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## **Dallus' Gun**

*a short story*

*by Austin Mitchell*

*From where I was sitting, the men couldn't see me. They were Jackson (Jack) Brown, Duncan Archie and Reece Dickson. They were planning to take away old man, Astley Dallus's gun, tonight. Dallus would be about sixty-five years of age and many persons were wondering if it wasn't time for him to give up his gun. He formerly drove heavy duty vehicles all over the island for several construction companies.*

*He wasn't shaky or anything. He drove to Kingston every morning to sell juices in an open back pick-up. He owned about ten acres of land on which he planted oranges and some cash crops. These he sold to local higglers, he also bagged some of his oranges and took them into Kingston to sell.*

*We wondered how any of those boys in Kingston never tried to get his gun away from him. If my memory served me right Dallus had killed about five men. The last one was Winston Archie. Archie had attacked him late one night after Dallus caught him with a bag of his oranges. Dallus had challenged him and Archie had attacked him with a machete. Dallus had fired shots, two of which caught Archie. He had died on the way to hospital. Dallus got off the charge as he was able to prove self-defense. Duncan Archie was Winston's son.*

*"Once we get his gun, we're in business," Jack said.*

*As far as I knew the only one who knew anything about guns was Jack. He was a tall man, around twenty-eight years of age. He had been kicked out of the police force about five years ago. He had tried to join several security agencies, but had apparently run into problems with most of them. He had even tried to set up one himself before returning home to our district to loaf about the place.*

*"That old man is a wizard with a gun. None of us could go up against him and expect to live," Duncan opined. He had done at least two prison terms for robbery.*

*"We'll have to wait until he's asleep then we go in on him and get that gun," Reece stated.*

*It was agreed that Jack would lead the attack. Another man, Wayne (Waynie) Moore, who was not there, would join them later. I assumed that he was watching Dallus' house. It was agreed that the attack would start at two o'clock. I knew that it was minutes to eleven o'clock.*

*I lay in the bushes and wondered what to do. I decided to creep out and go home. I had left high school five years ago. I had been trained as a chef. I had been employed up to two months ago until Aston Dixon got into trouble with the government for not paying his taxes. He had assured us that as soon as he settled things with the authorities he would open again. I wasn't sure about that and was looking around for other opportunities.*

*As I made my way home, I was still unsure about what to do. The police station was about two miles away. Dallus' house was near the main road. My house was on a parochial road. I could see Dallus' house from my house. I don't think I could see what was happening at his house as there was no moon.*

*I was sleeping when I heard the shouts.*

*"They've shot Dallus! They've shot Dallus!"*

*I jumped out of my bed, put on my clothes. It had started drizzling so I grabbed a coat, put it over my head and ran down to Dallas' yard.*

*"They've gone with him to the hospital. It's a lot of shots he got. It looks as if he's dead. They took away his gun," a man named Jamesy, told me.*

*People were milling up and down the road. I could hear Dallas' two teenaged daughters crying.*

*A man called Fred came up to me. He had an umbrella covering his head. The drizzle had gotten heavier now. He was a medium sized copper colored man. Unlike him, I was almost six feet tall and of brown complexion. He was about two years older than me.*

*"I know who killed Dallas and I know who has his gun too."*

*I didn't ask him any questions nor did I let him know that I also knew who and what was behind Dallas' murder.*

*"So, are you going to the police with what you know?"*

*"Are you mad? Those men would shoot me down like a dog."*

*We parted just as the police came on the scene.*

*The next night, Johnny James, a shop and bar operator, was held up at home and his firearm taken along with money stolen. The next week, Larry Dacres, a sand miner, was held up at his house. His firearm and ammunition were taken plus all the money he had in the house.*

*I went to Fred and asked him about the information he had. After much persuasion he gave me three names. It was a completely different set of men from those I had heard planning Dallas' murder!*

*"How do you know that these guys were the ones who butchered Dallas?"*

*"I saw all of them run past my house, the night they killed him."*

*Fred lived about three houses from where Dallas lived.*

*I gave him the names of the men I heard planning to kill Dallas and take away his gun.*

*Could all of these men be involved? Maybe the two groups had teamed up in carrying out Dallas' murder.*

*"How about backing up one of the guys I told you about? We could find out if they were involved," I opined.*

*"Are you crazy? Those guys would never admit to us that they were involved in murder."*

*"So, what do we do? We can't go to the police station because as you said Waynie is staked out to watch it."*

*"Why not grab one of them one of these nights? Maybe we could get something out of him," I again put in.*

