

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Nothing personal – It's only business*

In the underworld the poker table has long been the equivalent of a board room table. A subtle undercurrent of information flows around the poker table in the same way as it flows around a legitimate business meeting in a hotel conference room. The winners and the losers at the poker table share in secrets that are far more valuable than an ace high straight flush. Secrets about insider trading and stock market scams. Secrets about cars stolen from the streets of North America and shipped in containers to Russian criminals in Europe. On this particular evening several members of Montreal's infamous West End Gang were discussing Rhuiz Aleverra and why he had been murdered. Aleverra had been a small time player in the Canadian dope trade. The newspapers described him as a South American mule and theorized correctly that he had been murdered by rivals in the drug game. The cops said a silencer had been used. Irving Goldberg confirmed that rumour while embellishing his reputation as one of the West End Gang's more colourful criminals.

"He shouldn't have done it the way he did."

"It got the message out."

"It created hard feelings."

"Anytime you cap a guy it creates hard feelings."

"The cops put a twenty man task force on the case."

"Who told you that, Irv?"

"I have friends."

“Do the cops have any idea who did it?”

“Not yet but they’re pulling out all the stops to find out who does.”

“It will wash over, Irv.”

“It’s putting a kink in our business. Let’s play cards.”

“Where is J.P. tonight? How come he didn’t come play cards with us?”

“He’s at the hockey game with Frankie. He doesn’t really like poker.”

“Just as well.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I don’t want to take his money at the table and have him pissed off at me. He’s already got a short fuse.”

“Like a ferret with a hard-on.”

“I wouldn’t know, Louie. Most of my dates are human.”

“Enough of the bullshit boys, let’s play cards.”

“So he left the kid laying there with a knife up his ass.”

“I don’t know if J.P. wants you talking about that, Freddie.”

“He was sending a message.”

“I already said that he shouldn’t have done it the way he did.”

“It got the message out.”

“At a cost. It’s your call Harry.”

“I see Louie’s double and raise him fifty.”

“That’s pretty steep, Harry. I fold.”

“So how long have Frankie and J.P. been working together now?”

“Since they met in school.”

“I thought they met in Juvy.”

“That came later.”

“Frankie was a pro boxer at one time, wasn't he?”

“That was a few years ago”

“Did you ever see him fight?”

“Before my time.”

“I heard he could really take a punch.”

“That's kind of like saying he couldn't throw one.”

“He still seems a little punchy if you ask me.”

“He would have made it into the big leagues if he hadn't got busted and sent to Archambault.”

“A lot of wops were in the fight game in the old days. Even old man Marino was a wrestler when he first got off the boat.”

“I used to like watching the midget wrestling. Remember Little Bear and his cousin what's his name. . . . those two Indian midget wrestlers. What happened to them?”

“They lost their jobs due to political correctness.”

“Speaking about political correctness, I was reading yesterday about a purse snatching in downtown Montreal. The reporter said to be on the lookout for a non-white male about six feet tall. How the fuck are they supposed to catch the guy when they won't even give his race in the papers?”

“Our politicians used to kiss babies, now they kiss immigrant assholes.”

“Fucking Muslims. Every time anyone says anything about Muslims those fuckers get uppity. They’ll blow a skyscraper up for offending their fucking Allah but no one gives a shit about them telling Jesus jokes.”

“I don’t think I ever heard a Jesus joke, Harry.”

“They got ‘em.”

“Fucking Muslims.”

“Spear-chuckers”

“Camel-jockeys.”

“Shit-smears.”

“Sand-monkeys.”

“They think they’re not fucking black. “

“Your call, Harry.”

“I’m in.”

“Freddie, what were you saying before? About the Alevera kid. What’s this about leaving him with a knife up his ass?”

“J.P. gave him an Ottawa enema.”

“What the fuck is that?”

“He used a bread knife on him. Carved him up and then stuck the knife up the kid’s ass.”

“That must have hurt.”

“The little fucker kept his squash shut until J.P. got tired of torturing him and gave him two in the head.”

“That will make those Spics think twice about moving their shit in our territory.”

“Where did J.P. and Frankie catch up to little Ruiz?”

“The kid was living in that tower on de Maisoneuve called the Radisson. It’s got security, fancy lobby, doorman, the whole nine yards.”

“How did they get past security?”

“They went in through the service entrance.”

“What about the cameras?”

“They kept their squashes down and they both wore a disguise. Frankie had on a yellow city workers uniform with a plastic construction hat that he bought at a five and dime store. He showed it to me before he went on the score. The hat was like three sizes too small. I had a hard time trying not to laugh. They went up the stairs to avoid the cameras and hid in the laundry closet until little Rhuiz came up the elevator. The kid lived on the top floor. Frankie sez his legs were burning from the walk up.”

“I know that place. I was thinking of moving in and I checked it out once. Nice place but how could little Rhuiz afford a pad like that?”

“He must have been into more action than we thought.”

“Not any more.”

“Alfie Herrera is still in big action.”

“Not for long.”

“What have you got planned, Irv?”

“You’ll see. Let’s play cards.”

**Postscript:** Jean Paul and his partner Frankie were unaware of the advances of DNA testing at the time of their crime. Otherwise they might have considered cutting out and removing a section of bloody carpet beneath Ruiz Alevera’s body or at least adding some bleach to the mix to mask the evidence that was left behind at the scene of their crime. A great many criminals today are paying a price for their ignorance about DNA evidence,

with long sentences that come many years and even decades after their crimes have been committed. As far as most people are concerned, the new research in DNA testing is just one more step up for the good guys.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *G Section*

Brian Fox threaded his low slung sports car between three lanes of traffic and pressed down on the gas. At six feet one inch tall, and one hundred and eighty pounds in weight, he fit snugly into the black leather seat of his vintage 1965 Austin Healy. He glanced at his wristwatch, and then up shifted to fourth. Of all the mornings to sleep in, he chided himself, as he pressed harder on the accelerator triggering a second Webber carburetor to cut in. The Healy's six cylinder overhead cam made sweet music to his ears as he accelerated past a Ford sedan and a four door Plymouth. He watched the two North American dinosaurs shrink and disappear in his rear view mirror as he pushed down on the throttle. He removed his hand from the gear shift long enough to crank the heater knob to full open and then he switched the heater fan to its highest setting in an attempt to draw some warmth into the chilly cockpit of the Healy. The addition of a hardtop at the beginning of fall had helped matters somewhat but by the end of November there were enough icy drafts leaking through the passenger compartment of the British sports car to overcome any warmth that trickled in from the antiquated heater. Nevertheless, Brian enjoyed the challenge of driving at this time of year when the cold weather thickened the oil in the Healy's shocks turning an already superb road machine into the equivalent of an Indy racer. He dropped back to third before drifting through a sweeping left hand curve onto Redpath Crescent, and then pulled to the red line before up-shifting again. Another week or two and the white stuff would hit the streets. Salt would be spread onto the roads and the Healy would have to be put away for the duration of winter. As he made his way through the city, the Mountie's thoughts left the sports car's cockpit to review the dossiers he had been studying over the weekend. The first dossier that came to mind was on

Alfredo Herrera. Not much was known about Herrera although street talk had it that Alfie was into some heavy drug action. The young man seemed to be out of place in the world of international munitions brokers and drug dealers he was allegedly running with. The key to Alfie's involvement with these people could well lay in his choice of college courses thought the Mountie as he downshifted again. Before he dropped out in his third year of University, Alfredo Herrera had switched his major from Modern Languages to Political Science. Maybe that's why he was so involved in the game he was playing. A car horn blared in his ear and the Mountie's thoughts swung back to the pavement rushing only inches beneath his seat. Better to be a few minutes late than to have an accident, he chided himself as he slowed to a modest twenty miles per hour over the speed limit. A second dossier popped into his mind. This one concerned the manipulations of duly elected governments in the Caribbean and the southern hemisphere. The Soviet Union was thought to be behind these destabilizing influences along with her ally Cuba. External forces allegedly backed by Cuba were reported to be gathering on the island of Jamaica where they were purported to be attempting some kind of political coup during the upcoming Jamaican elections. The head of this group was suspected to be a Cuban *agent provocateur* named Marcos Esquinapa. The dossier on Esquinapa was thin to the point of being emaciated. He was born in Cuba. He was of medium build and short at about five foot six or seven. He had no known identifying marks or scars.

Brian Fox turned down Peel Street and then swung onto de Maisoneuve Street, avoiding a meter wide pothole that would have torn the mufflers from the undercarriage of his low slung car. Damned road construction! Did it ever stop?

He completed the last leg of his journey without further event, arriving at the RCMP headquarters building on Dorchester Boulevard a few minutes after nine AM. The ultra modern glass and aluminum headquarters structure loomed like a cold fortress over the street, blocking out the morning sun and creating a pocket of frigid air by the entrance to

the underground garage. The Healy's engine reverberated crisply off the concrete walls as Brian entered the building and descended in a circular route to his parking space. He waited a moment before switching off the car. Oil pressure good. Water temperature good. He listened for a moment to the staccato chatter of the pistons firing before he turned off the ignition and the engine died instantly. Juggling an armload of file folders, Brian made his way to a bank of elevators a short distance away. He signed into the building at the mezzanine level and then switched to one of six waiting cars on the north wall's bank of elevators. Seven floors later he stepped into the sterile ambiance of an open-aired office filled with strategically placed desks and movable room dividers. Brian signed in and picked up his messages before hurrying through an office that was filled with uniformed and plain-clothed RCMP officers. Weaving his way through a maze of walkways and aisles that divided the office cubicles, he was assaulted by jangling telephones, clicking keyboards and the monotone drone of muffled conversations. This was G section, a division of the RCMP whose members were referred to as the cream of the crop. There were no junkies to deal with here. No bank robbers or thieves. Hookers occasionally, but not the street variety. The prostitutes G section dealt with could carry on a conversation about the world commodities market, the New York Mets or the theories of Sigmund Freud.

"Late again?"

The question came from Jerome Laframboise, a big moose-jawed Frenchman from the Gaspé region of Quebec. At six foot-four Jerome was built like a lumberjack, with massive shoulders and hands the size of kitchen skillets. Laframboise was so tall and large that he looked like an adult in pre-school sitting at his standard issue desk. Brian was glad to count the man amongst his allies rather than his enemies. The Mountie's smile dissolved into a frown as he looked up at the small red light that glowed above a door to a free standing structure in the center of the open-aired office. The twenty-five watt bulb situated above the door to the conference room was unquestionably lit,

indicating that a meeting was in session. The door below the red light was the only entrance into a lead-lined room which had no windows. The War Room was a room within a room, an island in an ocean of policemen, totally safe from wiretapping or electronic eavesdropping.

"How long has the light been on?"

"Only a couple of minutes."

"Any messages come in this morning?"

"One from Thibeault over at homicide looking for more information on the Alevera murder."

"If he calls again, tell him I'll get back to him as soon as this meeting is over."

Brian dropped his armload of documents on his desk and then eased open the door to the darkened conference room.

"You're late, Brian" Chief Inspector Alphonse Leroux called from the darkness as light spilled into the War Room from the outer office. The only other light in the conference room came from a small slide projector that sat at the closest end of a long polished rosewood table. Without bothering to look up, Chief Inspector Leroux directed Brian to a chair while he fiddled with a cassette of slides in the projector's carousel.

"Sorry sir. Traffic was heavy this morning."

"Take a seat but first say hello to Cal Russell of the Central Intelligence Agency," the Inspector replied without raising his eyes from the slide machine. "You already know the rest of the task force."

It took a few seconds for the Mountie's eyes to adjust to the darkness after the conference room door swung closed behind him. Brian nodded to Russell who was seated next to the Chief and then found his way to the nearest empty chair across the table. Light from the Kodak projector revealed Calvin Russell to be of medium build. A bit thick around the middle, but otherwise in decent shape for a man of about fifty years of age. He was dressed in a dark suit with a striped tie. Russell's hair was short and curly. His

complexion was tanned although, in the darkened room, it was difficult to determine how much was due to tan and how much was due to his black heritage. Harry Connors was down from Toronto. John Brophy was in from Halifax. Brian knew the seven other members of the task force, having worked with all of them at one time or another during his nine year career.

Chief Leroux cleared his throat and began speaking.

"Gentlemen, if I may have your attention, please. Commander Russell has recently come from the United States," the Chief began, grappling for his mustache as he always did when he spoke to two or more persons at a time, "to bring us some new information on the Herrera file. Some of the material that he has brought us today we have seen before. On the other hand some of the material is new and should be of considerable interest to those of you actively involved in the Herrera case. However we may have to change the name of the file because according to this latest information we are now certain that Alfredo Herrera is little more than a front for this man." The Chief snapped the projector's remote control button with a practiced flourish to display a grainy image that had been taken sometime over the past thirty years. A slim man of almost tiny stature stood glowering into the camera lens from the pull down screen on the far wall. The man was wearing a European suit with narrow lapels and a narrow tie. His face was leathered with age and his hair was slicked straight back over two ears that protruded like dried apricots from the side of his head. His deep set eyes were obscured by the shadows of a jungle that was quite probably in South America.

"This is the only known photograph we have of Marcos Esquinapa. As you can see, we have a man who would be about forty to fifty years of age today. His height is five-seven or eight. His weight is approximately one hundred and fifty pounds. His hair is receding and possibly dyed. Don't let his appearance deceive you. This man is extremely dangerous."

The video machine clicked one more time.

"Ahh yes, our own Alfredo Herrera. Born in Cuba circa 1970. Alfie came to Canada as a landed immigrant in the early eighties. Height, six feet-one inch. Weight, one hundred and seventy pounds. Nice looking boy. This is a photograph taken from his most recent McGill College yearbook. Alfie represents a local embarrassment, until we can ship him off to Archambault. Or perhaps, since Ontario has a higher class of criminal, we should ship him off to Millhaven, *n'est ce pas*, Harry?"

"We can always find space for a college student," Harry Connors responded dryly. "In fact Millhaven has the most modern library in the prison system."

"*Eh bien*. Another first for Ontario. But perhaps our Alfredo does not need libraries, since he dropped out of University. It is during this period, he is presumed to have linked up with the man we know as Marcos Esquinapa. We believe the link between the two men was made through Alfredo Herrera's sister, who works at the Cuban Consulate on Redpath Street."

The slide projector clicked to reveal a photo of an attractive female with long dark hair walking along a city street. Even though the image was grainy and shot through a long distance lens the young woman's beauty was undeniable. Her lips were naturally full and sultry without the need of collagen. Her eyes were dark and perfectly lined with purple eye shadow. Her carriage was proud and straight with her back arched and her breasts high. With prescription eye glasses she appeared intelligent and with her bored expression she looked like a model from a high fashion magazine.

"Marguerite Herrera is twenty-nine years old. She is presently working as a receptionist at the Cuban Consulate in downtown Montreal. When Marguerite began working at the consulate her brother, Alfredo, was little more than a small time drug dealer selling marijuana and hashish on campus. Today Alfredo Herrera operates strictly at the multi-ton level and rarely touches any of the contraband himself. Bank records show only nominal deposits in his current Canadian bank accounts. Six thousand three hundred dollars in the main branch of the Royal Bank. Nine thousand dollars in a second account

with the Toronto Dominion. We suspect he has other accounts around the province and around the country. His passport which was handed in for renewal in April of this year, suggests that he may be banking the bulk of his money in the Bahamas or in Switzerland. We know that last month Alfie signed a real estate option on a six hundred thousand dollar property in Upper Westmount and that the deposit check came from the Cayman Islands. Not bad for a college dropout, *n'est ce pas?*"

Guided by the Chief inspector's index finger the slide projector ratcheted ahead to a picture of a sandy coastline, bordered by tropical forest and crystal blue water.

"I will call on Commander Russell to brief you on the island of Jamaica as the Caribbean is more in his area of expertise than my own."

"Thank you, Inspector Leroux," the CIA man responded with a distinctive Midwestern twang. Commander Russell slid his chair closer to the slide projector and with a stab of his finger he sent the machine back to the picture of Marguerite Herrera.

"Too bad this pretty little filly's not on our side," he chuckled."

His index finger struck again and the slide projector moved backward with two audible clicks until the picture of Marcos Esquinapa returned once more to the screen. "He looks a little like Charlie Chaplin doesn't he? Don't let his looks throw you off, my friends. Marcos Esquinapa is without doubt, one of the most dangerous men you will ever encounter. Our information has it that he was behind several assassinations in Bolivia and El Salvador, as well as being responsible for the murders of several Cuban expatriates living in the United States. He uses a dozen aliases although he usually sticks with a Latin or Middle Eastern profile."

"Question."

It came from John Brophy of the Halifax detachment.

"Go ahead."

"Do we have any idea of Esquinapa's present whereabouts?"

"According to US immigration records, Esquinapa returned to New York from Montreal last week by the same route he entered under the name of Roberto Esperanza. He departed the United States two days later taking a direct flight out of Kennedy to Kingston, Jamaica. A check of Kennedy airport turned up the car he was driving in the Terminal's long term parking. We have it staked out, but there is no guarantee that Esquinapa will return for it. In fact I would say it is extremely unlikely that he will."

"What do our Canadian immigration records tell us about Esquinapa's visits to Canada?"

Russell deferred the question to Chief Inspector Leroux with a nod of his head.

"We are still searching the Telo cards," the Chief Inspector answered with a tug of his mustache. "Immigration should have an update for us by late this afternoon."

"Has Esquinapa been spotted anywhere outside of the Montreal area?"

"We believe his drug business is centered exclusively in Montreal."

"Do we know how Herrera and Esquinapa are getting their drug shipments into Canada?"

"Possibly through the Cuban Consulate. Possibly by ship or by land through Mexico and then through the United States. Lab analysis suggests that Jamaica is the source of the marijuana seized in raids on Alfredo Herrera's dealer network. The nitrogen-rich soil and high bauxite content in the leaves and stems makes that fact quite conclusive."

"What information is there to support the hypothesis that these guys are running drugs to support an overthrow of the Jamaican political system?"

"I'll field this one," the CIA man said as he leaned forward to pick up on the question. He clicked the Kodak machine three times in rapid succession until a picture of a rusted freighter appeared. This slide was followed in quick succession by a photo of shipping crates being unloaded by a dock crane. The CIA man loosed his grip on the projector's shuttle control when a close-up slide of one of the crates flashed onto the screen. The crate had been broken open to reveal the contents. The slide was a close up view of a

number of carbines lathered in grease and wrapped in waxed paper. "These pictures were taken in Jamaica last month. The ship is the Anna Maru, a privately owned freighter operating under Panamanian registry. The rifles in the crates are American made M-16s." The slide machine clicked back to a now familiar scene of sand and water. "Jamaica's mountainous topography and sparse population make it easy for any outside group or military force to access the island." The projector clicked again to reveal a photo of a large, bearded black man with shoulder length braided dreadlocks and a wide toothless smile. "This is Blackbeard, a well known smuggler of marijuana and cocaine on the island of Jamaica. Blackbeard operates his various illegal businesses with the compliance of the ruling government of Jamaica, a government, I might add, that was placed in power largely through Blackbeard's support. Blackbeard intends to use those M-16 rifles I just showed you to prolong the leadership of the ruling party of Jamaica. When Prime Minister Nigel Higgens first gained power some years ago, the island of Jamaica was on its way to financial self sufficiency for the first time since its independence from Britain. Crops were productive. Tourism flourished. Aluminum was the miracle metal of the decade and bauxite was an essential component. Today all that has changed. Other metals such as titanium and molybdenum are stronger and lighter than aluminum, largely replacing it in the marketplace. In addition to this declining need for bauxite, Jamaica's banana production has fallen from a ten year high of sixty million metric tons to a little over thirty million metric tons last year. During the same period, coffee yield has fallen sixty per cent. Sugar cane is down forty per cent. Last June the International Monetary Fund examined the GNP and other factors in Jamaica's financial portfolio and turned down Prime Minister Higgens' application for loan payment rescheduling and a new capital loan of six hundred million dollars. The situation has since turned into a standoff with the IMF demanding changes in Higgens' government and the Jamaican leader refusing to comply. Higgens has now turned to neighboring countries for financial assistance and Cuba has offered him support in rebuilding the island of Jamaica as a New

People's Republic. Central Intelligence Agency investigations have since turned up solid evidence that Higgens intends to subvert the free democratic process of Jamaica's upcoming elections, in order to hold on to power. With Cuba's help he aims to turn the democracy of Jamaica into a communist republic. Gentlemen, neither the United States nor Canada has any intention of letting that happen. The Central Intelligence Agency will spearhead an operation to excise and remove this threat to democracy. We will accomplish this by working in unison with this RCMP task force to plug the arms leak into Jamaica and to dismantle the drug operations of Marcos Esquinapa and Alfredo Herrera. Are there any questions?"

