

The Money Found in the Canvass Bag
a novel by
Austin Mitchell

This is a work of fiction. Names characters, places and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead is merely coincidental.

Copyright © 2021 Austin Mitchell

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

If you purchase this book without a cover you should be aware that this book may have been stolen property and reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher. In such a case, neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

Published by.

Austin Mitchell

Chapter One

Clement and Norris were in the woods of Lobbans Ridge, cutting yam sticks when they saw two men digging away. Three other men stood around. Clement gestured to Norris to keep quiet as the latter was about to fall a tree.

He crept forward to get a closer look at what they were doing. It was around two o'clock in the afternoon.

They were in the district of Spring Vale, a large district five miles north of Linstead. The two men watched as the relief diggers finished digging the hole. They could see that it was a large hole, enough to hold a body.

The five men left and went and opened their car trunk and took out a large canvas covered object. The men had little trouble carrying it to the hole.

They dumped the bag into the hole, then heaped dirt on it. An hour after the men left, the two men were still arguing as to what to do. Clement believed that they should report what they saw, to the police.

Norris was of the opinion that they should find out what it was that the men had just buried.

"I'm sure that a body was in that tarpaulin," Clement opined.

"I haven't heard of anybody being killed around here lately. Although if it was a body, they could have killed him somewhere else and just dumped the body in Spring Vale," Norris opined.

"So, what should we do?" Clement asked.

"I vote that we find out what they were hiding before we do anything."

Both men realized that they only had machetes. They would need a shovel for getting out all that dirt. Pedro was an old man living about half a kilometer from the woods.

He did manual labor and therefore had these kinds of tools all over his yard. When the men reached, he was not there.

They were, however, lucky to find two shovels in some amount of disrepair. They then made their way back to the woods. Norris was the first to start digging.

"What if we find a body and Pedro finds out that we borrowed his shovels and then the police find the dead body. Aren't we digging ourselves into a grave?"

Norris saw the look of fear in his eyes and knew that the man was about to give up.

"We have to find out what those men buried in that hole," he said.

"As far as I am concerned, it's a body they put down there. We heard those men say so, didn't we?"

"Far as we know it could be money they hid down there. I vote we dig for it."

"I'm sure those guys belong to the Coleman gang. It was either a body or money they were hiding."

He looked at Norris. The man was brave and had once put a gunman to flight, but he would stand no chance against Coleman and his friends. He was tall and was thirty years of age. He, Clement was of medium height and built and was and was four years older.

“How are we sure that Coleman and the others won’t catch us?” Clement asked.

Norris grabbed up his shovel and moved off. Clement followed him to where they had seen the men digging the hole. Norris started to shovel out the dirt.

“You’re going to stand there and stare or are you going to help me? If you don’t help me and I find that money it will be all mine.”

“Suppose you find a body, what are you going to do?”

“Just re-bury it, what do you think I should do? Call a morgue or the police and tell them that I’ve found a dead body?” Norris asked as he threw out dirt.

The sarcasm in his voice spurred Clement into action and he grabbed his shovel and started to dig out dirt too.

The two men got down to the digging. They were matching each other, shovel full for shovel full. Finally, they reached the parcel.

“What if Pedro comes home and find his tools missing?” Clement asked.

“He has so many of them all strewn over his yard. He won’t miss two shovels that have no more use than to be thrown away.”

“He’ll want to know why we borrowed them. You knows how cantankerous he is already.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll find something to tell him. You know how he loves rum. We can buy some and give him.”

Clement burst out laughing.

“I could do with some right now.”

“If these bags contain what I think they do, you can drink all the white rum you’ll ever need.”

Chapter Two

Clement jumped out of the hole and stood looking down at the object.

“Come and help me lift it out and don’t stand up there acting as if you are scared, Clement,” Norris reprimanded him.

“If it was a body neither of us could stand where we are right now.”

Clement had to agree, but maybe the fright he was in did not make him see that. But as far as he was concerned Norris was wrong as the man had just been buried so how come the body would have started decomposing so soon.

Nevertheless, despite his doubts, he jumped down into the hole and helped Norris to haul the parcels out.

The weight of the packets and the shape assured him that it wasn’t a corpse. Norris took out his machete and cut the strings tying up the packets and there were the bundles of money.

There were two distinct bundles. There was a small amount of cash and checks. They also saw foreign money, mostly American dollars.

“See I told you, Clement. We will share it equally. It’s a good thing that we have crocus bags with us,” Norris said as he started sharing out the money.

Clement was still staring in awe at the amount of money before him. Finally, at Norris’ insistence he got down and helped him to parcel out the money.

They both examined the heaps to make sure that they were equal before putting it into their bags. They threw back the earth into the hole and set off for their respective houses.

They sneaked in to leave Pedro's shovels in his yard. Before parting, they agreed not to tell anybody, not even their families about the money.