*Fred gave it some more consideration.*

*"All right, let's try after Duncan."*

*"Why, Duncan?"*

*"I'm sure he's involved. Maybe it's a whole gang, they have operating."*

*We agreed to do it the next night.*

*\*\*\**

*"I don't know what's going on. I don't know who is doing these things. I have an idea, but I'm not going to say anything," Duncan stated. He was a medium sized brown guy.*

*"But it's being strongly rumored that you are involved, Duncan. They say you, Reece and Jack are the leaders of the gang," I stated.*

*He whirled on me.*

*"Where the hell did you get that from?"*

*"I won't tell you who told me."*

*"I know you're not involved, Duncan. I told Bilton so and he didn't believe me."*

*"Dallus always believed that you would come after him one of these days for what he did to your father," I declared.*

*"Another thing, maybe the police haven't got around to it yet. But can you prove that you were somewhere else on the night Dallus was murdered?"*

*"He told you that, Bilton? Listen, on the night Dallus was murdered I was in my bed fast asleep."*

*"Can you prove it?"*

*"Why are you asking me all these questions? Are you working for the police?"*

*"The only reason, I'm asking you all these questions is because old man Dallus was kind to all of us guys. We used to travel in his van free from school. We could even pick one or two of his oranges and he didn't say anything."*

*"He murdered my father for no reason. What are a few oranges? You have to kill a man for that? That old man deserved everything he got. I'm not sorry he's dead."*

*I felt it was no use reminding him that Winston had attacked Dallus with a machete.*

*Duncan suddenly got up.*

*"Listen, I'm leaving. You can go to hell, Bilton! You're no police, you can't pin Dallus' murder on me."*

*He stalked away.*

*"I think you are involved, Duncan. I want to see what you're going to do when the police lock you up," I shouted after him.*

*He whirled around.*

*"Since you know so much, Bilton, why don't you go and ask Jack?"*

*He started walking faster now. It was obvious that he didn't want us to ask him any more questions.*

*I again told Fred what I had heard that night. He sat back puzzling over what I told him.*

*"You know what I think, Bilton, they had a falling out. But I just don't know who exactly carried out the murder."*

*"Since Duncan doesn't want to tell us, we'll have to try after somebody else," I told him.*

*"How about Reece? He's around, working as a barber with Border Smith down in the village square."*

*About two nights after that we confronted Reece.*

*"I'm surprised the police haven't taken you in, Reece. It's all over the place that you are involved in the recent spate of robberies. I've heard that you were the one who killed Dallus," I told him. He was a stout, copper colored man.*

*"Go to hell, Bilton! I'm down at Border's shop cutting peoples' hair. Border can testify to that."*

*"On the night of Dallus' murder where were you?" Fred asked him.*

*Reece didn't answer us. Instead, he cursed some bad words before heading back to the barber shop.*

*Just then two men, Steadman and Darry rode up on separate motorcycles. They stopped the motorcycles at my feet. Darry was in his early thirties while Steadman was in his late twenties. Both men had done at least a term for robbery. Both men were six footers. Darry was copper colored while Steadman was dark.*

*"I heard you've been asking questions about Dallus' murder, Bilton and Fred," Darry remarked.*

*"Yeah, so what? Aren't you anxious to find out who killed Dallus?" I asked.*

*"Of course, but I'm leaving it to the police," Darry replied.*

*"We're just asking around, seeing that Dallus was our neighbor," Fred replied.*

*"What are you two guys afraid of? If you were not involved in his killing then you have nothing to fear," I told them.*

*Both men started their bikes.*

*"You two guys might just talk too much," Steadman warned, before he and Darry rode away.*

*"What the hell did he mean by that?" Fred asked.*

*I shook my head.*

*"I think we should drop it, Fred. This thing is bigger than both of us."*

*"Yeah, maybe you're right," he said before we parted.*

*I had a kilometer to walk to my house. I had only gone a quarter of that when I heard gunshots. They came from the direction Fred had taken. I immediately ran to see what had happened.*

*I was the first person to reach there. It was Fred! He had been shot! He lay sprawled out on the ground.*

*"Fred, Fred!"*

*He groaned.*

*He was lying on his left side now. It looked like a shoulder wound just below his right collar bone. Blood was pouring out of the wound, reddening up his shirt. Other people were coming onto the scene now.*

*"Fred, can you hear me? Are you feeling any pain?"*

*He let out a loud groan and pointed to where he had gotten the bullet wound.*

*"We've got to get him to the hospital," a middle-aged woman named Miss Agnes, said.*



*A taximan named Lefty drove up and stopped. He came out of the car. I told him what had happened.*

*Lefty agreed to take Fred to the hospital in Spanish Town. I agreed to go with them along with Fred's girlfriend, Tena, who had just arrived.*

*When I returned home, I packed some clothes and left Keswick for Jackson, five miles away. I was staying with some of my relatives. I had phoned them before coming.*