"I have one" It was an officer named Newberry, a slim red-haired chap with an amazing ability in computers and higher mathematics.

"Go ahead."

"If there is some sort of revolutionary conspiracy building in Jamaica, why haven't the papers got on to it?"

"Prime Minister Higgens has been very clever in concealing his nefarious activities. Instead of involving his military or police, as one might expect, he has armed Blackbeard and his civilian posse to do the dirty work of harassing and killing his political opponents. This year alone Jamaica has seen over seven hundred politically-motivated murders and the year is only half over. To put that in perspective, that's just about ten times the worst murder rate per capita of any major city in the United States or Canada. Prime Minister Higgens uses Blackbeard's posse to accomplish most of these killings. The bastard supplies them with American made M-16s and then turns around and blames the killings on the CIA."

"Any line on where these M-16s originate?"

"We suspect the M-16s were purchased on the illicit market in Canada or the United States and somehow smuggled into Jamaica, possibly as machinery or farm equipment. The short answer to your question is we don't know . . . yet."

"Could Herrera and Esquinapa be using the same method to get the weapons out of Canada that they use to get drugs in?"

"We are investigating that theory and looking at several possibilities. The Cuban embassy is one possibility although we know that large shipments would not be smuggled into Canada via a small diplomatic pouch. We are of course investigating the supply shipments to and from Cuba very carefully right now. We are also investigating the possible involvement of the First Nations Indians on the Caughnawaga reserve who have been smuggling cigarettes and alcohol between our forty-ninth parallel borders for years. Since the reservation straddles both Canada and the United States the Indians claim to have a legal right to continue smuggling commodities across borders within their reserves but no matter how the court rules, that right does not extend to drug trafficking. The most logical way to ship large loads of contraband into Canada or the US is by sea and by air and we are concentrating on those two possibilities by stationing long range patrol AWAC aircraft in the Caribbean corridor to detect illegal movements of marine and air traffic."

Questions persisted throughout the morning as Commander Russell continued his dissertation on the dangers faced by the free world from drugs and terrorists until the meeting broke for lunch. When the meeting continued again after lunch Brian Fox heard more theories and saw more slides, until slides merged with other slides, faces morphed into other faces and his thoughts became overwhelmed with speculations and hypotheses. Just before three o'clock he was summoned by messenger to the office of Chief Alphonse Leroux who had not returned to the War Room for the afternoon session. Thanking God for small mercies, the Mountie made his way from the conference room, excusing himself with palms upraised in apology to Commander Russell and the others. He stopped briefly by the water cooler to let his eyes adjust to daylight before continuing along a corridor to a small but private office cubicle at the north end of the office. There

he found the Chief sitting at his desk. Brian knocked on the glass door of the Chief Inspector's office and entered.

"Come in," the Inspector said. "Have a seat, Brian."

"I prefer to stand, if you don't mind, sir."

"I understand," replied the Chief, with a smile that indicated some sense of accomplishment in his own escape from the all day meeting. "How was the afternoon briefing?"

"I thought we spent a lot of time on geography and not enough on the major suspects."

"That is because there is very little information on the major suspects beyond what you and the rest of the team have already seen today, Brian. We need more information about these men. We need hard evidence. We need serial numbers from containers and we need the shipping routes of those illegally exported M-16s. We need someone to go down to Jamaica and get this information." The Chief stared hard into his agent's eyes as though seeking some sign of disapproval. Finding none he continued. "We need someone to liaison with the CIA's operatives in Jamaica, someone who has an established knowledge of the drug scene in North America as well as intimate knowledge of the main players in this case. You have been on the Herrera case longer than anyone else, Brian. Therefore you are elected. Do you have any problems with that?"

"No sir," the RCMP agent responded.

"Good. We expect you to get on the trail of these drug traffickers and put a stop to their illegal activities. Canada still maintains excellent relations with Jamaica, but you can expect little help from the Higgens' government if you get in trouble down there. In fact, you might well consider yourself to be heading into hostile territory."

Again the Chief Inspector searched for some trace of dissent in the Mountie's face.

"Curious, isn't it?" he mused when his search proved unfruitful. "America expends enormous resources defending democracies around the world and yet those same democracies are often subverted by American made weapons. It reminds me of our

French Canadian ancestors who fired their canon at the Iroquois and then paid those same Indians a reward for every cannonball they brought back to the fort. It makes no sense. Nevertheless the Americans have asked for our help in this matter, Brian, and Canada intends to give it. Should you wish to decline this assignment there will be no blemish on your record."

"When do I start?" answered the Mountie with a grin.

"I will brief you with all of the details later but I can tell you that you are booked on this Saturday's flight to Montego Bay, Jamaica. Upon arrival you will liaison with a local CIA agent named Davin McCready. You will be traveling as a visiting tourist on a golf holiday. Not the most original cover I realize, but adequate under the circumstances. "

"I suppose I better buy some golf clubs."

"There is a set of clubs in the equipment locker you can requisition. Or you can wait until June and receive a set as a wedding gift, if you prefer."

"I see you have received the invitation."

"Claire and I will be honored to come to your wedding this June. How long have you and Sharon been going together now?"

"Since I first joined the Academy."

"That would be almost ten years then."

"Nine years eight months and twenty-two days."

"*Eh bien.* Well, best wishes for your wedding, Brian, and good luck on your mission."

The Chief extended a hand that conveyed a surprising amount of emotion as he rose from his chair to indicate the end of the meeting. "Before you leave for the day, stop by the lab," the Chief Inspector added before he broke off contact and returned to shuffling papers on his desk. "Our lab specialist, Doctor Demers, has a few surprises that should make your trip a little more interesting."

**Postscript:** Montreal roadwork is an on-going nightmare in Quebec where Canadian winters play havoc with the asphalt. Rain water sinks into crevices in the asphalt and then expands as the weather turns cold and then the water freezes creating cracks that turn into monster sized potholes. An Austin Healy 3000 has one of the lowest clearances of any sports car ever made and just traversing a set of raised train tracks is enough to rip the exhaust and mufflers off. The danger from Montreal roads is very real and I completely understand Brian Fox's concerns about the undercarriage of his vintage car.

On a separate note I have always admired the RCMP as a police force and I even tried to join the force in my youth although the physical standards were very tough in those days. One of the requirements of the Montreal RCMP was to have a combined expanded and relaxed chest measurement of seventy-two inches which I could not develop even after months of working out at the gym. I think my chest reached the required size some time after I reached the age of thirty. After being rejected by the Mounties I tried to get into the Montreal MUC police force. They also had restrictions including a minimum weight requirement of one hundred and sixty pounds which was a milestone that I did not reach until my late twenties. When I was unable to find a place in either police force I went back to my studies at McGill University to pursue a course in journalism 101.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Welcome to Jamaica*

"It's beautiful. Have you ever seen water so blue?"

She had red hair, a white suit and green eyes that were witness to several more years of living than those of the young man seated next to her. With no immediate answer forthcoming from her seat mate, she continued her one-sided conversation.

"It's so nice to have someone to talk to on these long flights, she said as she leaned across the vacant center seat to share his porthole view of the Caribbean Ocean. A fragrance of Christian Dior perfume wafted behind her as she returned to her original seating position.

"This is my first visit to Jamaica. It is Alfred, isn't it?" she asked with a reaffirming glance at his boarding pass that lay on the seat between them.

Alfredo," replied the man sitting by the window of Air Canada's flight 992. "My friends call me Alfie."

"My name is Nancy Epstein. Oops. I mean Nancy Cohen," she added with a broad smile and a wave of her unadorned wedding ring finger. "I divorced last year."

There was a moment of prickly silence.

"Alfredo . . . is that Spanish?"

"Cuban, but I live in Canada now."

"Maybe we'll meet at the beach later," the green-eyed lady suggested.

"That's not likely," replied Alfie. "I have to go up into the mountains on business."

"That's too bad," she pouted, with an intake of breath that forced her blouse to open wider at the neckline. "Perhaps it's rude of me to ask," she ventured, "but what business are you in, Alfie?"

"Cattle," he replied. "I raise cattle for the Jamaican market."

"You're a rancher," she exclaimed with an unconscious flutter of her eyelashes.

"Where exactly is your cattle ranch located?"

"In the Blue Mountains."

"And where is that?"

"About halfway between Ocho Rios and Kingston."

"Is that anywhere near Hedonism?"

"No not really. Is that where you will be staying?"

"It is, unless I'm invited elsewhere."

A pregnant pause followed as she studied his features. He was not a working rancher she noted with a glance at his immaculately manicured fingernails. Nor was he wearing a wedding ring. He was dressed in a white leisure jacket with an open necked black silk shirt and off white ivory slacks with tan leather loafers. His hair was fashionably cut in a contemporary style. His eyes were brown. His nose was straight and set over high cheekbones. His complexion was tanned and smooth. He looked to be in his late twenties - which made him just this side of available for a woman in her thirties. Or an eighteen year old with fifteen years of experience, as she was fond of saying whenever the subject of her age arose.

"Do you employ many Jamaicans on your ranch, Alfie?"

"A few," the young man nodded as he dropped the yachting magazine he had been perusing onto the empty seat between them.

"I was thinking of canceling my reservations to Jamaica when I read the reports about all the violence down there this year but by then I already had my pre-paid booking at Hedonism."

"Hedonism is in the tourist area of Jamaica. All that violence you read about is political and most of it takes place in Kingston."

"I understand the Jamaican Rastafarians can be quite dangerous. I read about them all the time in the Toronto Sun."

"The Rastas consider themselves to be the lost tribe of Judah exiled into a world they call Babylon. They may seem a little strange with their braided hair and their curious political philosophy, but they aren't much different from our North American hippies. Except that they believe that the Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, was Jesus Christ reincarnated."

"Wasn't Haile Selassie murdered by his own people for embezzlement?"

"Something like that."

"With a corrupt example like that for a leader, it's no wonder the Rastas have such a terrible reputation in Toronto."

"Perhaps the unemployment situation in Toronto is behind any troubles they might be having."

"I really couldn't tell you. Canadian politics is too confusing these days with the candidates speaking half in English and half in French. Prime Minister Trudeau started that damned bilingualism nonsense to win the Quebec vote and now the whole of Canada is stuck with it forever."

Alfie picked up his discarded yachting magazine and began thumbing through the pages.

"You seem to know a lot about the Jamaican culture," the green-eyed lady persisted.

"Do you have any Rastafarians working on your ranch?"

"A few," he answered without raising his eyes from his magazine.

"Do you find them hard to deal with?"

"Only when they run out of ganga," he answered with the faintest trace of a smile. "Don't be surprised if you are offered some as soon as you get off the plane. But watch out for the street dealers. They'll sell you the stuff and then tip off their police friends. It's the world's oldest scam, but they still use it down in Jamaica."

"Well I would never. . .", she began only to be cut off by the cabin intercom.

*"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. This is Captain MacDonald speaking. We are approaching the completion of Air Canada's flight 992 to Montego Bay and Kingston, Jamaica. In preparation for landing please fasten your seat belts, and place your chair backs in the full upright position. We will be arriving at Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport in approximately fifteen minutes, at two fifty-five eastern standard time. For those of you flying on to Kingston with us, there will be a one hour delay before departure. For those of you who are leaving us here in Montego Bay, we hope your flight has been a pleasant one and thank you for flying Air Canada."*

"Excuse me," said Alfie as he stood up to ease his lanky six foot frame past the red-head's shapely legs. "I have to complete my immigration forms and my pen is in the overhead."

"I have a pen you can borrow."

"That's okay. I have some paperwork to catch up on before we land."

Alfie collected his hand luggage from an overhead locker and then made his way to the economy section at the rear of the aircraft. He located a vacant seat in the aft cabin, where he sat down and completed his immigration forms as Air Canada's flight 992 banked left to reveal a three foot swell ebbing over the coral reefs on the north coast of Jamaica. A few small cars could be seen inching along Montego Bay's Gloucester Boulevard as the jet engines screamed to a higher pitch while the aircraft maneuvered into position for landing at Montego Bay Airport. When the wheels dropped down to the runway with a thump Alfie's heart jumped into his throat. The food service trays rattled and the overhead lockers shook until Air Canada's flight 992 touched down and completed its taxi to the main terminal. When the aircraft came to a stop Alfie breathed a sigh of relief but remained seated as the other passengers rose to disembark. He kept an eye on the green-eyed lady seated at the front of the aircraft until she and approximately half of the passengers had left the cabin, whereupon Alfie stood up and inserted himself

into the line of departing passengers. Alfie drifted with the ebb and flow of the line until it was his turn to step up to an Immigration booth where a black Jamaican Customs officer stood waiting for him. The coffee-complexioned officer sported dark trousers, a twenty-six inch waist, a starched white cotton shirt and a professional frown.

"Passport."

Herrera handed over his passport and immigration forms.

"How long do you intend to stay in Jamaica?"

"Two weeks."

"And the purpose of your visit?"

"Pleasure."

"Where will you be staying?"

"The Holiday Inn."

"Thank you, Mister Herrera. Enjoy your stay."

The immigration officer imprinted the passport and immigration documents with a slap of his ink stamp creating an echo in the concrete block Customs Hall and then he returned them. Upon receiving his immigration forms Alfie headed towards the customs and baggage area on the lower concourse. He stopped on the steps leading down to the lower level where his eyes roamed around the concourse taking careful note of the Jamaican customs officers who were performing exploratory surgery on all incoming baggage. After each piece of luggage was examined and cleared, the bag was closed and then marked with a white chalk line by the customs inspectors. A floating customs officer hovered near the exit doors to verify that all bags had been inspected and chalk-marked. Alfie eyeballed the routine until he was satisfied that the procedures were the same as on his previous visits. Then he collected a golf bag along with his tan leather suitcase from one of the luggage conveyors. But instead of bringing the golf bag up for inspection he leaned it against a concrete pillar and returned to the customs line with his

remaining piece of baggage. He subsequently waited in line until it was his turn to hand over his immigration forms to another slim-waisted customs and immigration officer.

"Good afternoon," said the Customs agent while skimming over Alfie's Immigration forms.

"Did you bring anything to Jamaica? Any liquor, guns, drugs?"

"No."

The customs officer opened Alfie's suitcase to examine his personal effects. Shirts were folded on the left, pants on the right and miscellaneous wearing apparel was in the middle of the bag. In a separate compartment to the rear, were some containers of suntan lotion, aftershave and a can of shaving cream which the officer opened and checked for contraband. A diving knife with a serrated edge lay sheathed in its case at the bottom of the bag along with a short pneumatic spear gun and two spears.

"What is this?" the Jamaican officer asked, pointing to the underwater weapon.

"It's for spear fishing."

"And you have nothing further to declare?" the officer asked, investigating the weapon in some detail.

"No."

The customs officer finished examining the spear gun and then replaced it back in the suitcase.

"Enjoy your stay, Mister Herrera," the officer replied as he marked Alfie's suitcase with a white chalk line and then stamped and returned Alfie's immigration documents.

"Excuse me?" said Alfie as the customs officer motioned the next person in line to come forward.

"Yes."

"I left my camera on the plane."

"Go back to the lost luggage counter . . . back the way you came."

"Thank you," replied Alfie who turned and pushed his way back through the jostling lines of waiting passengers. But Alfie did not go to the lost luggage counter which was on the far side of the terminal. Instead he waded into the middle of the crowd of passengers milling around the baggage turnstiles. He stopped beside the pillar where he had left his golf bag and when he was certain that no one was watching he bent over and discreetly marked the golf bag with a piece of chalk. Having completed this deception, he picked up the golf bag and meandered towards the exit. One of the roving customs officers spied Alfie and saw both the passport and immigration documents in his hand as well as the chalk marks on both his suitcase and his golf bag. How could they be so rich and still be so stupid the officer mused to himself as he pointed an authoritative finger towards the exit doors leading to the outer terminal. Alfie followed the directions and subsequently stepped through the frosted doors of Jamaican Immigration into sunlight so bright that his eyes immediately started to water.

"Hey *mon!* I can carry *yu* bags."

"No thanks," replied Alfie who slipped on a pair of Ray Ban Aviator sunglasses. He stood for a moment to let his eyes adjust to the light before he crossed to the other side of the service road. The outside air was a mixture of floral smells from fruit trees in the parking lot and kerosene from the aircraft idling at the airport. The sun beat down so hard that it made Alfie's hair feel like a hat on his head.

"Hey *mon*, you need a taxi?"

Alfie shook his head in the negative.

"Sensimilla?"

Alfie ignored the offer which came less than fifty meters from the airport police depot.

"Change your money . . . twenty for one."

Alfie was tempted to reply that anyone could do better than twenty for one on the Jamaican black market but he held his tongue knowing that such a remark would only lead to more harassment.

"You want a girl?"

Alfie turned to scope out the young Jamaican airport hustler who had been following him. The young man had on a pair of loose fitting trousers that were held up with twine and a torn shirt that was unbuttoned to the waist. The youth was wearing size ten runners that were too small for his size twelve feet and his heels were tromping down on the backs of his shoes as though they were a pair of sandals. The Jamaican hustler looked to Alfie like if you turned him upside down and shook him less than a dollar in change would fall from his pockets.

"Do I look like I need your help to find a girl?"

Before the hustler could respond Alfie turned on his heel and continued walking towards the rear of the airport parking lot. An enormous shadow could be seen sitting behind the steering wheel of a green Jaguar idling in the distance; a great black Buddha with hair like Medusa and eyes like burning charcoals. As Alfie approached the car the door of the Jag opened and the Rasta stepped out followed by a cloud of marijuana smoke. Blackbeard shook loose his matted dreadlocks and shouted a warning to the hustler who was trailing Alfie's footsteps. And with not another word the young man did an about face and headed back towards the airport terminal.

"*Irie mon*," Clyde Alexander Tobin grinned with a gap where his two front teeth should have been. "Time to get high and fly," the Rasta laughed as he took hold of Alfie's suitcase and exchanged it for a lighted spliff. "Nice to see you again, Mister Herrera."

Alfie took a hit from the spliff and held in the smoke before he squeaked out an answer.

"Nice to see you too, Blackbeard."

"*Irie mon*."

Clyde Tobin made a reach for Alfie's golf bag but was surprised to have his offer of assistance rejected.

"I can carry *it* for you *mon*."

“I’ll keep it with me.”

“*Eh?*”

“I’ll carry it myself.”

“What *inna de bag, mon?*”

“A present from Marcos but I can’t give it to you yet.”

“*Eh?*”

“Marcos wants to be sure you can do your end first.”

“*Eh?*”

“He wants to see the rest of the weed delivered.”

“*Dat bullshit mon.*”

“Those were his instructions.”