Clement told Norris that he would lock up his money in his store-room to which only he had a key. They agreed to meet the next day to discuss what they should do with so much money.

The next morning Clement woke up to hear his ten year old son, Marvin, telling his mother, Merlene, that somebody had broken into their store room.

He quickly put on some clothes and went outside. It had rained last night and the ground was still soggy.

"Why would anybody want to break into that little store-room?" Merlene asked as Clement joined them.

Clement was dumbfounded as he made his way into the store-room. He kept mostly farming tools and seeds for planting in there.

"Marvin and I have to get ready as the taxi will soon be here, but this is all a mystery to me, Clement," Merlene said as he came out of the store-room.

"They didn't take anything. I think I'm going to report it to the police. There's nothing there for them to take," he said, resignedly as both Merlene and Marvin went inside to get ready for school.

As soon as they left, he locked up the house and headed for where Norris lived about a kilometer away. It had to be him as nobody else would have known that the money was there.

He took his longest and sharpest machete with him. He estimated that the total money had amounted to nearly a million dollars.

When he reached where Norris and his girlfriend, Paula, lived, the house was locked up. He was there calling the man's name when Ben, his neighbor, said he had seen him leaving early this morning with some bags.

He had told him that he was going to the country as his mother was ill. Clement was about to head back home when Paula arrived in a taxi. She expressed surprise at what Ben was telling her.

Clement said that they were supposed to have gone to cut some more yam sticks later that afternoon. She returned to say that he had gone with all of his clothes.

Clement knew then that the man had played him for the fool. He felt sorry for Paula when she began crying.

He stayed there and tried to console her. After about ten minutes she dried her tears and told him that she was going back inside to try and contact some of Norris' relatives in an effort to find his whereabouts.

Clement was in the woods, Tuesday evening when he heard loud voices. He darted behind some bushes.

"Where's the money, Brown-man?" a man asked.

He recognized Fuller's voice. He had been sent to prison five years ago after being convicted for the murder of two men.

The latest he had heard was that he had escaped and was now on the run. He knew that he was dead meat if he found him. Then he heard another voice that chilled his bones to the very marrow.

“Brown-man, what did you do with Bernie and where is Dudley, Sonny and Worrel?” Joseph Coleman asked.

“Why didn’t you guys, do as we told to do? Why didn’t you take the money to Elder? You disobeyed our orders and now the money can’t be found.”

“It was all Dudley and Bernie’s fault. They said you didn’t plan to give us any of the money. If you gave us any it would be a pittance. They said we should hide it in the woods. We’d come back later in the night for it, split it up and then disappear.”

Clement’s eyes were wild with fear and he knew that he should get out of the bushes in an instant in a desperate effort to get away from Coleman and Fuller.

Coleman had killed his first man in a knife fight and had gotten off those charges by proving self-defense. From then on he had been held for several murders, none of which came to trial as the witnesses never came forward.

He knew that Coleman, Fuller and another man, Robbie roamed together.

“But when you returned the money was gone. Somebody saw you burying it and decided to help themselves to what was in the canvas bag.

The five of you weren’t even smart enough to check if anybody else was in the woods and might have seen you.”

“We saw where some men had been cutting sticks,” Brown-man said.

Clement knew that while Robbie had stayed out of prison and had never gone on any wild killing sprees like his two friends he was a pretty rough customer.

It appeared that he was their spy. Both Fuller and Coleman lived underworld, surfacing to do their crimes and then disappearing again.

Clement listened as the three men inflicted more punishment on Brown-man, but the man refused to do anymore talking.

Then he heard three shots almost simultaneously. He knew that the man had been killed.

"I have to find that money and those other guys had better tell us where it is or else we are going to wipe out all of them," Coleman threatened.

Clement didn't know the dead man, Brown-man, nor Dudley or Worrell and Sonny, but he knew Bernie. He was an associate of the Coleman gang and was thought to be one of their spies.

The three killers did not leave at once, but stopped to have a smoke and to discuss their future plans. They also discussed yesterday's operation and what had gone wrong.

A courier service vehicle had run into a roadblock mounted by some of the Coleman gang members. Two of the security guards had fled. The other two were tied up, blindfolded and left in some bushes.

Brown-man and Dudley along with Bernie, Worrel and Sonny were to bring the money to a secret location where Elder would take it from them.

But the five men had disappeared and by the time the gang managed to hold Brown-man there was no sign of the other four men or the money.

“Who lives at Dudley’s house?” Coleman asked.

“He has a woman there and two children,” Robbie replied.

“We are going to take them away and hold them until he gives us back our money,” Coleman said.

“Maybe we should kill one of them just to show him how serious we are,” Fuller suggested.

“Come, let us go up there, we might just do as you said Fuller,” Coleman stated.

“What are we going to do with Brown-man’s body?” Robbie asked.

“We’ll come back for it later tonight. We can throw it in the bog hole,” Coleman replied as they moved out.

