Miami. He had contacts all over the United States, the Caribbean, South and Central America. He also acted as a broker in finding buyers for several syndicates, including Danville Burke’s, though he had never had any dealings with Danny King. The two men only had a casual acquaintance. Gus McCreed’s control of such a sizeable portion of the Jamaican market could spell doom for him and several other dealers unless they were willing to team up to fight against him. That was why he was glad to hear from Burke with the news that he wanted to form a syndicate to fight the man’s growing dominance of the trade.

Bucky stood up and yawned.

"Time I turned in, have to be awake by five in the morning. You catching a late flight, Ken, or you returning to Linstead?" he asked.

"I have a woman in Moneague to spend the night with. I've been romancing her for a long time and she has just decided to give me a chance."

"You can help us out with some dates when this is over Ken," Mose requested.

"When you finish this job, Mose, you have to start living a life. I know that you love women so I've arranged some dates with some of them for you. They love to party and I told them that both of you were party animals. Lots of them wanted to meet you once I told them about you, but I told them that you had a little job to finish."

"Ken, I'm dying to see those girls," Mose said.

"Don't worry Mose, once you finish this job, you're going to see girls until your eyes dazzle."

"We used to help you out up North, Ken, so it's time for you to return those favors," Bucky said.

"As I said before, I have girls lined up and waiting for you, just finish the job. I'll be seeing you, keep safe," Ken said as he disappeared into the night.

Another shipment of the goods came in from Colombia on Friday night. This was the sixth shipment and all had been handled safely so far. Bonnie Josephs, one of those, who had received the letter from Paolo Colombo and had agreed to cooperate with the syndicate, took this one.

Bendoo's outfit consisted of six men. They had been hastily assembled and trained. They now alternated with the other groups in guarding the camp and sometimes going on patrols with various growers. He lay on his bed and relaxed. He doubted if they would see any action for sometime.

At eight o'clock he turned on the radio to catch the news that was coming on. He didn't feel at all hungry; he took a bottle of stout out of the refrigerator, and some ice and milk and mixed them together. He drank the tasty liquid. He took out a cigarette and lit it before opening the door and going out for a breath of fresh air and a chat. As he walked out towards the trees he saw Butler and Ardez coming up the trail. They were checked and passed by the guards. Butler called out to him as he passed. Ardez called him over.

"Bendoo, what's going on? We went to the country today, everything's cool down there. But we're watching them to see what their next move will be because I don't believe they're going to stop after they killed Niah and shot up Shower and Gungoo."

"We have the ammunition ready for them," Bendoo said as they walked along the path to Ardez's shack.

"How are your fighters, Bendoo? Are they any good?" he asked.

"Yes, Rattigan, Premba, Grosset, Butler and I are training them. They look good, like they'll fight."

"That's what the boss wants to hear," Ardez said, slapping him on his back.

He saw the newspaper in Ardez's pocket.

"Lend me that paper, Ardez."

"It's today's, I bought it this morning. You can give it back to me tomorrow," he said, handing Bendoo the paper.

He took it and the two men said good-bye. He then headed for his shack to read the paper and go to bed.

Lorena McCreed was so taken up with her job that she hardly had any spare time. She really enjoyed it and found that she could use up much of what she had gained in her studies. Her father and Fred hardly came to the hotel these days. She wasn't rushing things with Paul; they had gone out a few times after that first date. She was cautious when it came to sex, allowing him to make love to her a few times but always with a condom. She had also gone to her doctor and made him prescribe family planning pills for her when she decided that she wanted to start having sex with him. She had to admit that he was far more experienced than Bobby and the majority of her lovers since then. One day she went into his bank to cash a check and received some long stares from at least two of the girls there. When she spoke to him about it, he told her that she was imagining things. That had done nothing to ease the doubts she had about him. Her mind turned to Bendoo and she wondered where he was. She had to think that she knew nothing about him. She wondered why she was thinking about him any at all. She doubted if she would ever see him again. But there had been something about him that had stirred up something in her. Somehow she knew that they were destined to meet again. She hoped that it would be under better circumstances than their first encounter.

Lorena McCreed wasn't the only one pondering over Bendoo.

Fred Billings was certain that he had seen Bendoo already. He looked at the note again 'Bendoo is a traitor, he could be a policeman'. He looked at the man who had given him the note.

"Who gave you this note to give me?"

"A brethren name Duffus."

The man told him that Duffus had given him the message when they were in jail. As soon as he got bail he had come to deliver the message. He remembered Duffus as the guy whom the police had held for killing, Lex Malcolm.

He had given the man two hundred dollars and warned him about saying anything to anybody.

But from the meeting at Mac's bar, he remembered the face from somewhere. Now it all came back to him with his and Lorena's quarrel up in Stony Hill, the tall man, who had stopped his car to help her, believing her to be in danger. The man might have been a policeman because later she had told him that he was armed. At first he had thought she was trying to scare him. He had pressed her for his name but she had refused, probably fearing that he might cause trouble for him. He had caught more than a glimpse of the man's face and he was sure that the man now posing as Bendo was the intruder. He was no fool or else he could never have risen so high in Gus McCreed's organization. Such a piece of ingenuity on his part would be another boost in his rising status within the organization. The best person to contact now was Lorena. If she didn't want to talk, he could always find a way to get it out of her.