“*Dat bullshit!*”

Blackbeard screwed his face up like he had just tasted bitter lemons as he hitched his size fifty-four pants above his great belly and strode around to the other side of the car. He opened the driver’s door and maneuvered head first behind the steering wheel while Alfie climbed into the opposite side of the car. When the Rasta’s fiery eyes fell once again to the golf bag in Alfie’s lap he let out a Jamaican curse. “*Blood clot!*” he said as he slammed the car in gear. Gravel spun from the rear wheels as the bearded Rasta put the pedal to the metal and sped from the parking lot. The Jag headed towards the airport traffic circle a mile to the east of the air terminal as might be expected but when it exited the airport roundabout the Jaguar saloon was traveling in the opposite direction from the Holiday Inn address that Alfie had given to Jamaican Immigration as his intended destination.

**Postscript:** Jamaica is a flocking ground for Canadian snowbirds who often travel somewhere warm each winter, with Jamaica being one of the closer destinations. When they arrive on the tiny island, the northern snowbirds are greeted by a heritage that is a

throwback to a tribal system that was brought from Africa two hundred years earlier. This tribal system is the very thing that many islanders have always loved and at the same time disliked about Jamaica. On one hand, you can have anything you want with the right connections. On the other hand, even the privileged are dismayed by the island's corruption. Everyone in Montego Bay's Customs and Immigration Department knew that Alfie Herrera was dealing weed. But rather than fault him for his drug smuggling, most admired him as an accomplished businessman. As an interesting aside to this postscript, the golf bag method that Alfie used to smuggle contraband and money into Jamaica is a method that has been used many times in the past. It might even work today.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### ***The Cuban Connection***

Twenty miles outside of Havana, an old black Ford negotiated a rutted dirt road under the heat of the noon day sun. The Ford was in good condition for its age, with thirty year old paint still holding its luster and chrome that still sparkled brightly under a thick film of red dust.

"*Hola,*" a man greeted when the black Ford pulled into the yard of a vacant ranch in the Cardenas Valley. "Park inside the barn."

The Ford drove between two sun-bleached barn doors that stood open and stopped in the center of a scene that looked somewhat surrealistic with sunlight seeping through the narrow cracks in the wood plank walls. There was no sign of life inside the barn. No familiar odors of fresh dung or hay. The animal stalls were empty. The hay loft barren. There were no hens. No roosters. The only thing notable was the complete absence of sound besides the rumbling of the car engine. The car engine shut off and the driver's door opened. A man stepped out. He was small in stature. Five seven or eight. His russet eyes were dark and deep set beneath bushy eyebrows and cauliflower ears. He looked military with his hair shaved along the sides and a few longer strands standing on top. He was dressed in light cotton slacks and a white business shirt opened at the neck with the sleeves rolled up. Size six cowboy boots added several inches of height to the diminutive visitor as well as providing a convenient place to store a thin but lethal stiletto with a seven inch blade. His eyes were unflinching. His lips were thin and his mouth was a straight line that looked like it was made from a machete slash.

"We sowed a few wild oats here in our youth, didn't we?" huffed Sebastian de Ortega, in a deep baritone voice as he approached the new arrival with his hand held open in greeting. "It seems like only yesterday."

"Not to me it doesn't"

"Are you finally feeling your age, my old friend?"

"I can still get my pecker up."

"That is good news, *el Lobo*. Why don't you come up to the hacienda and tell me the rest."

Marcos Esquinapa, also known as *el Lobo*, shook the fat man's hand and then followed him towards an adjacent farm house that was situated on top of a small hill a few hundred meters to the east. Sebastian de Ortega's mind had survived the ravages of time, but field agent Marcos Esquinapa could clearly see that his body had not. Sebastian had at least fifty pounds on Marcos and he favored one leg with a distinct limp. Marcos also noted that what was left of Sebastian's once dark hair was now dyed black and had been carefully arranged to conceal a bald spot at the crown.

"I have fresh coffee inside the hacienda".

Receiving no response de Ortega added. "I also have some over proof rum."

"That sounds better."

"Take a seat on the verandah," de Ortega offered, as he and Marcos completed the short walk to the ranch house. De Ortega wiped the sweat from his brow with a white handkerchief and then stuffed the damp linen into his jacket pocket. He mounted three rickety wood steps and motioned to a wicker chair on the veranda. "Wait here in the shade while I fix us a drink."

He looks older, thought Marcos, as he followed de Ortega's departure into the ranch house. We are all getting older, I suppose, the agent mused as he took in the view that carried across the Cardenas valley that he used to call home. He studied the blue haze that hung like fog over the Caribbean Sea as he dropped into the rattan chair and then placed his high heeled leather boots on the verandah railing.

"If this old ranch was put back into production, it could support a large community," de Ortega huffed as he returned with two glasses of amber rum dressed with a twist of green lime. He handed Marcos a glass and tilted his own towards his lips.

"This place is dead," Marcos replied, taking the glass of rum in hand. "It died the day that Batista sent his troops to massacre our people."

"It is foolish to brood over events that occurred so long ago."

"It is more foolish to forget."

"We must let go of the past if we wish to rebuild a new Cuba."

"Am I not doing my part?"

"You are doing much more than your part, Marcos. Your mission is integral to Cuba's survival."

"I don't like dealing in drugs."

"We must all make sacrifices for the cause."

"Let Russia finance our cause."

"Russia has no money for us since Perestroika. Besides as long as our Caribbean neighbors continue to provide us with their natural resources we need no help from the Russians."

"That is the first time I have heard of marijuana described as a natural resource."

"It is all that some of our poor neighbors have to offer."

"If money is your concern then let me dispose of Irving Goldberg."

"We have been through this before, Marcos."

"With Goldberg out of the way we can sell off our shipments in half the time."

"There is no need. We are still on schedule."

"He murdered my cousin Rhuiz."

"That is unfortunate, Marcos . . . most unfortunate. But it would be foolish to risk all we have gained to avenge one poor foot soldier."

"What they did to Rhuiz . . . leaving him that way is unforgivable. It is a matter of honor."

"We dare not expose ourselves to a murder investigation at this point in time. In less than six months you may do as you wish in this matter of honor. Until then, I need you to place all of your attention on fulfilling your assignment. Now tell me. How is the distribution of the marijuana going?"

"We have one more load left to send up to Montreal."

"Is there enough time?"

"There are still a few weeks before the Jamaican elections."

"And the name of the ship taking the cargo?"

"The Anna Maru."

"And where is the marihuana being stored right now?"

"The marijuana is being stored at the Villa Sea Breeze on the north coast of Jamaica. The villa is in a part of the island that is controlled by Blackbeard."

"Is Blackbeard watching over the marijuana?"

"I do not trust him for that."

"Then who?"

"Alfredo Herrera."

"Herrera could become a loose end."

"Loose ends can be tied, if necessary."

"You are having an affair with his sister, are you not?"

"A man must have his pleasure."

"What does she know of your business?"

"She knows nothing."

"What does her brother know of your business?"

"Nothing more than what he might have heard from that old fool who runs our Consulate in Montreal."

"Hernandez del Rio is hardly a fool, Marcos. Don't forget that del Rio fought beside Fidel in the Escambray Mountains and that he worked with Raoul to produce our original manifesto."

"I can't stand the man."

"Nevertheless we must work with him to reach our goals and we must keep our business secret from everyone, including the girl and her brother."

"She knows nothing of our business unless del Rio spilled his guts trying to impress her."

"*Madre de Dios*, don't even say that out loud. Imagine the outcry if the world discovered that agents of the Cuban government are trading marijuana to finance the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Jamaica? It would be the diplomatic nightmare of the century."

"I have told no one of our plans."

"I can't impress upon you enough the need for secrecy in these matters. When will the balance of the munitions be delivered to Jamaica?"

"We have one last shipment of marijuana to sell before we can complete payment to our munitions suppliers."

"Surely with all the money we have given these arms merchants our credit has been established."

"US dollars are the only terms they deal in."

"Whatever happens, Marcos, you must expedite delivery of the munitions and small arms before the start of the Jamaican elections in June. We must make sure that Blackbeard and the rest of Prime Minister Higgens's supporters have the tools they need to win the elections."

"What if Blackbeard decides to develop some political ambitions of his own?"

"Blackbeard is Nigel Higgens's strongest supporter. We have to trust him if Prime Minister Higgens's re-election is to be made certain. We need Blackbeard's posse to intimidate the voters in the remote parishes and villages of Jamaica on Election Day."

"We could easily replace Blackbeard and his men with a few thousand well-armed Cuban soldiers."

"The Americans will intervene if they see an attempt at an outright coup."

"Let them come," replied Marcos as his eyes slowly misted and then fixed on some unseen object on the horizon. The Yankees tried more than twenty times to assassinate our Fidel. They ordered Humberto Sori-Marin to try and kill him in nineteen-sixty. In the seventies, they paid Rolondo Cubela Secades to shoot at our leader with a high-powered rifle and scope. Fidel can not wear the same underwear twice since the CIA tried to poison them with lethal toxins. The CIA even paid the American Mafia to kill Fidel with poisoned cigars. It is time the Americans paid a price for their arrogance. I want to shove their democracy up their ass."

"If we stick to our plan we can do that."

"I still don't like dealing drugs."

"I have also decided to change your Canadian identity." replied de Ortega ignoring Esquinapa's objections.

"I already have a good name and passport."

"The RCMP may have caught on to you by now."

"They couldn't find shit in an outhouse."

"Don't be cavalier about the RCMP, Marcos. The RCMP is an elite military force. We dare not risk provoking them when Cuba is so close to fulfilling her destiny."

Marcos digested the warning with raw indifference as he cast an eye over the deserted ranch house.

"The steps need fixing."

"Perhaps you can repair them yourself when you return from Canada."

"I have other plans for my time off."

"A wedding perhaps?"

"At my age?"

"A vacation with your young lady friend, then?"

"That is more likely."

"I envy your freedom," chuckled Sebastian de Ortega as he finished his drink and set his glass on the veranda's wooden railing. "Maria would not allow me the time for a younger woman even if I had the desire. She asks about you often."

"Give her my regards."

"She told me to invite you to dinner."

"Maybe after this Jamaica business is finished."

"When you return to Havana this time you should come back to stay."

"I don't like the city."

"You can rebuild this ranch. With government financing it would cost you nothing. Maria and I could come and visit you on weekends."

"Like a regular family?"

"Yes, like a regular family."

"It is too far from town."

"You measure distance in time today not miles. One hour from Havana is not far."

"It is for a twenty minute meeting."

"Then let us rendezvous at Frescos the next time we meet," de Ortega offered with a broad smile, "They have the best *empanadas* in all of Havana."

"You pick up the tab."

"It will be my pleasure."

After a little more catch up conversation, Sebastian de Ortega stood up from his chair to accompany the diminutive Cuban back to his car. He embraced the smaller man in an

affectionate bear hug before handing him a briefcase filled with American money, a new Canadian passport and new identification papers in the name of Eduardo Matisse.

"God go with you," the portly man said as he released his grip on *el Lobo*'s shoulders and opened the car door for him.

"God has no place in our business," replied Marcos as he shook loose from de Ortega's grasp and took his place behind the steering wheel of the car. De Ortega closed the car door as *el Lobo* started the car, stirred the column-mounted shift lever into first and released the clutch. The gears of the forty year old transmission meshed and engaged without a sound as the antique Ford departed the barn leaving only an imprint of tire tracks and a cloud of red dust to mark its visit.

**Postscript:** There is another side to Marcos Esquinapa's life that is not written here. To be honest he was not much different from many other political zealots of his time and to be fair, while the western world considers him a murderer and terrorist, he was considered a hero and a patriot in his own country. Most people today are aware of Fidel Castro and his courageous Cuban revolution. But what they may not know is that Cuba attempted to spread its own communist revolution throughout the Caribbean in the early nineteen seventies, during a time when Castro sent troops to build schools and roads in Jamaica. When his friend and ally Prime Minister Norman Manley lost the subsequent Jamaican elections, Castro's plans were derailed and his communist aspirations were laid to rest. This novel continues his revolutionary story two decades later with Fidel Castro using *el Lobo* to re-implement his "poli-trick-al" games.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### ***Bon appetite***

Winters north of Montreal are resplendent with white blanketed countrysides that are surrounded by snow garlanded pine trees standing straight and tall against clear blue skies. In November of nineteen ninety-five the scene just north of Saint Adele looked like a Norman Rockwell painting with log and cedar shake barns sitting in the middle of a forested winter wonderland. Rolling mountains smoothed by thousand year old glaciers provided a backdrop to the Dusfresne Valley whose only full time business inhabitant was the Maison aux Montagnes restaurant. A trickle of smoke drifted from the chimney of the log and stone restaurant and hung in the frosted sky until a gust of frigid air swept it from view.

"We would like that table over there, please. The one by the fountain."

The man speaking wore a grey pinstripe suit with a herringbone weave, a McGill University tie, and shoes that were polished to the brightness of patent leather. His attractive escort was outfitted in a black wool skirt and jacket over a white taffeta blouse that was silky and sensuous to the touch.

"I am sorry, sir," the tuxedoed maitre'd replied in answer to the gentleman's request. "The Fountain Room is not available this evening. However we have a lovely fireside table in our Grand Salon."

"But it's our first anniversary tonight," the young man protested with a twenty dollar bill in his palm. "And it was right beside your fountain that we first decided to get married. Couldn't you make an exception?"

"I am sorry," Gustavo, the head waiter persisted, speaking to the young lady this time while doing his best to ignore the twenty dollar banknote in her husband's hand. "The Fountain room is completely reserved this evening and the party will be arriving at any

moment. Why don't you try our fireside table in the main dining room? I am certain you will find it to be very comfortable."

The young couple traded glances as they considered their options. It was a thirty minute drive back to the city of Montreal where they would be unlikely to make reservations any place else on such short notice. In the end, they still would not be any closer to their special fountain. They nodded their acceptance.

"Follow me, please," replied the maitre'd as he led the newlywed couple through the lobby of the Maison aux Montagnes restaurant into the main dining area. The decor of the French Canadian establishment was in keeping with the structure's one hundred and fifty year old heritage as a renovated Hudson's Bay trading post. The Grand Salon's main dining room was divided into several sections that were partitioned by low balustrades and lathe-turned wooden balusters. Brass lamps hung over the tables, suspended by long chains from a post and beam ceiling. Supplementary lighting was strategically hidden into recesses in the Grand Salon's full cut log walls to create a mood of warmth and intimacy. The maitre'd settled the couple beside a glowing fire and called to his barman for a bottle of medium-priced Bordeaux wine.

"Compliments of the house," the maitre'd said, as he took the bottle from the attendant and presented it to the newlyweds. "In celebration of your anniversary," he added, as he uncorked and opened the bottle. First he offered a taste to the gentleman and then he filled a glass for the lady. When he finished his performance, the silver haired maitre'd straightened his tuxedo and departed from the dimly lit Grand Salon, striding with purpose towards the fluorescent brightness of the lobby. He walked past an empty cloakroom as he returned to the reservation desk and checked his watch. It was almost seven PM. If the Goldberg party arrived within the next half hour, he could have them wined, dined and on their way before the Friday night dinner rush began. That would leave twenty tables in the Fountain Room for any Friday night walk-ins. Gustavo was not particularly happy about entertaining Irving Goldberg and his associates in the Fountain

Room of his establishment, having read several news articles describing the portly man as a Montreal gangster. But Goldberg spent money like water and tipped well, Gustavo thought to himself as he peered out through the restaurant's oak-framed windows to gaze at a light sprinkling of snow that was falling to the ground. The public saw men like Goldberg as a celebrity, which was good for business, he reminded himself as he stared across the snow covered parking lot. It was hard to imagine, looking at all that empty space, that in a few hours there would be over a hundred cars out there. A few moments later the gleam of headlights could be seen approaching along the restaurant's access road. The Goldberg party at last, the maitre'd sighed with some relief.

"Stations," he called out to the red-capped valet who was chatting up the hat check girl in the cloakroom. The lad looked a little like a circus monkey in his round cap and tight fitting red jacket, the maitre'd thought to himself as he made a mental note to do something about updating the lad's uniform. Automobile headlights flared across the face of the log and stone building as Gustavo prepared for the arrival of the Goldberg party. Leading a parade of cars to the reception area was a black Mercedes 500 SLC with dark tinted windows. The late model Mercedes Benz coupe was followed by a Lincoln Town Car and a flashy red Thunderbird which pulled up behind the Lincoln. The T-Bird was trailed by a late model Chrysler convertible which was in turn followed by an older model Volvo sedan.

The maitre'd hastened down the carpeted stairs to meet the new arrivals, trailed by a seventeen year old car jockey who had a serious acne problem.

"Park it and don't scratch it," Irving Goldberg snarled gruffly as he stepped from the Mercedes 500 and dropped the car keys into the car jockey's hands. "And don't mess up the upholstery," he added with a withering glance at the young lad's pockmarked complexion. The red-cap drove off with Goldberg's Mercedes as the two occupants of the next car in line began an impromptu snowball fight with the men in the Chrysler

behind them. A bronze Volvo sedan idled at the back of the pack, its lone occupant quietly puffing on a pipe as he watched the four men in leather jackets assaulting each other with clumps of hard packed snow. Only when the young rowdies had finished with their Tom foolery did Reuben Singerman deem it wise to exit a Volvo that seemed as ancient as he was. When the coast was clear he limped up to the others who were gathered around Irving Goldberg in the foyer of the restaurant.

Irving Goldberg was built like a weight lifter with broad shoulders and a neck like a Redwood tree trunk. On top of his sawed off neck perched a head that appeared too small for his muscular body. He had a clean-shaven face with short curly hair and clear translucent blue eyes that sparkled when he laughed. In place of a tie around his neck hung a gold pendent that was as ostentatious as a dinner plate. The gold pendent was suspended by a twenty-eight inch gold necklace with links as large as a dog chain. A Patek Philippe watch adorned his left wrist and a five carat diamond ring encircled the smallest finger of that same hand. Although he wore expensive jewelry and sported manicured fingernails, Irving Goldberg was no metro-sexual dandy. His mind was quick and his courage knew no boundaries. When faced with a difficult situation Goldberg's face would flush a deep red showing his desire to leave while his legs stood firmly planted in place. Irving had total contempt for civilization's rules and conventions in spite of his jewelry and brand name clothes. He flashed his wealth and drove fancy cars but you would never know from his body language and gruff demeanor that Irving had been brought up in a wealthy family. Irving had been expelled from his Upper Canada College private school at the age of fourteen for threatening his teachers. After his expulsion from private school, he ran away from home and began a life on

the streets. He started out doing petty thefts and burglaries to feed himself. He soon moved up to bank robberies, strong arms and truck hijackings. Goldberg was almost forty years old at this point in his career as he stood in the foyer of the Maison aux Montagnes restaurant and took stock of his long road to success. He had spent nearly a dozen years in prison to get where he was today and now that life was finally bearing fruit, he indulged himself without guilt on anything he fancied. That meant fine meals, expensive cars, speedboats and race horses. When questioned about how he managed to accumulate his wealth Irving was fond of saying that it was because he “had friends in low places.”

"So nice to see you again, Monsieur Goldberg," the maitre'd gushed as Irving Goldberg reached into his pocket and passed him a hundred dollar bill. "I have your section ready," the maitre d' continued as his hand devoured the bill like a hungry dog. "I have closed off the Fountain Room this evening," he added as he fell into close formation with Irving Goldberg, "So that you and your friends may enjoy the utmost privacy."

"Swell, Gus," Goldberg replied slowing down just long enough to slip a second hundred dollar bill to the maitre'd's hovering fingertips. "See if there's any hot bread in the kitchen."

Jean Paul LaPierre followed closely on Irving Goldberg's heels as he trailed the big man into the restaurant while toying with a new growth of beard. Jean Paul had grown his beard in case the cops came calling about his last job. That was the sorry piece of work that left an imprint of a dead man's teeth in his neck. Frankie Lascarta followed closely on the heels of his pint-sized French speaking partner. Frankie and Jean Paul had grown up in the multi-ethnic area of Montreal North where they had spent much of their younger lives fighting each other in the French versus English gang fights that were common during their youth. After they met in school, they became friends and after they met again in "Juvy" Jean Paul and Frankie became solid partners. They did bank jobs

together until the banks began locking up their big money in time controlled vaults, after which the two gangsters moved on to strong arms and drug dealing. They did well for themselves for a time but when they met up with Irving Goldberg, they moved into the big leagues.