*A week later, I got a job in a restaurant as an assistant chef. A month later I heard that Fred had left hospital, but had relocated to Nelson, two miles from Keswick.*

*One Sunday a week later, I went to see him.*

*"I must thank you and Lefty for getting me to hospital."*

*"That's all right, Fred, so how are you feeling now?"*

*"The wound has completely healed. All I want is a job and I'll be all right."*

*I forgot that he used to work for Ramsay's Hardware which was the largest hardware in Keswick.*

*I told him that I hoped that he would soon get a job. I told him about my job in the restaurant.*

*"So who do you think shot you, Fred?"*

*We were drinking beers. He took two swallows of his beer before replying.*

*"It could have been any one of those guys. I don't know."*

*I couldn't blame him for not wanting to point fingers at anybody. I had my own suspicions that Darry and Steadman had been the ones who ambushed him.*

*I knew that up to now nobody had been arrested for Dallus' murder.*  
*Two*

*"It's pure criminals in Keswick now. Nearly every shop get robbed. The police are not doing anything to stop it. They lock up some guys, but they soon released them."*

*"It's three weeks now since Dallus has been buried and they haven't found his killers yet," he finished.*

*He drank some more of his beer I drank some more of mine.*

*"It's a lot of men killed that old man. I heard that the family hired a private detective to help the police."*

*According to him, Dallus eldest daughter, Jacinth, was married to a very rich Englishman. She had attended her father's funeral and swore to get his killers.*

*I knew Jacinth. She was about fifteen years older than me.*

*The man they had hired was a former police Inspector by the name of Ralph Young. I knew of him as he had once worked in Keswick as a Corporal. Even then he had been a no-nonsense sort of policeman.*

*I remember him arresting Chapo Bell and Tex Biggerton, two of the toughest men in Keswick. Both men never returned to the area after serving their prison sentences.*

*Goffeman told me that he would be passing through the district on a regular basis, so he would update me on any new developments. I understood later that he was checking a young lady who lived about a kilometer from where I was living.*

*A week later, Ralph came to see me. It was a Saturday afternoon and we were at the back of Luddy's bar talking.*

*He was a tall man whose hair was just turning gray. I guess he was in his late fifties. He had taken early retirement.*

*"What do you have to tell me about Dallus' murder? You don't have to worry about telling me anything."*

*I took some more of the beer I was drinking.*

*"That's why I relocated down here. I felt that after they shot Fred, they would have come after me."*

*"Oh, Fred, but he still doesn't know who shot him."*

*I was surprised to hear him say that, but maybe Fred still didn't want to cast suspicions on anyone.*

*He took out his notebook.*

*"I want you to come clean with me, Bilton, no holding back. Anything you tell me stays with me."*

*I took some more swallows of my beer.*

*"I can only tell you what I saw and heard, nothing else."*

*"Okay, fair with me, as I said everything you say is safe with me."*

*So, I told him what I had seen and heard that night. He was busy as hell taking down his notes. When I was finished, he bought me another beer.*

*"I hope people would be frank and as honest as you, Bilton. I know what you've told me will help."*

*"I sure hope it does."*

*He then left, saying that he would contact me if he needed any further information.*

*I knew that I had to be careful. There were spies all around. I wondered if Ralph was being spied upon. Certainly, word would have gotten back to the guys in Keswick that he had been to see me. So, what, nobody would know what I told him plus I wasn't a witness to Dallus' murder.*

*How wrong I was. The next day I received a phone call from a man trying to disguise his voice.*

*"Bilton, keep your mouth shut, if you know what's good for you."*

*The man ended the call before I could gather my wits about me. I didn't know the number nor did I recognize the voice. I called some people in Keswick but nobody knew whose number it was.*

*Two days later Goffeman rode through the area.*

*"Ralph threatened Darry and Steadman last night. He accused them of shooting Dallus."*

*We were sitting in Luddy's bar in the village square drinking white rum.*

*"So, what did they do?"*

*"They threatened him in turn, but Ralph told them that he wasn't afraid of them."*

*"So, do you think he will solve Dallus' murder? Do you think he knows who did it?"*

*"If it wasn't Steadman and Darry, then they are involved," I opined. After he left, I drank some more rum before I went home.*

*About a week later I decided to venture into Keswick. There was a dance being held down there. I rode a bike that I borrowed from one of my cousins. I was dancing with my girlfriend when a man called Boyd touched me on my arm.*

*I told my girlfriend to excuse me and went to see what he wanted.*

*"I just saw Steadman and Darry. They just finished drinking down at Delroy's bar. They have gone for more men. They were swearing after you. I don't know how they know that you were in Keswick."*