Chapter Nineteen

Fred reached the hotel at six o'clock that evening and made for the front desk. He asked for Lorena and was told that she was at her flat. He went and knocked on her front door.

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Fred."

"I am coming."

Damn her, he thought. She didn't have to sound so dry. She opened the door and he entered. It was a one bedroom flat assigned to senior managers at the hotel. It contained a small porch; a living and dining room plus a bedroom and bathroom.

"I never expected to see you or daddy down here for a long time. The two of you are so busy in Kingston."

"We have a lot of work to do," Fred replied, taking a seat on the couch opposite her.

"Let me fix you a drink, Fred. What do you want?"

"Make it a gin and tonic, I have to go back to Kingston tonight, so I don't want anything stronger," he replied, taking out a cigarette and lighting it.

He heard her in the kitchen mixing the drinks. He looked at the television set, but decided against turning it on. He took up the book that she had been reading. It was one of those hospital romances. He put it down, careful not to lose her page.

Presently, she returned and handed him his drink; he tasted it.

"It tastes good, it seems as if these bartenders down here have given you some good lessons."

"I can't be helping to run this big hotel and don't know anything. I do everything, I even go into the bars and serve sometimes, so you and daddy can stay there."

She took some sips of her drink.

Fred became serious.

"Lorena, do you remember the guy whom I had that run in with when you and I had that quarrel up in Stony Hill?"

She was shocked, had Fred run into Bendo again?

"I sort of remember him, but I've never seen him again. Have you seen him?"

He thought over what she had just said for a minute or so.

"A guy wants to do some work for us. I'm sure he's the same

guy. Do you remember his name?"

"You know how these things are, before you hire a man, you want to know everything about him."

"He told me that his name was Curtis Johnson but everybody called him Bendo."

He drank the last of his drink, he rested the glass on the coffee table, he looked at her.

"Lor, this guy wants to handle our security at our stores in Kingston. He told me that his name was Wesley James. I thought that he resembled Bendo so much that I said I would ask you about him."

"Maybe you'd better check him out some more, or even let me see him in person or a photograph of him."

"Well, I'll do that. I'm returning to Kingston now. I'll tell Gus what you said, I'll be seeing you, sis."

"Maybe you could try to find out where Bendo is," she advised him.

"I'll do that, Lor, goodbye," he said pecking her on her cheeks. She opened the door and he went out.

Driving back to Kingston, he was thinking, Bendo was Curtis Johnson all right, he was sure of that. He would go to the Factory and get in touch with K and ask him to look up Johnson's record and his present whereabouts.

K had returned his call and would be looking up the file on Johnson. He promised to let him have the information by Saturday afternoon. Thinking that he had done a good day's work, he decided to bed down at the Factory. There were two beds there for overnight visitors.

He knew that the time was coming up fast for him to take over from Mc Creed but this Bendo could complicate matters. If he turned out to be a policeman he would have to be tortured to tell what information he had passed to his superiors, only then could he be gotten rid of.

Fred didn't know when he dropped off to sleep. When he woke up it was in bright sunshine and by his watch it was eight o'clock. He took a hurried bath and headed for the mansion.

When he reached there he didn't find Gus. Damn him, where could he be? Fred thought. At a time like this when their enemies could strike at any time it was unbelievable that Gus could be so careless. He ate the breakfast that Caslyn fixed for him, as he was very hungry.

He decided to stay and wait on Mc Creed and also on K for the information. He took up the morning papers and moved out to the balcony.

Ken Stone returned from his latest tryst and had just left when Wally, Burke, Benny and Dickson Lunan arrived at the training camp. Wally and Benny had arrived from Miami and New York respectively. Stone had returned to Miami to arrange for the shipment next Saturday. All four arrived at the camp at ten o'clock to find the recruits doing pushups.

"I heard that you guys are doing a good job Mose," Benny shouted. Mose took a towel and wiped his face.

"Hey, you guys take a break. You've been going all morning," he said to his trainees.

He left them and walked over to where his bosses were. Bucky was there too, after dismissing his recruits too.

They walked over to the makeshift office. Burke sat around the table while the others sat on the wooden benches.

"What's the news, Burke?" Mose asked.

"I have to congratulate both of you about the job you're doing. I want to announce that our plans are going ahead as scheduled."

"Our people are coming for the weed on Saturday. We attack McCreed on Sunday. We stay put for about a week and then we move in and take control."

"Mose and I move out on Monday."

"Yes and with half of the money you're supposed to get."

Wally groaned from the hardness of the wooden bench.

"What's wrong with you, Wally?" Burke asked.

"Wally's not used to this kind of life," Benny said.

Burke laughed.

"Better get used to it, Wally. This isn't New York or Miami, this is Jamaica. From now until we get out the first shipment things are going to be rough."

"I can take care of myself, don't worry yourself," Wally replied hastily.

"I was just joking, Wally."

"What next, Gaskell?" Benny asked.

"My people in Miami are anxious to get some of the Jamaican weed," Wally said. "I want the next trip for them."

"I know that lots of people want our weed, but they have to wait until we get rid of McCreed."

"Do you know where he'll be on Sunday night?" Mose asked.

There was silence in the room.

"He'll either be at his house or at a nightclub; he's a big party-goer. All of the men have a photograph of him and know that they're to shoot to kill him on sight."

"You think that he knows about us, Burke?" Wally asked.

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