Fast Freddie McGuire slipped behind Jean Paul and Frankie like a shadow in a trench coat. Fast Freddie was a booster by trade when he was not riding on Irving Goldberg's gravy train. Freddy was not as ruthless as some of the other individuals in Goldberg's entourage but he was a career criminal nevertheless. Freddie was a boozier, a party guy, a stoner, a thief and a drug dealer. But if Freddie told you it was a pound he was selling you, it was exactly four hundred and fifty-four grams. Not four hundred and forty eight grams like a lot of the short change artists pull. Not four hundred and fifty-two grams with the excuse that the scales were off. It would be four hundred and fifty-four grams on the button.

Mickey Francino and Ivan Christodoulou trailed behind Freddie as part of Goldberg's entourage. Mickey and Ivan were known as "the Pimps" on the street although neither one had actually plied the trade for several years now. The Pimps had met some years ago, when Ivan came up from New York to establish a line of girls in Montreal. There had been an initial clash between the two pimps that had ended in a novel business arrangement. Instead of fighting over territory, they decided to work together, passing on referrals between cities and switching their girls between New York and Montreal as needed. With their combined network of hookers and clients, the pimps inadvertently developed an excellent drug retailing network. After finding a regular drug supplier in the form of Irving Goldberg, they encountered a problem they had never been faced with before . . . how to spend all their money.

Reuben the Fence was the last man to limp into the Maison aux Montagnes restaurant that evening, trailing behind Harry Bright and George Letoumis who both did strong arm and collections work for Goldberg's crew. At fifty-seven years old, it could be said that

Reuben had been a career criminal for most of his life. But Reuben was more of a businessman than a thief. Reuben bought and sold. He traded and bartered. Reuben's sin was the sin of omission: that is to say, his ability to look the other way while his business partners did their dirty deeds.

And to Reuben came the spoils.

The Goldberg party took their places near the back wall of the Fountain Room with Irving Goldberg taking his usual seat at the head of the table. Frankie and Jean Paul took the two seats closest to Goldberg, while the other men in the group found their individual places around the table.

"Bring us some red wine," Goldberg growled as the maitre'd returned to deposit a basket of hot bread on the table. "The good stuff . . . Rothschild."

Irving Goldberg did not often drink alcohol in any form. He found that alcohol made him goofy and friendly which were both emotions that he did not want to display to others. When he did drink he indulged in only a single glass of wine or Planter's Punch and nursed it all night like a true social drinker. The nineteen sixty-three Chateau Mouton Rothschild wine he preferred on this particular evening sold for one hundred and fifty dollars a bottle in nineteen ninety-five and today costs at least that much for a single glass if you can find it. When Gustavo left to fetch the wine Irving Goldberg immediately began a conversation with the two men sitting closest to him.

"I heard you're buying a new car."

"I'm trading in the Town Car and buying a Benz like yours."

"Good move. You don't need that big American pig."

"I was feeling patriotic when I bought it."

"Yah, well look at me. I'm a Jew and I'm driving a German car."

"You're a Jew when it suits you."

The comment came from Jean Paul LaPierre on his left.

"What do you mean?"

“You never go to Synagogue.”

“I did when I got married.”

“That was twenty years ago.”

“I went last year when my uncle Izzy died.”

“So . . . weddings and funerals.”

“I went when I was in the bucket.”

“Because of the early release programs.”

“Stop busting my balls J.P. How often do you go to church?”

“I go to confession every week.”

“No kidding, since when?”

“All my life.”

“Yah, well that’s a good deal you Catholics got. Go to confession and all is forgiven.”

“It’s not that simple.”

“Same ways as you Catholics think that a blow job is not the same thing as having sex.”

“It’s not.”

“Yah, it is.”

“Not according to the Bible.”

“Like I said, you got a good thing going when you can whack a guy on Friday, go to confession on Sunday and your conscience is clean by Monday. And you can have all the blow jobs you want because it ain’t sex.”

“There’s no point in arguing with you about it.”

“I saw you making eyes at the new hat check girl.”

“She’s alright.”

“I thought you had a girlfriend.”

“There’s always room for one more.”

“Where’s that written in your Bible?”

“The same place it’s written that married Jews like you can have *shitskas*?”

“Touché J.P. You got me there. Pass me some bread and let’s change the subject.

What else did that little shit head Rhuiz say before . . .?”

Irving Goldberg stopped talking long enough to throw a warning look that sent a hovering waiter scurrying out of earshot.

“. . . did he say where Alfie’s been stashing his loads?”

“He said Alfie had his shit stashed in a warehouse somewhere on Tupper Street but I don’t know if he was telling the truth.”

“Did he give you any idea of where on Tupper?”

“He only gave the street name. He said he didn’t know the address.”

“It’s too bad you couldn’t have found out more.”

"There was no time, Irv," Frankie Lascarta interrupted. "Someone came to the door and we had to ice the little fucker,"

"After you dropped him my name, remember," Jean Paul LaPierre scowled.

"It was only your first name."

"Why didn't you give him my phone number and address while you were at it, *mon esti*?"

"Hold it down you two," Goldberg interrupted, his face clouding with disapproval over their constant bickering. The conversation halted as the maitre’d returned with two bottles of Chateau Mouton Rothschild nineteen sixty-three. Gustavo began the usual ritual of serving a test glass of wine until waved off by Goldberg who emptied his sample glass in a single swallow and then belched approvingly.

"That’s good, Gus, but we need more bread."

"It’s heating in the oven, *Monsieur* Goldberg. I will get it right away."

"Hurry it up, we're hungry."

"Right away, *Monsieur* Goldberg."

Irving returned his attention to his two henchmen.

"What else did that little chili-eater have to say?"

"He told us that Alfie was heading to Jamaica to arrange for more weed."

"Where in Jamaica?"

"We don't know, Irv. He pissed off J.P. and got himself wasted."

"The doorbell rang remember," said Jean Paul, his voice taking on an icy quality.

"Yeah, that's right, Irv . . . someone rang the buzzer from the lobby. We had to waste him."

"Jesus, what a pair," Goldberg said as his two henchmen glowered at each other. "Did you wipe the place down before you left?"

"We didn't leave any clues behind but we left a message for Alfie and J.P. signed it with a bread knife."

"A good artist always signs his work."

"Stop fucking around you two. That was a bad move leaving the kid that way. Next time check with me before you come up with any ideas like that.

"Don't look at me. It was Jean Paul's idea.

"Fuck, you're supposed to have my back, Frankie, *maudit salop*."

"There ain't more than a dozen warehouses on Tupper Street," the big man continued ignoring their childish quarrel. "I'll have the Pimps check them out. Meanwhile, you and Jean Paul fly down to Jamaica and see if you can find this Alfie character."

"I don't know anything about Jamaica, Irving. I couldn't even find it on a map."

"You couldn't find the bathroom without a map."

"That's enough," interjected Goldberg with a look that scolded the two men into silence. "Jamaica is a small island . . . it shouldn't be hard to spot a white face amongst all those black ones. And take that look off your face, Frankie. It ain't like you're being sent to fucking Iceland."

"What about my parole, Irving?"

"I'll get some traveling papers in another name for you. I got a friend . . . the guy's a genius with a printing press. You can't tell this guy's work from the real thing."

"But what if Alfie is connected, Irving?"

"Eh?"

"What if he's working with the Wops?"

Goldberg stared hard into Frankie's eyes until they rotated downward.

"He's gotta have some solid connections to be bringing in major loads of dope, Irv," Frankie added as he saw Goldberg reddening up and attempted to mitigate the damage

"Listen up," said Irving, addressing Frankie at first but then raising his voice to challenge the rest of the men around the table. "Every one of us stands to make some serious bread this year but only if we protect what's ours! That means against the Bikers. The East End gangs. The Wops. And especially those grease water Spics moving up here from Miami. Once those Florida Indians get a foothold in Montreal, they'll take over this city like they did Miami and we'll all be back to jacking hubcaps for a living." Goldberg eyed the members of his group one by one, as if to burn his message through each and every forehead. "No one operates on our turf without we get our end," he said, his eyes beginning to bulge outward as they always did when he was angry or upset. "Anyone who tries to muscle into our territory has gotta pay. And if he doesn't pay he's going to get his balls cut off."

Goldberg finished off with a hard stare at Frankie.

The female half of the anniversary couple looked over her husband's shoulders towards the boisterous conversation emanating from the Fountain Room.

"Those men are awfully loud."

"Which one do you want me to complain to . . . the big one with all the gold or the two body builders sitting next to him?"

"Doesn't the big one remind you of Marie's husband, Paul?"

"Paul is not as broad in the shoulders."

"He has the same eyes, don't you think?"

"Not really."

"His face reminds me of someone."

"You probably saw it on a post office wall."

"I wish they would quiet down."

"I'll speak to the maitre'd about it the next time he comes by."

But there was no need to speak to the maitre'd because the raucous laughter and friendly banter from the Fountain Room quickly became lost in the noise and activity of the rapidly filling Grand Salon. A mood of laughter and gaiety invaded the buzz of conversation as wine corks popped, silver wear clashed with fine bone china and a four piece orchestra began to play.

"You know," Irving Goldberg said as he ran a hand across the white linen tablecloth covering the mahogany table in the Fountain Room. "This place is a gold mine. I'm fixing to buy it." The gangster's grin was cherubic. "If you like, I'll cut you both in as partners."

Frankie seemed flattered by the offer but he immediately looked to Jean Paul for direction.

"How much?" asked Jean Paul.

"Three hundred large from each of us would do it."

Jean Paul contemplated the amount over the dregs at the bottom of his wine glass while Frankie choked down a piece of bread and quickly began a new conversation with George Letoumis on his right. Goldberg eased off on the pressure and stood up to raise a toast to the table.

"To prosperity this year," the big man smirked with wine glass in hand. "And retirement next year," he added as the entire table concurred with noisy laughter. And then it was on to business. There were timetables to be set. Delinquent accounts to be

dealt with. The procurement of weapons, tools and anti-bugging devices to be discussed. Not that anyone at the table besides Irving Goldberg would have any great impact on the decisions to be made that evening. Goldberg had the contacts that made their marijuana smuggling empire work. Goldberg collected and doled out the money. Goldberg had control. Having decided what to do about Alfie Herrera, the big man kept his thoughts to himself. He would tell the others what they needed to know in due course but not before it was time and not before it became absolutely necessary.

**Postscript:** At the time of this book being written several gang wars were raging out of control over the drug trade in Montreal. The Hells Angels and the Rock Machine Motorcycle clubs were the main instigators of the drug war accounting for scores of bodies each year. Besides these two groups, you had the Haitian Gangs, The East End gangs, The South Shore gangs, The North Shore gangs, The Sicilian Mafia, The Calabrian Mafia and there was the West End Gang to which Irving Goldberg was said to belong - which is amusing since there is no such thing as a Montreal West End Gang. That moniker was made up by the Canadian Press and the RCMP who conveniently hang a name or moniker on any group of two or more individuals who pull off a crime. Not being content to merely invent names for these gangs, they also invent rankings and hierarchy within the gangs. Since Irving Goldberg lived in the west end of Montreal the local press called him a Captain of the West End Gang, which no doubt increased his authority in the underworld and helped to sell more papers when they wrote about him. Gustavo, the maitre'd, told me several interesting stories about Irving Goldberg during my interviews with him for this story. One time Goldberg showed up for dinner at the Maison aux Montagnes restaurant dressed only in his bathrobe and slippers. Lacking any alternatives, Gustavo sat Goldberg at the furthest table from the rest of the restaurant patrons and served him and sent him on his way as quickly as possible. Irving Goldberg

seemed to delight in shocking and offending people and dining out in his bathrobe was just one more way to achieve that end.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *The Villa Sea Breeze*

Six miles west of Hopewell, Jamaica, Alfredo Herrera stood silent and pensive as the sun rose like a helium-filled balloon into the morning sky. A wisp of white smoke trailed from a cigar-sized spliff of marijuana that dangled loosely from Alfie's lips. His throat swelled around the fumes of the smoldering Sensimilla plant as he grasped an iron railing that ran along the sea wall and stared at the seaweed washing to and fro in the crystal water. He scanned the ocean floor for signs of life but apart from a small lobster hiding in a rock crevice, his search was largely unrewarded. He turned his back to the ocean to face the grounds of the Villa Sea Breeze and drew another hit of his spliff. The villa had been rented on a long term lease at a cost of three thousand American dollars per month. It came with its own private beach, a forty foot in ground pool and ten acres of forested property surrounding the living quarters. Features of the house included a screened in verandah, separate guest facilities with sleeping room for eight and complete furnishings right down to linens and silverware. A private access road led through the fields and forest surrounding the villa to the main highway a mile and a half southeast of the beach. Lulled into a dream state by the gentle to and fro motion of waves, Alfie's thoughts drifted on an ebbing tide to his own house that he was preparing to build back in Canada. By early next year his financing would be complete and the Upper Westmount property that he now owned would be ripe for a summer housewarming party. His sister, Marguerite, and a few of her embassy friends would be invited. Her ex-boyfriend the Cuban Charge' D'affairs, Hernando Del Rio, would receive an invitation. It would be interesting to see his reaction to Marguerite's new beau, if in fact Marcos Esquinapa showed up. There were several other people from the Cuban Consulate that Alfie would be inviting but several of them were specifically not included because he did not want the

Cuban delegation using his housewarming party as a soapbox for one of their political causes. Especially since his old chum Murray Katz was going to be there. It would be interesting to watch Murray and the Cubans square off. Murray was free enterprise all the way. Government handouts, medical reforms and social welfare were three of the things that would get Murray hot under the collar. Murray was doing well for himself in his private law practice now that he had finished University. Most of Alfie's university alumni seemed to be doing well for themselves. But Alfie, the college dropout, was doing better than all of them. A glimpse up to the villa's attic brought Alfie's house-warming fantasies crashing back down to reality. His university chums would be more than a little shocked if they knew that the attic of his Jamaican villa was filled with marijuana. Alfie did not fully enjoy his role as house-sitter for several tons of marijuana but what really bothered him were the guns and ammunition that were stored alongside the weed. Weapons carried a high premium in Jamaica and no doubt his partner Marcos was using that premium to his best advantage in bartering them for weed to smuggle north. But something didn't add up. Something was missing in all this. Something was behind all those hushed conversations between Marcos and the Cuban Charges D'affairs in Montreal, Hernandez Del Rio. Some of it had to do with the drug wars raging in Montreal where bikers and gangsters were killing each other at an unprecedented rate. The Hells Angels and the Rock Machine Motorcycle club were fighting for control of Montreal's lucrative drug trade accounting for most of the bodies hitting the pavement. Marcos' cousin Rhuiz was the war's latest victim. But other criminal groups were also jockeying for position in the underworld and the newspapers exploited the carnage by giving daily updates on the body count in the same way they listed the hockey scores.

Hells Angels-six. Rock Machine-two.

Until the Montreal drug war came to an end, Alfie had decided to remain in the safety of Jamaica in spite of the inconveniences, preferring to miss a few channels on TV and a few of his favorite restaurants rather than end up with a knife up his ass like Rhuiz did.

His routine went as follows. First he flew from Montreal to Montego Bay, Jamaica where he rented a car and drove into the hills to examine and approve the quality of the weed. The best weed was the Sinsemilla herb which came from the hills of Orange Bay and was grown by ganga farmers who worked for Blackbeard. Then he would arrange for the preparation of the marijuana, making certain that all of the stems and branches had been removed from the Sinsemilla cannabis before having it pressed into fifty pound bales. Once the weed was pressed and ready, Alfie would pay the farmers for the load in American hundred dollar bills which he smuggled down to Jamaica on his person and in his golf bag. After paying for the weed with the money given to him by Marcos, he would oversee the crating of the marijuana. He made certain that the wood in the crates was free of knot-holes and that the lids and seams were sealed with wood glue. Although the crates were air tight by the time they were sealed up, Alfie still attempted to disguise the marijuana smell with limes that he cut open and threw in as an extra precaution. Once the weed was crated and ready for shipping, Blackbeard's men would truck it to Kingston, Jamaica for loading onto a commercial transport ship. Alfie would fly to Kingston to pay the customs broker and he would obtain the bill of lading. This was the part he feared the most. If there was any problem with the marijuana shipment it would happen when he accepted the bill of lading. He always took a deep breath and a swallow when he walked into the customs brokers' offices to pay the bill and retrieve the customs documents, half expecting a team of Jamaican police officers to jump from a closet and arrest him. Once the customs and shipping receipts were in hand, he would fly to Montreal with the bill of lading concealed upon his person and he would subsequently give the bill of lading to Marcos who had a way to smuggle containers full of weed into Canada without inspection. After he delivered the bill of lading, Alfie's work was done and he would hang around Montreal waiting for the weed to be sold and waiting for his end. But not since the drug war body count began building up in Montreal. Alfie was nobody's fool, even if he hadn't graduated from University and as long as the violence in

Montreal continued, he decided he would stay in Jamaica while the marijuana was being sold off. Alfie felt no guilt in what he was doing. In his mind decriminalization of marijuana was long overdue and he felt that the Canadian public had been double crossed by double speaking politicians. The Quebec Ledain Commission had long ago recommended legalization of marijuana, stating that it was no more dangerous than cigarettes or alcohol. Many other studies that Alfie read also touted the benign aspects of marijuana. Hell, every ex-hippy knows that cannabis is harmless but for political or perhaps economic reasons marijuana was still illegal in Canada. Why shouldn't Alfie capitalize on the unfair and illogical restrictions attached to a benign plant like cannabis? He wasn't hurting anyone. It's not like he was dealing in heroin or cocaine. It was bullies that wanted cannabis to remain illegal. Spiteful people who wanted to control other people. And everyone knows that bullies gravitate to policing and politics. And now bullies were in charge on both sides of the equation. It was no longer a case of small time hippies and dealers selling marijuana. The big boys in crime were running the show now and people like Alfie needed protection. That is why he was happy to be working with Marcos Esquinapa. His sister's boyfriend not only held the "key" to the city, meaning a way to smuggle weed into Montreal in large quantities. He also had the wherewithal to deal with the many criminal groups that would eat Alfie up and spit out his bones like confetti if he did not have protection. Alfie found confidence in Marcos Esquinapa's cold unflinching eyes that showed no emotion at all when he was informed about the grisly demise of his cousin Rhuiz Alevera. The little man merely smiled bitterly and told Alfie that he would handle Irving Goldberg and his crew when the time was ripe. If anyone hassles you, he said to Alfie, tell them what they want to hear and agree to any deal they come up with. Then leave them to me, he said in a voice dipped in ice. Alfie's musings were interrupted by the barking of a large dog. Alerted by the Doberman's warning, he turned from his ocean-side recognizance to begin a quick sojourn across a manicured lawn with the cool morning dew squishing between his bare toes. The guard dog had

been his own idea and a damn good one at that, Alfie congratulated himself as he made his way across the lawn towards the front gate. He had purchased the dog from a breeder in Jamaica for fifteen hundred dollars. The breeder let the dog go for an amount he had thought was cheap. Alfie smiled as he secured the black and tan Doberman to a run alongside the house. Since when was fifteen hundred US dollars for an oversized Doberman with a broken ear, a butchered tail and black lumps all over his legs cheap? As he left the dog behind and arrived at the gate, Alfie came face to face with a seven foot tall giant of a man who had the physique of a black gladiator and a head that was as bald as a billiard ball.