The bog hole was a deep hole in the woods. They said caves were underneath, but nobody had ever investigated.

Clement knew that many persons had suspicions that the bodies of a lot of persons who had disappeared without a trace could be found down there.

Norris had moved to the village of Keswick five miles from where he used to live. Surprisingly, he got the small half-side of a house to rent.

That same day he bought the necessary furniture and appliances and moved them into his new lodgings. He had also heard of housing lots being sold in a neighboring district of Rennals and was able to pay down on one of them.

He knew that if he didn't develop the land, he could always sell it back and make a profit. He was also going by the name of Leon.

He bought the Sunday papers and checked the automobile section. He was able to negotiate the price of two cars from two men who had advertised their cars for sale.

He took a mechanic to look at them. A man told him about lines he could use to get a public passenger vehicle licence plates.

He paid the necessary money. The insurance and other government duties burned another hole in his pocket.

He decided against driving one of the taxis as if the Coleman gang got wind that he was driving a taxi, they would be sure to investigate.

He could tell them that he was only hired as the driver. Still by the end of the week he was able to hire two competent drivers.

He thought of going for Paula, but decided against it. If Clement went to the police, then they would be watching her. Coleman and his cronies would also be watching her.

She couldn't handle the type of businesses he was planning to set up. He wanted a woman with a good head for business.

Yvette Newland was a thirty-year-old woman and she operated her own wholesale in Keswick. Six years earlier, she had to leave the district of Nelson.

She had met Brenton Newland in Nelson when she had come to teach school there. In another year they were married and with her help, he started a three-bedroom house on his father's property.

It was finished in no time. They built a bar and were operating it successfully for two years during which time she failed to get pregnant. Then Brenton went on the farm work program.

He wrote her regularly, but after four months she stopped hearing from him. His mother, father and brothers stopped talking to her.

One day she and Daphne, his eldest sister were quarreling and the girl told her that her brother was not coming back to her.

The sixth month when he should have returned home came and went and there was not a sign of him.

Then Daphne told her that he had written to her telling her to move her kids into the house he had built with Yvette's money.

She eventually moved out and with her savings, opened this wholesale. She gave up teaching and lived off the income from her shop.

She had seen Leon around the place and noted that he was a newcomer. He had come into her shop a couple of times and she was curious to know if he had a woman.

She was alone in the shop that evening at about six o'clock when he walked in.

“Hi, Yvette, how are you?” he asked. Everybody called her Yvette so she did not mind him using her first name.

He ordered his supplies and she began to serve him.

“Where do you live, Leon? I’m sure you don’t live in Keswick.”

“I live over in Nelson.”

They talked some more. Both of them felt they had something in common. Norris got to realize that she lived alone, but inquires soon made him realize what had happened to her.

He was looking for a woman to be his lover and business partner. He would eventually have to let her in on a lot of things such as how he came by so much money, but he had to be confident that she wouldn’t let him down by going to the police.

He remembered what had happened to Rory Harper. Rory had robbed a businessman in Manor Park of thousands of dollars and fled to a district called Barnett near to Above Rocks. He had set up shop there and got involved with a woman by the name of Precious. A year later she had a child for him. They were making a success of the business when Precious got involved with a policeman. She told him everything and when Rory refused to pay off the policeman he was arrested and charged.

Precious and the policeman were running the business now. The policeman was still in the force. He didn’t remember how many years in prison Rory had gotten, but it was a substantial amount. The businessman claimed that Rory had shot him before robbing him.

Precious had denied knowing that Rory was a robber or a gunman.

So he had to be careful in choosing a woman to be his partner as anything could go wrong. He felt that Rory had been too soft on Precious. Any woman he linked up with he would let them know that if they doublecrossed him he would kill them.

Chapter Three

Yvette in the meantime was also checking out Norris. She liked his tall, lean, muscular body, strong and firm face. She did not think that he would back down from anybody.

So that day when he asked her to the party in Nelson she did not hesitate in accepting his invitation. She was a tall woman with a good figure. Her breasts were very firm and like Norris she had copper colored skin.

Clement was sure that he was being watched. He had identified the taxi that had taken Norris out of Spring Vale. Wilbert, the taxi driver, told him that he had dropped him in Old Harbour.

He did not tell him where he was going. He knew that there must have been about a million dollars in that bag and Norris had taken it all.

He had consulted Colbert Bryan about what had happened to him. The two men had agreed terms. Colbert would get fifteen percent of the money plus Clement would refund him back his expenses once they found Norris and got the money from him.

They were sitting outside John Taylor's bar in Linstead.

"So where do you think he could be?" Colbert asked.

He was a stout fellow of medium height with brown complexion, who was not otherwise employed. He did a lot of scamming and gambling and cooperation with Clement was right in his line of work.

"The taxi took him to Linstead, but after that he just disappeared."

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