*I returned inside the dance and told my girl what was going down. I dropped her home and decided to take a different route to get out of Keswick.*

*I was riding my bike on a lonely stretch of road when I heard the sound of several bikes further down the road. I rode my bike on an overhead road and hid it in some bushes. From where I was, I could look down on the road. There were about five bikes with pillion riders. They were talking very loudly.*

*"I must shoot that guy, Bilton tonight," Darry threatened.*

*"After we get rid of him, we are going after Fred," Steadman told them.*

*I didn't hear anything more as they rode out of earshot. I phoned Fred but didn't get him. I went to my bike and rode home. I called Fred again, but didn't get him.*

*The next day, Boyd called me to say that Darry and the others had returned and were looking for me.*

*A week later I heard that several men had tried to ambush Ralph. In the ensuing shootout, he had shot and wounded one of the men, Carlston.*

*"It was like a war. I saw Ralph hiding behind a wall and shooting," Goffeman told me.*

*"Do you know who was shooting at him?"*

*"I saw Steadman, Darry, Carlston and Jack," he replied.*

*"Do you think Ralph knows who was shooting at him?"*

*"It was dark and they all ran away after the shooting. Only Carlston was captured."*

*My God, I thought so Jack was involved. I had always wondered if the men I heard plotting Dallus' murder had been the ones who had done it. I remember that Fred had said that Carlston was also a member of the gang.*

*Carlston had relocated to Keswick after spending many years in Kingston. Rumor had it that he had shot a man down there and was hiding out in Keswick. He was a short, thick, copper colored guy.*

*Goffeman left to run some more errands.*

*I was left thinking Fred had given me the names of Dallus' attackers. Did the men I heard plotting the attack and the men Fred said he saw, the only ones involved in the murder?*

*I wondered how Ralph was getting on. Based on what I knew Fred had given him the information on Dallus' killers. Another man I knew by the name of Hudson told me that he had given him information too.*

*The next week there was a shoot-out between Ralph, Darry and Steadman. Both fugitives managed to escape without being injured.*

*I was in the area that Saturday night when all hell broke loose. A party of policemen had backed up Jackson Brown, Darry, Steadman and the others.*

*There was a fierce exchange of gunfire.*

*"Give yourselves up men," the Sergeant leading the attack shouted at them.*

*"Go to hell! We have bigger guns than you," Jack shouted as he let off a barrage of gunfire from his assault rifle at the cops.*

*I was hiding behind a wall when I heard the cops calling for back up. It appeared that one of them had been hit.*

*Five minutes later two patrol cars swept into the area but, by then the gunmen had fled into nearby bushes.*

*The police combed the area and other areas where bad men usually hung out, but the gunmen had apparently disappeared.*

*I rode my borrowed bike home that night, wary that guys were hiding out in bushes ready to pounce on any easy targets like passers-by or motorcycle riders.*

*I was at a dance in Keswick the next week. Ralph was also at a dance. I think he was at the dance to pick up more information on the case. He left the dance at about twelve o'clock. As he walked to his car, gunshots rang out. I saw him dive behind his car, but I doubted if he'd been hit. I didn't know who were the guys attacking him, although I suspected who they were.*

*"You're finished, Ralph," I heard a voice like Jack, shout out.*

*We could see Ralph kneeling behind his car and firing at his attackers.*

*But I doubted if he would last as the men had him surrounded. Then they started to move, to run rings around him and maybe confuse him before moving in for the kill. It seemed as if Ralph wasn't giving up and that he had more than one gun. Then I heard a man shout.*

*"I've been hit!"*

*"What the hell! We're coming for you, Ralph!" Darry shouted.*

*Then I heard a shout and realized that policemen from the local station had joined in the fight. The fighting continued for another half hour. When it was over, it transpired that Steadman was the man shot and wounded. Reece Dickson was caught with a gun.*

*The police began rounding up the rest of the gang. We eventually learned that apart from Steadman, Darry, Jackson Brown, Reece Dixon and Carlston, two other men were involved. They were Wayne Moore and Dennis Reid. We learned that the latter man had joined the gang after Dallus' murder.*

*At the trial we learned that Jackson Brown had been the trigger man on the night Dallus was murdered. All of them received life sentences.*

*Duncan Archie could not escape being charged as an accessory to murder and received a twenty-year prison sentence. The police eventually caught Wayne Moore but Dennis Reid is still on the run. The End.*

*Epilogue: I returned to Keswick and started a small restaurant as Dixon had still not solved his problems with the tax people. Fred returned too, and got back his job at Ramsay's Hardware.*



*This story was taken from the collection of short stories, The Worst is Over Now by Austin Mitchell.*

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