"My name is Moses," the Jamaican announced in a voice that came up from a cave. "Fence don' stop Moses," the giant added with a grin as he leaned over the villa's privacy enclosure and unlatched the gate from the inside. Moses swung the gate open and then stepped aside to allow a green Jaguar to drive into the center of the yard. The Jaguar stopped in the shade of a palm tree whereupon its doors opened and three more black men stepped out. The two men from the back seat were large and naturally muscled in the way that most Jamaicans are, but the driver of the car dwarfed them like a tree in a meadow of knee high grass. With the girth of a bear and an appearance to match, Blackbeard outweighed either of his associates by at least a hundred pounds. He was shorter by several inches than his bald-headed lieutenant Moses, but broader in the chest by far. With matted dreadlocks that fell to his shoulders and two missing front teeth he looked intimidating enough but when Blackbeard was angry, his eyes burned like red coals and he had the ability to screw his face into a menacing dark scowl that made him resemble the devil himself minus the horns.

"One day I kill *dat* fool dog," Blackbeard laughed as he stepped from the car and made a provocative lunge towards the snarling Doberman. The Doberman stood its ground growling and snapping its jaws from the end of its chain. Alfie took note of the

Jamaican's gap-toothed grin and the dog's wagging stump of a tail and left the two to enjoy their little game.

"One day I kill *dat* fool dog," Blackbeard repeated sometime later as he hitched his pants higher and made his way across the parched lawn to the sea wall where Alfie stood waiting for him. "Kill him *wi me* bare hands," he added as he tugged up his pants which were fighting against gravity and the downward forces of a size fifty-two inch stomach.

"It would be an interesting fight," replied Alfie as he fell into step with the bearded Jamaican Rasta.

"Dog *na'* stop Blackbeard. Police *na'* stop Blackbeard. No one can stop Blackbeard." The Rasta gave a thunderous belly laugh that applauded his own verbal prowess.

"Who's the tall guy?" Alfie asked, with a nod back towards the seven foot tall Jamaican named Moses who stood waiting by the car.

"*'Im be a Obeah mon.*"

"Obeah?"

"*Science, mon.*"

"You mean like science in a laboratory?"

"*No mon, witchcraft.*"

"You mean like ghosts and goblins?"

"*Na' laugh, mon.*"

"I'm sorry Blackbeard but that Obeah stuff's a little too heavy for me this early in the morning."

"*Dat cause you high, mon.*"

"I'm not high."

"*Ya, mon. I see it in your eyes. Your eyes well red.*"

"That's from too much chlorine in the pool."

"*Na chlorine. You high, mon. I smell it on you.*" Blackbeard laughed approvingly.

"You like my *herb*?"

"It's good shit."

"Marcos, him too *mus*' like my *herb*."

"He was very pleased with the quality of the last shipment. He sent down some money for you. It's inside the house. He told me that the rest of the guns you're waiting for will be shipped here by next week."

"Same promise *him did* make last week."

"Marcos will keep his word."

"Marcos promise guns. *White-white* bring more promise."

"Don't shoot the messenger."

"Eh?"

"Just take it easy and be cool man."

"Eh?"

Blackbeard's face turned dark as he moved quickly for a man of his size. Alfie stepped back in an evasive maneuver but the broad-chested Rasta caught him with one massive hand and squeezed his shoulder in a vice-like grip.

"*Nah tell me a cool out, white bread. You have my herb. Where be my guns?*"

"I told you they're coming."

"*I and I na' believe you.*"

"It's true," Alfie squeaked in a small voice. "I brought you one as a sample. It's in the house."

"*Make I see.*"

Blackbeard released his grip on the smaller man's shoulder as he propelled him towards the house. He flashed a hand sign to his waiting posse who were sharing a spliff by the car as he followed the slender white man across the yard and up four stairs of the verandah. The two men disappeared inside the villa, whereupon Alfie went to the bedroom quarters while Blackbeard broke away to wander into the kitchen for a beer. After finding a cold Red Stripe in the fridge, the Jamaican found himself a chair in the

living room where he placed his size fourteen sandals on a coffee table in front of him. The old Great House had been quite something in her time, he mused as he took a sip from his bottle and waited patiently for Alfie to return. The paint had faded from the walls and the furniture was threadworn in places but the grandeur of the old sugar baron's plantation house was not yet lost. Twelve foot high ceilings with crown moldings and wainscoting were extras from a bygone era where labour was cheap and mahogany was plentiful. The days of inexpensive labour were over in Jamaica now that slavery was gone. Today's cookie cutter houses were made of concrete block with rebar in the middle that any fool could build. In the modern Jamaica no one could afford to pay for the quality of construction from days gone by. In today's dollars it would be far too expensive. Great Houses like the Villa Sea Breeze were a leftover from a cruel past that saw men and women captured in Africa and delivered to Jamaica into a life of slavery and bondage. Blackbeard did not follow any particular political agenda in spite of the fact that he was a black man borne of enslaved ancestors. He had helped Nigel Higgens to become Prime Minister in the last election but not for any noble reasons pertaining to politics. Blackbeard was neither a liberal nor a socialist. He was an opportunist. And while he was happy to participate in weed smuggling and gun running schemes, he was in it purely for profit. As long as he helped Nigel Higgens to stay in power he would remain untouchable in his own drug business. Blackbeard's musings were interrupted when Alfie entered the living room carrying a golf bag under his arm. It was the same golf bag that Alfie had carried when Blackbeard picked him up at the airport. Setting the leather bag down with a rattle of clubs, Alfie plucked a screwdriver from his back pocket and carefully pried loose the black retaining ring that fitted across the mouth of the golf bag to hold the individual clubs in place. The retainer slipped from its socket and rolled across the floor like a toy hoop. Then, as Blackbeard watched with mounting interest, Herrera lifted the golf bag into the air and upturned it, spilling the golf clubs to the ground. In amongst the clubs that fell to the floor lay an object about three feet long that

was wrapped in black felt. Blackbeard set down his beer and shifted his great bulk forward to scoop the object up. He unraveled the felt cloth wrapping and then held a small seven pound carbine in his hands with the rapture of a father holding a newborn baby.

"This is one of the M-16 rifles that Marcos is sending down to you," said Alfie. "He had this one customized with an oversize stock and blueprinted for you so that it will never misfire or jam. It fires 30 rounds per second and can be set to full-auto or semi-auto settings." Alfie settled into an adjacent chair as Blackbeard examined every inch of the weapon with the meticulousness of a diamond merchant. The bearded Rasta raised the carbine and sighted along its length, his index finger swinging the lever on the breech between single fire and full automatic settings. He found the magazine release and removed the clip.

"Where *de* bullets *dey*?"

"I have two full magazines upstairs and several cases of ammo are on the way."

"When do I get *de* rest of my guns?"

"They'll be here as soon as Marcos finishes paying for them."

"Paid for *wid* my *ganga*."

"That's the deal you made with Marcos, isn't it?"

"No problem." The Jamaican replied as he pulled the slide on the breech and aimed the barrel of the M-16 directly towards Herrera's heart. Blackbeard pulled the trigger and sent the firing pin home to the empty chamber with a metallic clink.

"*I an' I wan'* bullets."

"You can't be serious," Alfie sputtered as his heart began to race. "You can't fire that thing around here while I'm sitting on tons of weed and munitions!"

"*Don'* tell Blackbeard what him can do in Jamaica," the Rasta said, his size taking on even greater proportions as he rose to his feet and scowled darkly. "Blackbeard can do

*anything 'im want in a Jamaica. I and I rule 'dis land. You come wid' me white-bread. I and I show you. Come. We go a bush."*

There was no point in resisting the giant Rasta thought Alfie as he was lifted from his easy chair with one easy motion of Blackbeard's oversized hand. Alfie resolved to take a positive approach towards this unexpected turn of events as he was roughly propelled towards the front door of the house. He hadn't seen much of the island, having been cooped up with the Doberman and guarding the stash every day. The more he thought about a trip into the jungle, the more he began to appreciate that a change of scenery might even be welcome. He was almost looking forward to this new experience until Blackbeard issued one final instruction that turned his blood cold.

"Bring *dem* bullets!"

**Post script.** There was a time when there were no guns at all in Jamaica except for the odd hunting shotgun. In the nineteen seventies, however, Jamaica began to see an increase in military ordinance most of which was rumored to be coming to the island from the CIA. M-16 carbines were handed out like candy to supporters of CIA backed political parties while on the other side of the ledger Fidel Castro was pouring weapons, troops and money onto the island to promote communism. In today's Jamaica, high powered rifles and carbines are as common as grass lice to use a colloquial expression that many islanders favor. It seems that going forward in this world means no going back and in Jamaica there seems to be no way of eradicating the gun use from politics. That genie has been let out of the bottle and won't go back in.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *First class*

“I can’t hear.”

“Yawn.”

“I’m not sleepy.”

“Just make yourself yawn.”

“That’s not gonna work.”

“Yes it is. Yawn, *mon esti.*”

“Okay, there it worked.”

“Why do you always fucking argue with me about everything?”

“I don’t argue about everything.”

“You’re doing it again.”

“That’s not arguing, that’s questioning.”

“Same fucking thing.”

“No, it’s not.”

“Here we go again.”

“I’m just being conversational.”

“Well, stop being conversational. There’s a whole bunch of magazines in the rack over there.”

“This is nice, ain’t it?”

“What?”

“Flying first class.”

“It’s the only way I travel.”

“Me too, from now on.”

“Want to play some heads up?”

“You deal.”

“Why should I deal?”

“Okay, I’ll deal. Gin, a buck a point.”

“It’s a four hour flight to Montego Bay, Frankie. That could add up.”

“Make it payable after the next load comes in.”

“Sure, why not? Here comes the stewardess with our dinner menu.”

“They call them flight attendants now.”

“Same difference to me, *mon esti*. The nicest ones are in economy anyways.”

“What do you mean?”

“The stews in first class have seniority. They’re all old boots.”

“Not this one coming.”

“She’s old enough to be your mother, Frankie.”

“She still looks pretty good to me.”

“If you say so.”

“You ever been to Jamaica before, J.P?”

“Just once.”

“What’s it like?”

“It’s full of nigs.”

“I thought it was nice down there.”

“It is if you like frying on the beach with a bunch of black guys.”

“What about the babes?”

“They’ve all got big lips and fat asses.”

“There’s gotta be a few cute ones.”

“If we find one she’s all yours, Frankie.”

“What’s the matter J.P. you don’t like dark meat?”

“We’re not down here for broads Frankie.”

“I know, I know. We’re looking for Alfie. Where do we look first?”

“We’ll check out the main beaches first”

“And if we don’t find him there?”

“Then we’ll start checking out the hookers in Montego Bay.”

“Good plan.”

“We can also check the car rental agencies.”

“That’s good too.”

“And the hotels and villa rental agencies.”

“You’re a regular Sherlock Homes.”

“I’ve done this shit before.”

“Since when?”

“Since I took on a contract from old man Marino while you were in the slammer. One of his crew took off with the old man’s money. The boss told me where to look for the guy and I found him. I can always spot ‘em. Especially on the beach. They’re the ones that are always looking around instead of relaxing. Their eyes never stop moving.”

“You mean like Irving’s?”

“It’s not the same. A hunted man has a special look about him. You can see it in his eyes. It’s the same look you see in animals when you’re out hunting.”

“What happened to Marino’s guy?”

“I had to spend a whole fucking month lying on a beach to find him.”

“Where is he now?”

“Down there.”

“In the baggage compartment?”

“Fuck, you’re stupid sometimes, Frankie.”

“How am I supposed to know what you mean when you stamp your foot on the ground and say down there?”

“Some things you never say out loud, Frankie.”

“Did you ever get old man Marino’s money back?”

“It wasn’t about the money. It was to set an example. When you fuck up in our world, you gotta pay Frankie. You always gotta pay. There’s no getting around that rule.”

“It’s too bad Irving couldn’t fly down to Jamaica with us.”

“He’s on parole.”

“So am I.”

“Irving’s parole officer has a hard on for him. He checks on him every week.”

“Too bad.”

“Not for us.”

“What do you mean?”

“If Irving was able to travel to Jamaica he’d never have brought us in on this score.”

“He does seem pissed off about you and me going down to Jamaica without him.”

“He’s always pissed off. The more money he makes the more miserable he gets.”

“So why are you going partners with him in the restaurant?”

“I don’t know, Frankie. There’s not much else I can do in life besides what I’m doing now and maybe owning a restaurant. I’m thirty-five. I got no house. No job. No legit business. And I got three bits under my belt.”

“Jail’s an occupational hazard for us.

“Maybe so but I ain’t going back inside again, Frankie. I can’t take it any more.”

“Jail’s not much different from boarding school.”

“How can you keep saying it’s the same as fucking boarding school? It’s noisy all the time. You can’t get any sleep because they leave the lights on day and night. The food tastes like shit. And most of the cons would kill their own mother for a hundred bucks.”

“We’re doing a lot better since we teamed up with Irving.”

“In his little black book we’re doing well but I want to see some cash. At least we had hard cash when we were boosting banks.”

“Hard cash and hard time.”

“Maybe so but I’d like to take some of my own connections and try something different.”

“What connections?”

“I got friends at the airport. They’re already pulling off bags for Ryan’s bunch.”

“You know this for a fact?”

“Why are you always questioning me, Frankie?”

“I’m just saying that if you’re right maybe we can go in on something together.”

“If something works out I’ll cut you in. You and me are partners, Frankie.”

“I got your back, man.”

“I know you do.”

“I’ll never run out on you.”

“I know that too.”

“It’s you and me together.”

“To the end.”

“Gin.”

“What.”

“Gin.”

“*Colis!*”

“That’s Gin at four hundred points and a dollar a point.”

“*Tabernacle de colis! Frankie* stop talking so much and let me play cards.”

“Its only money J.P.

“Deal.”

“Its too bad we couldn’t have brought our girlfriends down.”

“No place for women in our business.”

“I know but it would have been nice.”

“Has Monica ever even been on a plane?”

“No, but neither have I before now.”

“Then I guess there’s no point in asking if you’ve joined the mile high club.”

“What’s that?”

“You don’t know what the mile high club is? You’re out of touch since you started going steady, Frankie. You’ve got to get out more.”

“I get out enough.”

“Since Monica moved in you don’t do anything but sit on your couch together and get stoned.”

“I’m tired of the club scene.”

“You’re getting old, Frankie.”

“Just because I’m not into chasing pussy anymore.”

“Especially because you’re not into chasing pussy anymore.”

“I just like staying home is all.”

“She’s got you by the balls.”

“No she doesn’t.”

“Stop doing that.”

“What?”

“That thing with your teeth.”

“What thing with my teeth?”

“Forget about it. And forget cards. I’m going to have a nap.”

“Go ahead J.P. I’ll play solitaire.”

“Wake me up if I snore.”

“Or if you have a bad dream.”

“I don’t dream”

“Everybody dreams.”

“Not me.”

“Yes, you do. You just don’t remember them.”

“*Tabernacle* Frankie! Stop fucking arguing with me. I should know if I dream or not. I’m going to sleep. Don’t bother waking me unless the plane goes down.”

“Here comes the stewardess with the dinner menus.”

“She’s all yours partner.”

**Postscript:** First class travel in flying is often an oxymoron today with terrorist threats overriding civilized travel. Even first class travellers have to remove their shoes and chuck out their gels and liquids before being granted the privilege of stepping on board an aeroplane these days. There is no more smoking on board. Or in the terminal for that matter. No more free pillows and blankets. No more unlimited drinks. But more important than the *things* that have been lost is the *attitude* which has been lost from today’s airlines. The unionized ground crews are invariably rude and surly. The Immigration staffs are thorough to the point of intrusion. Customs are unrelentingly dedicated to their task with very little if any training in manners and politeness. Even the guy with the dope sniffing dog is nasty to those who attempt to pat his furry charge. As a result of these changes I am probably not alone in having lost my desire to fly these days. When you consider the inconveniences of modern air travel with cancellations, delays, diseases, terrorists, crooked cab drivers, lost luggage, air disasters and cabin spraying for insects, it’s amazing that anyone takes a plane anywhere. As far as I am concerned, wide screen high definition television is the best way to visit exotic locales in the modern era and once we learn how to manipulate the weather at home, there will be no reason left to travel by plane anywhere at all.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Tee Time*

Log entry: 403-02-08-95

Originating-Montreal, Canada/

Chief Inspector Alphonse Leroux-RCMP

Receiving-McLean Virginia/

Commander Calvin Russell/ CIA Section 403

Time in: 2100

Time out: 2114

Reference file:2402-9403

Tape begins: 2402.9

"Hello, Cal?"

"Hello, Alphonse. How have you been keeping?"

"Very well, thank you . . . how is the weather down there?"

"Sixty-five degrees and sunny. Why don't you come down and play a little golf?"

"Would that I could, Cal, but I'm swamped with work up here. Are we on a clear line?"

"The scrambler is on, Alphonse, go ahead."

"Can you confirm that your man is in position? Our man is on the way down."

"Yes, McCready is in place."

"McCready? I thought that he took early retirement after that IRA fiasco."

"He's been collecting the odd bit of information for us on the Jamaican drug traffic."

"I'm surprised you still use him."

"He's done good work for us in the past."

"When he wasn't on the bottle."

"He's the best asset we have in Jamaica at the moment and he speaks several languages including Jamaican patois. Who is this Brian Fox you're sending down?"

"Hell of a good man. One of our best. He did some excellent work during that Separatist resurgence a while back. I just hope that working with McCready doesn't spoil him. Is McCready aware of your contingency plan, the one you so carefully neglected to include in my official report?"

"That is something I don't think we should discuss on the phone, Alphonse, clear line or not. Has Corporal Fox been fully briefed on the plan?"

"Brian Fox is far too apple pie to become involved in that kind of assignment, Cal, and so is the Canadian Government. Your contingency operation is not our cup of tea, I'm afraid."

"I could quote you some past incidents to the contrary but if our boys come through for us the entire subject becomes academic."

"Just as long as you realize Canada's official position on this, Cal. Terrorists and revolutions notwithstanding, we can not go along with your contingency plan in its present format. Canada's Charter of Rights does not permit it. Furthermore our Charter forbids interference in other countries domestic affairs although to some degree we are prepared to overlook that particular rule of law in this case. Let us discuss the matter further when we have Corporal Fox and agent McCready's preliminary reports in hand. Perhaps your contingency plan will remain unnecessary. I may come down for a personal visit. If I do, I will bring my fishing rod and golf clubs."

"Will you be bringing Claire with you?"

"I doubt that very much, Cal. It will probably be a quick visit, in and out."

"If you change your mind, Madge has the guest room ready."

"*Merci, mon ami*, but I must reserve judgment on your kind offer until I know for certain what the future holds. What kind of help can our boys count on if they run into difficulty down in Jamaica?"

"We still employ a few local contacts on the island but with the stakes raised as high as they are in the upcoming elections, it's hard to know who we can trust."

"And if an emergency evacuation becomes necessary?"

"Jamaica is an island. There are many ways in and out."

"Let's hope they are not needed. In any event we'll know more when we have McCready's and Fox's reports to evaluate."

"I'll talk to you then, Alphonse."

"*A la prochaine, mon ami.*"

Tape ends: 2794.8

**Postscript:** This tape recorded message was declassified a few years ago and was passed on to me through an associate of my father who informed me that Cal Russell and Chief Inspector Leroux were as much friends as they were business acquaintances. My father played golf with both Cal Russell and Inspector Leroux on more than one occasion and my dad told me that the Chief inspector was no duffer. He witnessed Chief Leroux belt a two hundred and forty yard shot that ended up as a hole in one on a par three course at Woodlands Golf Club in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Although I never played that course myself I can appreciate the degree of difficulty in such a shot. In fact I do not play golf very often. I find it too frustrating to try to whack that little ball into that little hole. I prefer the thoroughly Canadian sports of swimming, ice fishing, sailing and skiing. My

father on the other hand was an accomplished golfer and an all around sports enthusiast and he was good at everything he tried.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Boys Night Out*

Irving Goldberg looked at his hole card and then pushed his entire pot of cash into the center of the table.

“I’m all in.”

“I fold.”

“Fold.”

“Fold.”

“Fold.”

“Fold.”

Goldberg raked in the pot and then flipped over a pair of sixes.

“Just like old times, eh boys?”

“Son of a bitch!”

“I knew you were bluffing.”

“If you knew I was bluffing, Harry, why didn’t you call me?”

“Because you didn’t raise once.”

“I didn’t?”

“You sucked us all in.”

“It wasn’t hard.”

“Your deal, Freddie.”

“I don’t wanna deal.”

“You have to. It’s your turn.”

“Okay. Seven card stud. Deuces and one eyed Jacks wild.”

“Jesus, Freddie, why don’t you make all the cards wild?”

“Deuces and one eyed Jacks is only six wild cards.”

“Okay, let’s cut the bullshit and deal.”

“What about those Habs tonight, eh?”

“Corneyer was asleep most of the game.”

“Gretsky skated circles around him.”

“Ever since you did a dime in BC you’re rooting for the Canucks?”

“I just said Gretsky out skated Corneyer. I didn’t say I give a fuck about hockey.”

“What’s it like, doing time in BC?”

“Three squares a day and all the cock you can suck.”

“Lots of fags out there?”

“Every third inmate.”

“Well, you know what they say, pitching ain’t the same as catching.”

“It is to me.”

“You never did a little catching?”

“I never turned queer inside.”

“Any port in a storm.”

“Not for me.”

“I’m just pulling your leg, Pat. Every one knows you’re not queer.”

“I have nothing against them.”

“Yah, you’ll rob them whether they’re queer or straight.”

“That’s not funny, Louie.”

“You’re in a bad mood tonight.”

“I’m not in a bad mood. I just don’t like your stupid fucking jokes.”

“Hey boys, we’re here to play poker, not argue.”

“Tell Louie to stop getting in my face.”

“Louie, ease up on the jokes and play cards.”

“I’m in Irv.”

“Me too.”

“In.”

“In.”

“Yah.”

“In.”

“So how are Frankie and Jean Paul doing in Jamaica, Irving?”

“They’re probably sucking down Mai Tais and tanning on the beach.”

“Did they find little Alfie yet?”

“They heard something from the hookers in Montego Bay. They’ll be on the job tomorrow checking it out.”

“Tanning in Jamaica and questioning hookers ain’t exactly being on the job.”

“It is for Jean Paul. He hates niggers.”

“He hates a lot of things.”

“I can just see him and Frankie bickering on the beach like an old married couple.”

“Its okay for Jean Paul to razz the shit out of Frankie but no one else is allowed to. You don’t want to get between them in a fight.”

“Frankie’s strong as a bull. I saw him in jail once and he threw a con right over the front end of a truck in the maintenance shop.

“I’d put my money on Jean Paul in a beef. In his case, size doesn’t matter. I saw him in a bar fight once with a biker twice his size. Jean Paul hit the guy six times before the guy even knew he was hit. The biker went down for the count and didn’t come up again.”

“You heard what J.P. did to Alfie’s main dealer?”

“He rammed a bread knife up his ass and then turned his lights out.”

“No wonder Alfie’s lying low.”

“So would you if J.P. was looking for you.”

“Someone told me that he changes his bed sheets every night.”

“Clean sheets, clean conscience.”

“So what are the boys going to do when they find Alfie down in Jamaica, Irving, give him the bread knife treatment?”

“We’re here to play cards, not discuss business.”

“I can’t believe that you drove over to my house in your robe, Irv.”

“It’s his lucky robe, Harry. It’s the same one that he used to wear in the can.”

“I remember that robe.”

“What would you do if your car broke down, Irv? Hitchhike home in your robe and slippers?”

“Mercedes don’t break down.”

Irving pronounced it Mar-say-dees.

“Get that dog of yours away from me, Freddie.”

“What’s the matter, George, you afraid of dogs?”

“I’m not afraid of your fucking dog. Just keep him away from me.”

“Jesus Christ, man, she’s a fucking pussycat.”

“It wouldn’t be the first pussycat I killed.”

“Lighten up, George, it’s a card game.”

“I can’t concentrate on my cards with that fucking dog looking at me.”

“You’re into the bag too much, George. Next you’ll be thinking the dog is a narc.”

“Don’t talk to me about the bag, Willie. You never stop rolling them.”

“Weed’s not the same as coke.”

“That’s what you say.”

“I’m not the one freaking out over a dog.”

“That’s because it’s not staring at you.”

“I’ll put her away.”

“Freddie bring some beers from the kitchen when you come back.”

“What do you think about the biker wars?”

“My money’s on the HA.”

“I heard the Rockers are bringing in hired guns from New York.”

“I heard the wops are behind it.”

“Let them kill each other off.”

“It’s bringing heat on all of us.”

“I did a quick tally on our cars in the driveway tonight. If you add them all up, they come to more than the value of Freddie’s house.”

“Freddie’s house is not exactly the Taj Mahal.”

“Don’t say that. Freddie’s got a nice little place here.”

“I was just saying you got a nice place here, Freddie. Pass me a beer. A nice little split level. What’d you pay for it?”

“Three fifty.”

“Three fifty’s not bad. Ten per cent down and a monthly mortgage. What’s that come to Freddie?”

“I don’t know, George. I didn’t get a mortgage.”

“You bought this place without a mortgage?”

“I didn’t qualify for a mortgage, Willie. You know with my record and all.”

“Who’s in?”

“I’m in.”

“I’m in.”

“Me too.”

“I fold.”

“I’m out.”

“You got a house without a mortgage or a job. Then you must be a damned good scammer to pull that off, Freddie.”

“I don’t scam anymore.”

“Then you must have been a damned good scam artist ‘cause you’ve owned this house as long as I have known you.”

“Did you ever think that I might have inherited it, Willie?”

“Chill out, man, you need to win a hand.”

“I’m due.”

“Then deal yourself a winner, man. It’s your fucking house. The least we can do is let you win a few hands. Is that a new bracelet, Irv?”

“Yah, you like it?”

“It’s nice. Eighteen caret?”

“Anything less than eighteen K doesn’t hold its value.”

“How much?”

“You don’t wanna know.”

“I’d like to buy me a bracelet but I’ll need to pull some money from the kitty.”

“I wouldn’t mind pulling some money from the kitty myself, Irv.”

“I said I didn’t want to discuss business tonight.”

“Maybe we can talk about it tomorrow then.”

“We’ll see.”

“What did you decide about the restaurant, Irv?”

“Me and Jean Paul are going to be partners.”

“What about Frankie?”

“Frankie wants to save his money for his old age.”

“When do you take possession?”

“The place is in escrow. Paperwork should be finalized in a week or two.”

“My brother’s getting married next month. Maybe I can throw his stag there.”

“It’s a restaurant not a bar, Willie. There’ll be no pussies eaten on my stage and no prostitutes getting fucked in my washrooms.”

“Are you going to redecorate the place, Irv?”

“I’m gonna get rid of that plywood sign on the roof.”

“It looks like the kind of sign you’d see on a chip stand.”

“Yah, well it ain’t the sign that makes the restaurant.”

“We know, Irv . . . it’s the food.”

”Last night I smoked some of that weed that Alfie’s bringing in from Jamaica. It’s good shit. It makes our Mex weed taste like garbage.”

“Jesus Christ, Willie. You’re buying weed from Alfie’s crew when you can get all you want from us for free?”

“You’re not a smoker, Irv. You wouldn’t understand.”

“I understand alright. You want to pull your money out of the kitty ‘cause you’re throwing it away like fucking water.”

“Six hundred and fifty for a pound of weed ain’t exactly a lot of money, Irv.”

“It’s the principal of the thing. You’re competing with your own product by buying the Spic’s weed.”

“You don’t understand.”

“What’s to understand? You get our weed for free from us but you’d rather spend your hard earned cash on someone else’s weed because it tastes a bit better.”

“Willie’s got a point, Irv. Selling our weed while the Spic’s weed is in town is like trying to sell old Fridges to Eskimos.”

“Our weed is backing up on us. Some of it’s going rotten.”

“I told you to unwrap the masking tape from the bundles.”

“I did, Irv, but you gotta break open the bales too. Some of them are wet in the middle.”

“Then open the bales up and let them dry out. Jesus Christ, do I have to think of everything?”

“Once the ammonia smell is in the weed, the high is no good. When the weed rots it’s ruined.”

“Ever since the Spic’s weed hit the streets our weed ain’t moving.”

“Not for long.”

“What do you have in mind, Irv?”

“I told you we’re here to play cards, Louie, not talk shop. But I tell you this. I got something in mind for Alfie and his Spic friends. I’m just waiting for the right time.”

“How are the boys on the rez doing, Irv?”

“They’re getting tired of waiting for their end.”

“I’m collecting some cash tomorrow. I should be picking up at least two hundred large.”

“Bring it to me right away, Willie. I don’t want our friends to be unhappy. Without them we wouldn’t be getting anything in.”

“It’s a two way street, Irv. Without us they’d have nothing.”

“They don’t need us. They can deal with anyone. If the wops ever get wind of our scam they’ll put us and the whole fucking reservation on the arm.”

“I think the wops would think twice about taking us on, Irv.”

“Don’t you believe it, Louie. If the wops find out about us swinging loads through the rez they’ll try to take over our scam. And I’m not gonna let that happen. They’ll shoot. We’ll shoot. Then we’ll all be dead. So everyone just shut your mouths about what we’re doing.”

“Your call.”

“I raise.”

“Fold.”

“Fold.”

“I’m out.”

“I call.”

“It’s just me and you Freddie.”

“I hate going heads up.”

“Fold then.”

“I’m not folding. I got a King showing and all you got is one little three.”

“My little three goes all in.”

“I hate this.”

“You wanna see my cards, Freddie? You gotta pay.”

“I see one little three stacked up against my pair of Kings and tens and I’m hooked like a guppy. I’m all in, Irv. Turn ‘em over.”

“Three little threes.”

“Fuck fuck and fuck again! Don’t you ever bluff?”

“How do you think I took the last hand?”

“I’m tapped out.”

“You can put more money on the table.”

“Nah, I’m gonna take a break. Maybe I’ll walk the dog.”

“One down, five to go. Deal the cards Louie.”

“Who wants to see Montreal get the Olympics again?”

“If Montreal gets the Olympics the cops will be too busy chasing Arab terrorists to bother with us. And our dope will sell for five times the price.”

“For two lousy weeks.”

“Montreal is still paying off the last Olympics.”

“You’re thinking small, George. The Olympics bring millions in spin off business.”

“Not for any of us, it doesn’t.”

“I don’t want to pay any more taxes. Governments are like magicians the way they make our tax money disappear.”

“You don’t pay taxes.”

“Yes, I do. Irv’s brother in law does them for me.”

”Your brother in law’s an accountant, Irv?”

“Yah.”

“Is he any good?”

“Not bad.”

“I might need an accountant this year.”

“Since when do you declare taxes, George?”

“Since I want to get a mortgage and buy a house and I need to show income.”

“Call Irv’s brother in law, Abe. He fixed Irv and Jean Paul up with a mortgage for the restaurant. It’s a private mortgage. Interest only, no principal.”

“He can get me a mortgage without a job?”

“Yah, Freddie. Abe can get you one.”

”I didn’t know you could do that.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know, Freddie.”

“Like what?”

“Like going the distance with Kings and tens.”

“Kings and tens is a good hand, Irv.”

“It’s a sucker’s hand.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because it looks strong but almost anything can beat it.”

“That’s it for me, boys. I’m wrapping it up.”

“Hold on. I got something to wake you up.”

“Put that shit away, George.”

“That’s kind of hypocritical of you, isn’t it Irving?”

“Weed is one thing but that white powder is no fucking good for you.”

“I’m down eight hundred, Pat. Have a bump and stay a while. It’s still early.”

“I gotta go. It’s three in the morning and I have a wife and two kids waiting for me at home.”

“Pussy whipped.”

“Hen pecked.”

“Cluck cluck cluck.”

“Fuck you, I’m going home.”

“I’m going home too.”

“Me too.”

“That leaves three players and I can’t make any money with only three players. I’m going home too. Let me know any time you boys want another lesson in cards.”

“How much are you up, Irv?”

“I don’t count up ‘till I get home.”

“Don’t get stopped by the cops or you might have some explaining to do about why you’re driving around town at three in the morning in your robe and slippers with your pockets full of cash.”

“Ain’t no law against that. Besides I got my coat on over my robe.”

“It’s a nice coat, Irv.”

“It fell off a truck.”

“Is that real wolf fur on the collar?”

“Wolf is the only fur that doesn’t freeze up around your breath.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“There’s lots you don’t know, Freddie.”

“Like what?”

“Like going the distance with a pair of Kings and tens.”

“Good night, Irv.”

“See you tomorrow, boys.”

**Postscript:** It is commonly known that the inhabitants of the Kahnawake Mohawk Indian Reserve (Originally named the Caughnawaga Reserve) have been smuggling cigarettes and liquor through their reservation for decades. The Kahnawake Reserve straddles both the American and Canadian borders which makes smuggling between the two countries so easy that it has become a part of life for some members of the tribe. Both the Canadian and the American authorities have turned a blind eye to this practice while the issue of cigarette and alcohol smuggling on Indian reserves is debated before the courts. Irving

Goldberg took advantage of these legal machinations to set up a smuggling corridor with a Kahnawake Indian cell mate that he bunked with for several years. When Irving and his cell mate were sprung free, they set up a marijuana pipeline that stretched from Mexico to Canada.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### ***Dangerous Liaisons***

Karee! Karee! Karee!

Brian Fox awoke with a start, his heart racing from a night filled with strange dreams and sounds. He opened his eyes to search out the unfamiliar cries coming from outside of his darkened bedroom.

Karee! Karee! Karee!

He slipped from his bed and felt his way across the floor towards a trace of light filtering in through the curtains. The floor tiles felt cool to his bare feet as he crossed the room and pulled the drapes open. He fumbled for a metal crank in the sash surrounding the window casing and turned the crank clockwise until the louvered shutters opened to spill daylight into the room. He squinted between the slats towards a small blackbird with piercing yellow eyes that was sitting in a tree in the garden. The bird puffed out its chest and gave another cry.

Karee! Karee! Karee!

The blackbird hopped to a lower branch and stood with its head cocked to one side as Brian stumbled back to his four poster bed and lay down. He took a moment to explore the guest room of CIA agent Davin McCready's Jamaican villa. A pair of dark eyes returned his gaze from an oil painting on the opposite wall. If the artist was to be believed, his female model was blessed with a thin waist, oversized breasts and a smile like the Mona Lisa. On an adjacent wall was a painting of a watering hole, featuring elephants with elongated trunks and lions whose shaggy manes and large heads were out of proportion with their bodies. The animals looked like comic book drawings and the

artist's watering hole was much too lush with vegetation for an African scene thought the RCMP corporal, as he examined the oil rendering. Brian Fox's gaze wandered upward to a vaulted A-frame ceiling with support slats and shingles that were openly visible from the floor below. The ceiling looked unfinished to Brian who was used to the insulated and plastered walls and ceilings of buildings back in Canada. Two antique dressers and two wooden chairs shared an adjacent wall of the bedroom. An alcove between the dressers led to a small bathroom that contained an old-fashioned claw foot tub and a modern shower stall with sliding glass doors. Old and new. That seemed to sum up Jamaica as Brian Fox had seen it thus far on his first visit to the island. Modernization appeared to have caught Jamaica unawares, trapping her somewhere between the eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries. The anomaly could be seen in old-fashioned kitchens with modern appliances. Old stone buildings with satellite dishes on their roofs. And modern highways that catered to pushcarts as well as fuel driven buses and cars. The louvered window he had opened was not actually a window, the Mountie realized as he studied his surroundings. The entire west wall of the guest room was a series of interconnecting louvered doors that could be folded open or closed. A folding wall. How novel, thought the Mountie as he jumped from the bed and walked lightly on the balls of his feet to open the wall to its fullest extent. Through the twenty foot opening that faced the garden he observed fruit trees with oranges that were round and ripe. Breadfruit trees with fruit that looked like green basketballs hanging from broad-limbed branches. Banana trees. Red-petaled Ackee trees. The garden was encircled by majestic royal palms that towered above the surrounding property like soldiers guarding the crops. Brian Fox examined the lower reaches of the mountainside, where shingled rooftops could be seen peeking through the trees, then swung his vision westward towards an ocean lying grey and calm in the distance. A slight mist was hanging in the lowlands creating a scene that was reminiscent of an old Tarzan movie. A flock of wild parrots flew over the garden and began screeching unintelligible gibberish as they settled in a nearby almond tree to forage

for nuts. Although the morning sun was already giving off heat it had been cool last night, Brian recalled. Too cool for the single sheet that covered his bed in the guest bedroom. The Mountie stepped back into the shade of the bedroom and completed a set of fifty sit ups. Then he did fifty push ups and fifty deep knee bends. After he finished exercising, he went into the adjacent bathroom to peer at his image in a chrome-framed mirror that hung on the wall above an old-fashioned porcelain sink. The image in the mirror revealed a straight nose, chiseled cheek bones, and eyes that were ice blue and almost hypnotic in their unwavering steadiness. After completing his bathroom hygiene, the Mountie dressed and then strolled around the pool apron towards the center of the sprawling villa as he followed his nose towards the smell of frying bacon. He found Davin McCready in the kitchen wielding a frying pan over a gas fired stove while singing along to a small portable radio. McCready's rendition of a Bob Marley tune was less than professional but to his credit, the raspy-voiced CIA agent seemed to know all of the lyrics to the song that was playing.

"Good morning,"

"Aye, that it is" replied Corporal Fox's red-haired host as he expertly flipped an egg into the air and caught it with the frying pan. "Sit yourself down, lad," the broad-shouldered CIA agent offered cheerfully as the Mountie entered the kitchen through a screen door. "I was just getting ready to call you for breakfast."

Showered and wearing a fresh dash of cologne, Davin McCready looked far better than the unshaven dog's breakfast that had come to meet Brian at the Pelican Grill restaurant yesterday. McCready had introduced himself the day before, with no apologies for his tattered appearance and no explanation for his bloodshot eyes and the booze on his breath. Today the CIA man was freshly groomed and shaven and wearing a clean and pressed pale green safari suit that looked professional but did little to compliment his reddish hair and freckled complexion. Under his safari suit was a tan open-collared shirt that Brian presumed to have a similar collection of pocket flaps and straps and epaulets as

McCready's jacket and trousers displayed. Cops often dress very similar to the prey they are after. In Brian Fox's case that meant casual slacks, a light summer shirt and a knee length leather jacket that was too warm for the tropics. McCready, on the other hand, was dressed in Jamaican gangster chic that included expensive Tilley togs and a pair of Ray Ban aviator sunglasses.

"Did you sleep well?" agent McCready inquired of his guest.

"I did once I got used to all the noises."

"Aye, a lot of visitors are surprised by the noises at night in Jamaica. It's insects mainly. The hisses you heard are lizards and tree frogs, depending on the time of year. The high squeaks are rodents or bats. You get used to it after a time."

"Are there any wild animals in Jamaica?"

"No wild animals in Jamaica. No snakes either since they brought in the mongoose. The biggest animal you are likely to encounter down here might be a wild goat."

"What about the animals in that painting in the bedroom?"

"I did that myself. Do you like it?"

"It's interesting."

"I paint in my spare time. It keeps me from going crazy down here."

"You have quite a view from the garden," replied the Mountie.

"Aye, you can almost see Cuba on a clear day. Sit down and eat," McCready exhorted as he slipped a serving of fried eggs with bacon in front of the Mountie. "I've had mine some time ago," he added in response to the RCMP man's hesitant look. "Eat up lad. There won't be any restaurants where we're headed this morning. This might be our only meal of the day," he continued as Brian Fox sat down and dug in.

"How long have you been living here in Jamaica, Davin?"

"Twenty years off and on. But I moved down here for good five years ago."

"What's it like living here?"

"Like everything in life, there's good and bad. The good being the weather mainly."

“No problems being white down here?”

“Nay, lad.”

“What about the lack of modern amenities?”

“That’s part of the appeal.”

“So what are the negatives?”

“Trying to live on a disability pension.”

“Is that why you’re still on watch?”

“Aye, lad. Freedom fifty-five came and went for me.”

“I don’t think anyone retires until they have to these days.”

“Who can afford to? With the stock market in the gutter and interest rates at record lows, most people on a pension have to supplement their incomes.”

“How does it work that you can collect disability and still get a paycheck?”

“I’m paid as a private contractor. No benefits.”

“How does that work out?”

“I always thought that when I retired I would have a little hotel or guest house here in Jamaica. That and a small government pension is all I really need. I don’t have my hotel yet.”

"So, our boy Alfie has been down here for several weeks I hear," the RCMP agent inquired, changing the subject between mouthfuls of food. "What's he been up to?"

"He rarely leaves his villa, except to pay the occasional visit to the hookers in town."

"Sounds like your typical tourist."

"Your typical tourists don't have ten ton moving trucks coming and going to their villas in the wee hours of morning."

"Were you able to I.D. any of the plates?"

"There were no plates. No plates and no markings. The rigs looked to be military."

"What the hell would military trucks be doing at Alfie's?"

"That's what you and I are going to find out this morning as soon as you finish your breakfast. One of the trucks was still there when I left my surveillance to pick you up yesterday. With a little luck it will still be there when we return to the villa this morning."

"Do you think the trucks are hauling drugs?"

"From the shape of the boxes I saw being loaded into Herrera's villa, they may have been hauling rifle crates."

McCready tossed his spatula into the sink without cleaning up the breakfast implements.

"Can we get inside the house for a closer look?"

"Nay, lad, there's always somebody there and a bloody big Doberman is guarding the place."

"Did you recognize anyone else at the villa?"

"Only Clyde Tobin . . . Blackbeard to you."

"And you think Blackbeard is the link between Jamaica's Prime Minister Higgens and Marcos Esquinapa."

"Marcos Esquinapa is the one running this show. The drug part of this operation is just a small part of his master plan. I haven't figured out the mechanics of his scheme yet, but I'm certain that it's centered on Jamaica's upcoming national elections."

"But you haven't actually seen any weapons being off-loaded at the villa, have you?"

"You don't need to see a skunk to know it's there, lad. You just have to follow your nose. Five years ago there was barely a shotgun to be found in Jamaica. Now automatic weapons are as common as grass lice. So many M-16s are finding their way here we could fight the Vietnam War all over again. I'm pretty sure that our friend Marcos is the source of most of them."

"Are Godfrey Brown's supporters armed with M-16s as well?"

"He's on our side."

"So if I read between the lines, Higgens is getting his guns from Cuba and Brown is getting his guns from the CIA."

"No comment."

"If Prime Minister Higgens is moving towards the communist left because he needs foreign exchange, why doesn't the IMF just lend him some more money?"

"Higgens blew last year's allotment of six hundred million IMF dollars on a bunch of bloody socialist projects designed to help him cinch his re-election. As soon as he learned that he couldn't have any more money, the crafty old bastard went straight to Cuba looking for handouts. Only instead of money, Castro has been giving Higgens weapons and ammunition to start a bloody socialist revolution."

As Brian Fox began working on the last of his meal, McCready began to fill a packsack with oranges and fresh honey bananas from the fridge.

"Everything a person needs to survive grows wild here in Jamaica," the CIA man relished with a wave towards the garden outside. He reached into a kitchen cupboard to locate a stainless steel revolver that had been secreted away beneath some loose rags in the corner. "And it's all free," he continued as he broke open the breech to position an empty chamber under the firing pin. "I always make sure Betsey's on empty before I put her in my pants," he winked as he stuffed the gun under his belt and smoothed the front of his safari jacket over the butt of the revolver."

"Wouldn't a holster be safer?"

"No sense in throwing down the piece and being caught with the holster," the CIA man answered with another wink.

"Are we expecting trouble this morning?" inquired the Mountie as he watched McCready slip a box of .357 shells into his jacket pocket.

"Nay, lad," the CIA agent answered. "I just like to be prepared. I can lend you a spare .38 if you like, but I must warn you, it's indefinite prison time for packing a gun down here in Jamaica. With very little leniency for any foreign agents trying to upset Prime Minister Higgens' applecart, I might add."

"I'm just a tourist," replied the Mountie, declining the offer.

"That's the spirit," offered McCready.

Brian digested the remainder of his breakfast with some concern over the remark McCready had just made, since the Mountie had in fact smuggled his own weapon into Jamaica. Brian's was an experimental lightweight handgun designed by a Canadian manufacturing company that was secretly affiliated with the RCMP. The heart of the revolutionary pistol was a one piece injection-molded polycarbonate frame based on a Beretta design which enclosed a non-metallic firing mechanism. The only metal used in the fabrication of the weapon was a thin sleeve of titanium in the barrel as well as a similar skin of titanium for reinforcement of the breech. The plastic gun, or Q gun as it was designated by the RCMP lab boys, came with a screw on silencer and a clip on laser sight that could be affixed beneath the barrel. Included with the firepower package was a clip of twelve small but deadly .32 caliber bullets. To make up for their lack of punch, the small caliber bullets were filled with a mixture of lead, mercury and a chemical compound that was designed to explode upon impact. The only downfall to the unique Q gun was that in its present state of design, it could only fire one magazine's worth of bullets before the paper thin titanium-sleeve in the barrel would begin to warp. That meant that the unique weapon had to be discarded when its initial magazine of bullets was empty because the bullets might explode in the gun if fired through a warped barrel. The upside of the equation was that the pistol was small and light enough to carry in a pocket. And because of its plastic composition, the Q gun was able to be carried through electronic metal detection systems such as those used in airports, prisons and other high security areas without setting off alarms.

"Those eggs were delicious," said Brian to his CIA counterpart. "They remind me of the farm eggs I used to get as a boy in Saskatchewan."

"Aye, Jamaica is a land of plenty all right," the CIA man replied. "Livestock doesn't do all that well down here because of the heat, but the ocean provides a variety of fish and the fruits and vegetables here grow like wildfire."

"With such a beautiful climate and so much food in abundance, it makes me wonder why there is so much political unrest down here. I would think that the Jamaican people shouldn't have a care in the world."

"Aye, when I first came to Jamaica it was like living in paradise. People walked the streets unmolested and left their doors open. Neighbors helped each other out. Everyone was courteous with everyone else. Then the tourists with designer jeans started coming down here, bringing their Walkmans, televisions, fancy motor cars and other instruments of envy and greed. Now most Jamaicans want the North American lifestyle instead of paradise lost. They want material things and some don't care how they get them."

"Is that why they grow so much marijuana down here?"

"Ganga was brought here by the first slaves from Africa for their own use. But they grow most of it now because North Americans want it."

"Does everybody down here smoke marijuana?"

"There are two very distinct classes of people down here in Jamaica. The rich who favour imported wine and spirits and the poor who use ganga that they can grow for next to nothing."

"If marijuana is illegal why doesn't the government eradicate it? The island is only a hundred or so miles long by sixty miles wide. A couple of choppers could destroy all of the marijuana crops in a matter of days."

"Aye, lad, they tried that a few years ago, but every time the government burned a field of ganga, the drug growers retaliated by burning down a field of sugar cane."

"Couldn't guards be placed around the legitimate crops?"

"The ganga cultivators take a mongoose and light his tail on fire. Then they release it into the cane fields. All it takes is a matter of minutes."

"That's cruel."

"Aye, but effective."

"Do you think marijuana will ever be legalized here in Jamaica?"

"I doubt it, lad."

"My girlfriend back in Canada thinks that marijuana should be legalized."

"How would she feel if all her airline pilots and medical surgeons were on the stuff?"

"She would probably say that there would have to be controls . . . like anything else."

"Aye, well her opinions are safe enough with me, lad, but I wouldn't broadcast them about the RCMP detachment if I were you."

"It's not the rights of pot heads that I give a damn about. It's all of the young people filling our jails. I don't like laws that protect people from themselves."

"Aye, well we can't allow the youth of our nations to throw their lives away on drugs, can we?"

"We allow them to use alcohol and cigarettes."

"Alcohol has been a comfort to man since the beginning of time. Even the Bible sanctions the use of spirits."

"Marijuana has been around at least that long and many eastern religions sanction the use of cannabis and condemn the use of alcohol."

"Heathen beggars! Are you sure you don't smoke the ganga, lad?"

McCready accompanied his remark with the smallest trace of a grin.

"Never," replied the Mountie, his blue eyes unwavering.

"Aye, well you can't be a police officer and keep double standards, can you? Leave the dishes," McCready added with a wink. "The maid will take care of them when she comes by later."

Brian Fox dropped the plate he was carrying into the sink and followed McCready out to the carport. He caught up to the CIA man behind the wheel of a battered ten year old Fiat. The radio was pumping out a reggae tune that had the CIA agent drumming his fingers on the steering wheel as Brian slipped into the passenger seat and closed the door.

"Slam it . . . you've got to slam it," said McCready over the noise of the radio.

"Are you sure it won't fall off?" Brian replied as he looked around the Fiat's interior. Brian had been too tired and disoriented from his late night air flight to examine McCready's car when the CIA agent had picked him up at the Pelican Grill the night before. But in the clear light of day he could see that the Fiat's glove box was missing its cover. The seats were torn in several places. The carpet was in tatters. And the passenger side sun visor kept falling down in spite of his best efforts to secure it in place.

"What are you looking for?"

"Seat belts."

"No seat belts in this car. Seat belts are not required in Jamaica."

"That's crazy."

"You said you didn't like laws that protected people from themselves."

The Mountie pointed to a half finished marijuana spliff in the ash tray.

"What's that?"

"Part of my cover," the CIA man answered with a grin as he plucked the offensive object from the ashtray and flicked it into the surrounding bushes. With no more justifications for the lack of seat belts or the discarded marijuana joint, Davin McCready shifted into gear and exited the carport at a brisk speed with all four wheels sliding sideways on the loose gravel of the driveway. The sport sedan's dual overhead cams quickly spun to an RPM that the unbelted RCMP agent felt was unnecessarily fast for the undulating two lane causeway, as the Italian sedan made short work of the downhill run to the highway a mile down the road. The Jamaican custom of driving on the left hand side of the road was somewhat disconcerting and on several occasions the Mountie's heart filled his mouth when a vehicle roared past only inches away in the opposite lane. Upon reaching Mo'Bay, McCready stopped to purchase two fresh coconuts from a street vendor's cart. The coconut water was sweet and refreshing as the Mountie had his first real lesson in Jamaican patois.

"*Dat* good?" smiled the Jamaican higgler, as Brian tipped the coconut and drained it of its liquid contents.

"Delicious," the Mountie replied.

"Coconut water *wash de' 'art.*"

"I beg your pardon?"

"*Wash de' 'art.*"

"I don't understand."

"It washes the heart," interjected McCready, after emptying the contents of his own green coconut. "Coconut water is said to be good for the heart muscle."

The Mountie looked at McCready somewhat perplexed.

"I thought they spoke English in Jamaica."

"Most speak patois which is a mixture of English and certain African dialects.

Jamaican Patois was used in the old days by slaves who wanted to talk in front of their white masters without being understood."

McCready tossed the empty coconut husks into the higgler's cart and left him richer by two American dollars. He then began making up time as he pushed up the Fiat's speed.

"Your car seems to run better than it looks, Davin. Why haven't you fixed up the interior and the body?"

"No one notices an old car," the CIA man chuckled as he swerved to avoid a deep hole in the pavement. He swerved again as he swept around a herd of goats that trotted across the road towards a pile of garbage. The scenery changed as they sped past the statue of Marcus Garvey in the commercial district of Montego Bay before winding back towards the water's edge along Fort Street.

"I can't believe people live like this," the Mountie said as he passed wooden shanties with no electricity, no plumbing and no glass in the windows. The shanties were of primitive construction with plywood and driftwood walls, a few large stones for a

foundation and zinc sheets for roofing. Most of the one and two room cabins were occupying squatter's rights beside the road.

"You said that Prime Minister Higgens spent his entire allotment of six hundred million IMF dollars on social reforms for the poor but I don't see much evidence of that out there."

"Aye, well Higgens is PNP and this is not PNP territory. He doesn't waste any of his IMF money here. He spends it where it will do him the most good, in strongholds such as Hopewell, Savannah la Mar and in Negril. That's where his supporters are the thickest."

"What about the marijuana trade that's supposed to be helping to support the poor? I don't see any evidence of drug wealth out there either."

"There are villas and houses tucked away in the hills that would make your chin drop to the ground if you saw them - all bought and paid for in cash with the proceeds of the illegal marijuana trade. As bad as it looks out there right now, imagine how these shanty towns would look if there were no ganga money at all coming to the island. I'm telling you, lad, Jamaica is on the verge of being damn near broke. And the proof of that is right before your eyes."

The Mountie noticed several emaciated dogs prowling through a garbage dump at the side of the road.

"Don't they feed their animals?"

"Not often," replied McCready as he veered around a traffic circle and headed out of town. After they left the city limits the Fiat's speed stabilized to a steady seventy miles per hour over a ribbon of blacktop that sliced through field after field of ripening sugar cane. The terrain began to take on a vague sameness until cane fields gave way to coconut plantations and then slowly changed to dense jungle. A man could get lost in there, thought the Mountie, as he peered deep into the dense brush at the side of the road where vines hung like ropes from the trees. McCready crossed a narrow bridge at Great River and then stopped at the side of the road a couple of miles further on. The CIA agent

pulled his Fiat off the highway and drove into the tall grass at the side of the highway where the car was concealed from passing traffic.

"We make our way on foot from here," the CIA man said in a low voice, as the two men began following a path that led from the main road into the jungle. The trail was muddy and slippery underfoot, with bushes constantly springing into the Mountie's face and tripping him up. The two men stopped some twenty minutes later when they reached a plantation of coconut trees that partially obscured an old Georgian style Great House whose peaked roof could be seen in the distance. The house was approximately a thousand yards from where the two police agents were standing and was surrounded by about three hundred yards of waist high grass that was interspersed with shrubs and bushes. The agents zigzagged through the coconut grove, using the tree trunks as cover until they reached the perimeter of a grassy meadow that surrounded the Great House. From this point on they were forced to crawl on hands and knees in order to reach an outcropping of weeds, trees and shrubbery approximately one hundred and fifty yards from the secluded villa.

"That's Herrera's villa," said McCready in a whisper as he crawled towards a thicket. "He can't see us from the house when we're in the thicket, but anyone walking through the meadow can be seen from the upper floors of the villa. We should really have come here in the dark."

"How long have you been using this watching post?" grunted the Mountie as he wriggled behind McCready on his belly.

"About three weeks now," the CIA agent replied and then fell silent until he reached the centre of the undergrowth where he shrugged off his pack. McCready removed a pair of powerful binoculars from his knapsack and then worked his way to the edge of the thicket closest to the Villa Sea Breeze. He raised the field glasses and panned left to the ocean and then right towards the highway and jungle until he traced the outline of the villa's in ground pool.

The villa was private, thought the Mountie, as he followed the CIA agent's lead and placed his own pocket spyglass to his right eye. Its focus fell on a large black and tan Doberman that was chained to a run at the west side of the villa, its nose raised and twitching in the wind.

"I see a dog."

"That's Herrera's guard dog," whispered the CIA agent. "He's been trying to pick up my scent for weeks now but the ocean breezes shift around too much for him to pinpoint my location."

The slam of a screen door at the side of the house cut McCready short as a figure emerged from the villa. The silhouette was that of a man who was very tall. A smaller silhouette followed the first before disappearing into the shadows at the far side of the house.

"I think I know those two," said McCready in a low voice, as he squinted through his binoculars. "At least I think I know one of them," he whispered.

The sound of a diesel engine suddenly shattered the quiet of morning.

"Son of a bitch," McCready swore as the noise gained in volume. He watched through his binoculars as a large truck lumbered from the shadows of the villa and started to accelerate down the access road towards the highway.

"Keep an eye on the villa while I check this out," McCready said as he grabbed his rucksack and began edging backwards out of the thicket.

"Hold on, Davin. Where are you going?"

"Someone has to tail that truck," the CIA man whispered. "And someone should stay to keep watch on the villa. Wait here until I come back for you."

The Doberman from the villa began barking and the two men fell silent.

No reason to be alarmed Corporal Fox consoled himself as CIA agent Davin McCready scampered away from the thicket. He watched McCready's departure until a trail of swaying grass stalks stopped moving and the savanna became still and quiet again. No

problem, the Mountie reassured himself, adopting the Jamaican expression that he had learned during his first visit to the island. He was well concealed in the thicket with a good view of the Villa Sea Breeze. And he had a full knapsack of oranges and bananas for provisions. McCready would be back to pick him up before dark. But until then the Mountie's thorny sanctuary would remain his prison until the sun went down!

**Postscript:** The reasons for social revolution were many in the nineteen seventies when hippies preached living off the land and shunned material wealth. In North America socialism was popular with the cultured crowd even as they sipped their espressos at sidewalk cafes and enjoyed the liberties of democracy. In Jamaica the idea of chucking capitalism for communism or socialism was almost out of control. But the CIA took care of that by cutting off the island's operating capital through sympathizers in the IMF. Prime Minister Michael Manley's socialist government countered that move by throwing the doors open to marijuana trafficking in Jamaica which brought precious foreign currency to the island. It was a heyday for weed smugglers during the seventies but today that is no longer the case as the IMF is back to supporting Jamaica. But there are still a few diehard socialists out there smuggling weed to North America. Men like Alan Long and Howard Marks and Marcos Esquinapa, alias *el Lobo*.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *The Rockers*

The Rockers Motorcycle Clubhouse in the suburbs of Montreal resembles a fortress, with security cameras and motion sensors policing the grounds. The plain grey concrete building is built like a bunker with a flat tar and gravel roof and small barred windows. An illuminated sign on the face of the industrial building heralds the Rockers Motorcycle Club logo and crest with a scull and crossbones on a background of fiery flames. Several smaller signs on the property are prominently displayed reading KEEP OUT, PRIVATE and NO TRESSPASSING. The pageants of secrecy and security become more ominous as one notes the coils of barbed wire atop a ten foot chain link fence that surrounds the RMC property. An RMC club member, usually a lower ranking pledge, always stands guard at the gate and another pledge stands watch inside the clubhouse door. The grounds are patrolled twenty four hours a day by free ranging Dobermans that are trained amongst other things not to take food from strangers. A club member trained in surveillance techniques makes a once a week sweep of the clubhouse for bugs. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the Quebec Provincial Police and the RCMP have taken a keen interest in the day to day business of what might appear to be an innocuous motorcycle club. On this cool summer morning, in late spring, several members of the Rockers

Motorcycle Club could be seen entering the clubhouse for a meeting or “prayer session” as the bikers themselves referred to the event. The sound of their choppers reverberated from the surrounding buildings as they roared through an industrial complex that led to their headquarters. A team of QPP officers was observing and filming the biker’s meeting from offices across the street in the south section of Saint Leonard which is a community just east of Montreal. While the police were able to photograph the club members as they arrived in bunches of two or three, they were unable to hear the conversations outside or inside the clubhouse. If they had been able to listen in, they would have been shocked by the extent of the criminal organization known as the Rockers Motorcycle Club. If their “mole” had been successful in placing a hidden mike before the meeting, they might have heard the leader of the RMC calling the meeting to order. Roger Lebrun was a personable and charming psychopath who spoke in a mixture of English and French.

“Attention, mes amies. Time to get down to business.”

Several members ignored the call as they continued drinking beer and sniffing lines of cocaine and crystal meth at some of the dozen tables scattered around the premises. There was very little else in the empty Clubhouse besides a keg of beer, a few chairs and tables and a long polished bar from a defunct nightclub. A shuffle board stood in one corner. A pin ball machine was nearby. A pool table and a dart board completed the games activities. A sink beside the wet bar was piled high with dirty beer glasses that a pledge would clean up later. The inside walls were painted in white enamel which was convenient for wiping up the blood that often flowed from fights and disagreements in the clubhouse. Several bullet holes dimpled the walls from test firing small calibre weapons. A picture of Adolph Hitler in full Nazi regalia suggested that there were no

Jews in the club. Next to the photo of Hitler was one of Alfred E Newman, the grinning mascot of Mad Magazine fame. Several hunting trophies were hung at different locations on the walls. A large eight point buck and a snarling bear decorated the north and west walls. A stuffed owl perched on the bar with its wings spread in flight. Johnny Castle was holding the owl in one hand and a beer in another while he humped the owl like he was fucking it, making the wings flap up and down as though it were alive. A few club members laughed uproariously over Johnny's pantomime as Roger Lebrun called for order. Meanwhile a conversation between Sergeant at Arms Andre Provincial and "hang around" Harry Chase was under way with too much momentum to stop.

"I like riding on four wheels, not two"

"You don't have to ride one. You just have to own one."

"Why should I own a bike if I never ride it?"

"You have to own a bike if you're going to be a member of the club. Otherwise the cops will call us a criminal organization and we won't have our privacy protections under the Charter."

"Okay, I'll buy a fucking Honda 75 cc and park it in my garage."

"You can't buy a Jap bike. It has to be a Harley or any other American made chopper."

"Says who?"

"Rules of the club."

"It's over twenty grand for a Harley."

"I can get some of the guys to put one together for you, using midnight auto parts.

There are no serial numbers on motorcycle parts. We use a legit frame and steal a

different chopper for the rest of the bits and pieces. All Harley parts are interchangeable from 1960 till today. The whole deal will cost you less than five grand.”

“That’s not too bad.”

“Look at it as an investment. It’s the cost of doing business with the club.”

Roger Lebrun tried again to call for order in the crowd of about thirty or so motor cycle club members.

“Shut the fuck up, mon tabernacle!”

Two senior affiliates of the RMC, Gilles Monet and Pierre Trudel, continued their debate about the expulsion of another member.

“He’s no good for the club. He does nothing for us.”

“He’s a shooter and the club needs those right now.”

“We have only two rules in the club. No screwing around with another member’s woman and no ripping off fellow members. He’s only been with us a few fucking months and he’s already broken both rules.”

“We could send him back to the West End Gang.”

“If they’ll take him back.”

“Someone should warn him that if he doesn’t smarten up, we’ll dump him in a sleeping bag in the Back River like the others.”

“Shut the fuck up, mon esti,” Roger Lebrun growled. “Or do I have to talk loud enough for the cops to hear? Listen up,” he said with a piece of white chalk in hand. The RMC members slowly gathered around their leader who stood beside a green chalk board. “I want to talk about something,” he said as he scrawled the word COKE in large letters on the board. “This is how most of us make our money,” he said pointing to the

chalk board, “This is how we earn our livelihood. The first thing we are going to do here today is set a price for this that everyone in the Province will have to follow. I figure this is the right amount,” he said as he wrote the words, \$45,000/KILO beside the word COKE. “We can all make money at this price,” he said before erasing the words from the board. Then he wrote the word COMPETITION on the chalk board. “This is another thing that we are here to talk about today”, he added as his expression changed to an angry grimace while he stared at the word on the board. “And this is what we are going to do about it,” he said as he took a damp sponge and wiped the words from sight. Then he took his chalk and scrawled several names in a vertical column one after the other.

Hells Angels

Devils Choice.

The Liquidators.

Saint Adele Bandits

“These are the main players in the game. These are the ones we have to take over or patch over. They will all be easy, except for the top name on the list. That is why I am starting a slush fund to take care of the problem. Everyone in the club will contribute to the fund. That fund will come from the extra money we make from the higher prices for this,” he said as he tapped his nose, “Starting today the club will pay ten K from the fund for any full color HA biker who patches over and fifty K for this,” he said as he wrote on the board using the French word for murdered. “So far the HA have refused our offers of a truce or a deal but after a few of them are . . . ” he pointed to the word on the blackboard, “. . . the others will come around.”

“Have the wops given their okay?”

“It’s their product we sell. They stand to make big on this.”

“What about the weed and hash business?”

“The Rockers Motorcycle Club will control every corner and every bar between Sherbrooke and Ontario. We will set the prices and we will eliminate the competition.

“Who do we start with?”

“We start with the HA but first we take out the Goldberg crew.”

“Why them?”

“The club wants their action.”

“Who do we take out first?”

“The head of the snake.”

“Goldberg will be tough to get to. He has his body guards.”

“Then we take out Jean Paul LaPierre and Frankie Lascarta.”

“LaPierre has done work for us in the past.

“Then make him an offer and see if he’ll come over.

“If J.P. comes on board, we get Frankie too.”

“What if they don’t go for it?”

“Then we waste them both.”

**Postscript:** The two best known motorcycle clubs in Montreal are the Hells Angels and the Rock Machine. Both of these clubs have criminal members but in the case of the Hells Angels it is not so much that all of the bikers are criminals, but more a case of outlaw bikers hiding amongst the legitimate bike club members. That is what makes it so difficult for police agencies to shut the clubs down as criminal enterprises. The legitimate

members provide cover for the outlaw members-or the one per centers are they like to be known, referring to the one per cent of bikers who are criminal.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Nice Day for a Drive*

There was freshness to the early morning air as CIA agent Davin McCready followed the military lorry from Alfie Herrera's villa towards Ocho Rhios. The old girl must be at least forty years old, he mused, as he studied the lorry with his arm draped over the window sill of his Fiat. Probably built during the Second World War, he decided, as he took note of her hydraulic tailgate, metal side posts and canvass top covering the cargo bed. The old lorry was strong on springs but weak on shocks, the CIA man noticed, as the transport pitched left and right along the freeway bucking like a burro with a thorn under its saddle. McCready tried to I.D. the driver through the truck's outside mirrors but the sun was still low in the eastern sky and the CIA man could see only a shadow of a face in a jiggling pan of white lightning. After passing through the Parish of Saint Ann's, the string of cars he was following splintered like articulated snakes into two separate lines. One line crawled alongside the ocean towards Ocho Rios. The other line slithered behind the lorry heading towards Kingston and the mountainous Cockpit Country where the Maroon slaves fought their British masters two hundred years earlier. The ocean faded into obscurity as the CIA man followed the procession of motor vehicles while they executed a slow climb up Fern Gully. It was dark and foreboding in the Fern Gully chasm that was said to have been cut from an old riverbed. Tall trees were blocking the sky and the CIA man had the feeling of being in a tunnel as he negotiated a roadbed that was slick with rainwater runoff. It took almost forty minutes to complete the arduous second gear climb from Fern Gully to the summit of Walkers Wood, where the highway crested a small plateau and broke into bright sunlight. The BMW in front of McCready chanced a dangerous passing maneuver, downshifting into first and screaming around the lorry in front just before a parade of cars and trucks appeared from the opposite direction.

McCready shuddered to think of what would have happened if the BMW and the opposite lane of traffic had met head on. The burned out evidence of similar confrontations were evidenced throughout the island in the form of wrecks left to rust away at the sides of the highway. The CIA man passed a fruit stand. And then another. Until fruit stands began popping up like toadstools alongside the two lane highway. The old lorry he was following suddenly pulled off to the side of the road to stop at one of the roadside stands. The stand was a primitive affair, with construction of lashed bamboo, thatched roof and a small cooking pot over an open fire. McCready took the opportunity to stop at another stand nearby to buy himself two cold beers along with a take out-order of salt-fish and roasted breadfruit. There was little opportunity to savor the salty snack as the World War Two lorry roared into life and lumbered past him again. McCready trailed the lorry at a distance remaining behind a white Toyota with two rubber-necking tourists until the outskirts of Kingston. He was held up by a traffic light on Old Hope Road and had to spend a dozen anxious minutes racing up and down side streets to find the lorry again. It was only by sheer chance that he stumbled upon the heavy vehicle rumbling across the Naggo Head Causeway, heading east towards the Kingston wharves.

McCready resumed trailing the World War Two vehicle across Passage Fort Bridge where the truck turned down a side street and then stopped in front of a warehouse. A plywood sign on the face of the building identified the offices of Harvey Masters and Sons, Brokers of Customs and Excise. McCready passed the lorry then pulled to the curb a hundred yards down the street and slouched low in his seat. As he watched in his rear view mirror the lorry's passenger door opened and a black man stepped out of the cab. The Jamaican was dressed in green army scrubs and work boots. He turned from sight and disappeared into a side door entrance of the Harvey Masters and Sons warehouse. A few moments later, the warehouse doors opened and the lorry reversed into the loading bay. The loading bay doors closed and about twenty minutes after that, they opened again and the lorry emerged from the Masters and Sons warehouse, riding several inches higher

on its springs than it had on the way in. The CIA agent sunk low in his seat as the heavy vehicle roared past him in a cloud of diesel fumes. He raised his head at the last minute in a bid to identify the driver. He snapped his spyglass to his eyes and sighted on the truck's door-mounted rear view mirror where he saw the driver's face for the briefest of seconds. He lowered his spyglass and adjusted his rear view mirror to catch sight of a small white car approaching from behind at a high rate of speed. A white Toyota sped up to the Masters and Sons loading dock and screeched to a stop, at which point two white men emerged from the car. One was tall and fair haired and stood approximately six feet-two. He had a prominent nose that looked like it had been broken several times and long dirty blond hair that was tied in a ponytail. The man beside him was shorter, with a stocky build, medium length hair and a close cropped dark beard and mustache. McCready recognized the white Toyota as one of the cars in the chain he had followed through the mountains. He had been too busy concentrating on the lorry to give much thought to the other vehicles in line but he knew that it had to be more than coincidence that the same white rental car had ended up here at this particular time. The two men from the Toyota could be seen talking to the foreman of the Masters and Sons stevedore crew and it looked to McCready like money was changing hands. He noted several Jamaican warehousemen who were in the process of loading wooden crates into a steel shipping container. McCready focused his binoculars on the stenciled numbers in the top right hand corner of the shipping container. CBIU 443532. He jotted down the container number in his note pad and then waited another few minutes until the two white men returned to the street and drove off. He thought for a moment about following the two strangers in the white car before he dismissed the idea and jotted down their license plate number instead. He would find out their identities in a day or two from one of his contacts in the Jamaican rental car business. Meanwhile there was a man he had to see in Montego Bay. A man whose great bald head had filled the lenses of his binoculars only a few moments ago. A man named Moses.

**Postscript:** If you have ever driven in Jamaica then you already know the dangers of doing so. Driving is about the only thing that is done quickly in Jamaica. Driving fast seems to be a national pastime, as is passing on blind corners. Only the brave take to the wheel in Jamaica and the burned out evidence of the fallen are everywhere in the form of car wrecks decaying at the side of the road. As skilled as Jamaicans are at driving in their own environment, I was inwardly snickering when a Jamaican friend came to Montreal for a visit and said he was too afraid to drive there. He said the left hand driving, the cloverleaf overpasses and the many lanes of traffic pressing bumper to bumper were overwhelming and he told me later that he could never drive in Canada.

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### ***Hand to Hand Combat***

After his three hour drive to Kingston, Davin McCready returned to the north coast of the island where he cruised slowly through the foothills of Montego Bay. The properties in Montego Heights were all large, five acres being the standard lot size. The roads were lined with cultured trees and the grass was manicured to golf course perfection. The streets were devoid of potholes, a result of maintenance by private paving contractors. The hydro lines were in excellent repair, because armed guards patrolled the grounds at night to keep thieves from stealing the copper wire. There was never any shortage of water in Montego Heights, which had its own water collection tank on top of the mountain. A store at the entrance to the affluent community was well stocked with American delicacies such as potato chips, beer, wine and cigarettes. Some of the richest businessmen in Montego Bay lived in the residential sub-division along with several prosperous drug dealers and their families. The villa where McCready stopped his Fiat featured six bedrooms and half a dozen more rooms on four separate levels. There were numerous televisions within the premises, evidenced by several satellite dishes on the ceramic tile rooftop. An alarm system with remote controlled cameras policed the grounds while decorative security grillwork covered all of the doors and windows. McCready parked in front of a massive steel gate that spanned the driveway and which was attached to an eight foot high stone wall that surrounded the ocean view property. A pedestrian doorway in the metal gate swung open with a squeak, as the CIA man pushed on the grillwork and stepped through the opening. A concrete path leading up to the

house was bordered by a patchwork of sun-bleached grass and patches of the same red volcanic soil that was prevalent throughout Jamaica. Three or four high priced automobiles were parked in the mansion's asphalt parking lot on a lower level to the right of the house and a green Jaguar that was locked up in a grill enclosed garage appeared to be in pristine condition. McCready detoured past the fleet of cars and continued up a tiled path leading towards the house.

"Private property *dis*, *white-white!*"

The CIA man ignored the warning and continued walking towards the front door of the four story mansion. At the front steps he was stopped from proceeding any further by a posse of Jamaican men who were lounging on the mansion's front porch. Some of the Jamaican men sported dreadlocks and were wearing jeans and floral T-shirts. Others wore their hair close cropped and were dressed in kaki-colored military style clothing. Two young girls stared down from the upper balcony of the residence while other dark eyes could be seen peering through the mansion's curtained windows. Most of the men on the front porch carried butterfly knives, with blades that swung open at the flick of the wrist. Others carried long bladed machetes. The sweet smell of burning marijuana filled the air as McCready stood by the front porch waiting for an audience with one of the men. A tall bald-headed man separated himself from the others on the porch and rose from his lounging position to address the stranger at the foot of the steps. Rising to a height of almost seven feet tall, the Jamaican squinted down at the white intruder through marijuana-reddened eyes. He flicked a four inch long marijuana roach that landed at the CIA agent's feet.

"Why do you come here, white man?"

"I'm here to see the owner of the house," answered McCready.

"You tell Moses what you *wan'*," the giant replied, his broad lips splitting into a grin that revealed a gold peg in the center of his upper bridgework.

The CIA man answered the giant's challenge by stretching to his full height of six foot one and a half inches. He tried to bulldoze past Moses only to bounce off the Jamaican's two hundred and sixty pound frame as though he had run into a steel girder.

"You should not have come here, White Man," the Jamaican boomed, his voice resonating like it was broadcasting through a sub woofer. Moses leaned forward to catch hold of the CIA man's throat. A wave of nausea rose from the pit of his stomach as McCready tried to break away from the vice-like grip on his neck. He threw his weight against the long-armed Moses but the giant pulled back and lifted him into the air like a stew pot chicken. The crowd of Jamaicans surrounding the Obeah man began chanting his name.

"Moses . . . Moses . . . Moses."

McCready slammed an open-palmed karate chop to the bridge of the giant's nose and found a moment of freedom until the giant's long arm struck him a blow across the forehead that blurred the CIA man's vision and numbed his body from head to toe. A moment later McCready found himself once again fighting for oxygen as the giant's hand squeezed his neck while voices around him chanted.

"Moses . . . Moses . . . Moses."

McCready attempted to push away from his captor, using his arms and legs against the giant's midsection. But when he tried to push away Moses effortlessly pulled the American back within his clutches. The CIA man pushed away again and was pulled back in the same manner as before. The third time he pushed away however, the CIA agent went along with the giant's pull back and used every last bit of his reserve energy and momentum to drive his fist deep into the bald man's throat. The blow had the effect of a rifle shot, catching Moses in the only non-muscled area of his body. The Jamaican dropped like a stone to the ground, rolled his eyes upwards and then collapsed on the lawn before a crowd of onlookers who stood by in stunned silence. McCready used the diversion to make a hasty retreat toward the street but two young Jamaicans sprang into

his path and cut him off. One dreadlocked Rasta raised his arm and swung his machete. The CIA man caught the Jamaican's machete arm with his left hand and then grabbed a handful of dreadlocks with the other hand before swinging the black man's face into his upraised knee. The dreadlock went down and McCready scooped the fallen man's machete from the ground. He backpedaled across the front lawn until his shoulders came to rest against the stone wall that surrounded the house and property. A machete swished by his ear as one of the bolder Jamaicans pressed closer. McCready threatened the advancing dreadlock with his purloined machete and gained a few more inches towards the gate. McCready lunged at the next challenger who melted back into the crowd while another man slashed a machete at the American's unprotected flank. The CIA man twisted just in time to avoid a crippling strike and then used his machete to block a second blow that would surely have killed him had it landed. He looked to the right. No possibility of escape there. He looked to the left. None there either. The situation was becoming desperate. He searched for a sympathizer in the crowd but saw only a horde of angry, black faces. A dreadlock armed with a butterfly knife moved in on McCready who raised his machete in a diversion and then kicked out the dread's kneecap. The Jamaican fell to the ground but McCready's own leg twisted and he slipped to his knees. Like a river breaching a dam, the Jamaicans surged in from all sides and began attacking him. Hands pulled at his hair as punches and kicks rained down upon him. McCready was fading fast and almost at the point of losing consciousness when a shot rang out. The abuse seemed to ease to some degree as the pile of bodies on top of McCready became lighter. A second gunshot rang out and the remaining Jamaicans clambered off of his back and moved to one side. McCready lay on the ground while the posse of Jamaicans and assorted onlookers stared down at him with hate burning in their eyes.

“*Who dat?*” a deep voice boomed and the crowd spread like waves before the bow of a ship as a barrel-chested black man pushed through their ranks.

“Blackbeard,” the Jamaicans whispered in collective reverence as the three hundred and fifty pound Rasta bullied his way through their forces.

“Judgment Day,” someone else murmured as they took note of the M-16 carbine that looked like a toy in the bearded Rasta’s large hands.

“Who dares to trespass in my yard?” Blackbeard demanded as he pressed forward and stopped in front of the fallen American. The Rasta stared down at the CIA agent and aimed his carbine at McCready’s chest. Blackbeard’s eyes blazed like molten lava as he squinted down the barrel of his M-16 but he appeared taken aback when he suddenly recognized the intruder.

“McCready,” he said swinging his weapon aside. “Why did you not call me and tell me you were coming?” He stooped to offer a brawny hand to the fallen white man. “Go on. Go on now,” Blackbeard roared at the crowd of curiosity seekers, dismissing them with a wave of his broad hand. “Come, my old friend,” he said as he turned back to McCready and escorted him into the house. “We have much to talk about.”

**Postscript:** Some of the houses in Jamaica are right out of a movie script. I stayed in a house like that once. It was just off the Montego Bay to Negril highway on the turn off road to Reading. The house had a view of the ocean and several acres of manicured property, including cut stone footpaths that led to a jungle gulley with hanging vines that looked right out of a Tarzan movie. The mansion came with a master toilet that was upholstered in red velvet like a throne. There were marble floors throughout. As nice as that house was with its separate two bedroom guest house and its two separate in ground pools, I have seen other houses in Jamaica that dwarfed that one by comparison. One drug dealer’s house that I visited in the heart of the jungle was surrounded by a twenty foot tall stone wall and the only way in or out was through an equally high steel and copper gate. The point I’m making is that there is a vast fortune in cash and real estate connected to the Jamaican drug trade that some of you would have to see to believe.

Some of that real estate is reflected in the names given to the Jamaican villas such as Winged Victory. Smuggler's Way. Devine Destiny. And others.

**To be continued**