

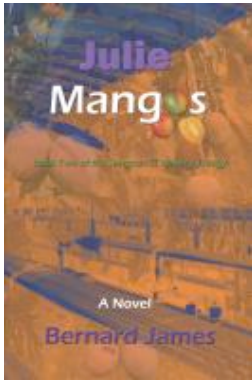


Julie Mangos

Book Two of the Sangster Fi' Manley Trilogy

A Novel

Bernard James



Julie Mangos picks up the tightly crafted drama delivered in **Underground from Brixton** with Marcella Scott boarding a Train at Paddington Station en route to Heathrow. Marcella's enemies have made good on their threats and, based on the shocking revelations concerning the apparent identity of her father, Marcella is forced to return to her native Jamaica to once and for all confront the ghosts that have inhabited her dreams since she was a child.

Julie Mangos

Order the complete book from

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6601.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

Julie Mangos

Julie Mangos. Copyright © 2012 by Bernard James

ISBN: 978-0-9840466-3-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012953422

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

Published in the United States by Buffalo Soldier Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Books offered through Buffalo Soldier Press may be purchased for business, educational or sales promotional use. For additional information please visit us on the web at <http://www.bspress.org> and follow the marketing link for further instructions.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and events are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Buffalo Soldier Press
2012

First Edition

Cover art and design by StudioGSM

Book design by StudioGSM

CHAPTER 01

Brixton, South London
Friday, 19th August

Over the course of her remarkable life, Marcella had frequently puzzled over the question of where she was from; but in all that time there'd never once been any question about *who she was*. And now, not forty eight hours removed from solving the great mystery of her existence, she felt nothing in common with the stranger staring back at her from the visor's mirror. Ashen complexion. Dry and barren lips. There had been nothing in her collection of Balms and Glossy appliqués to disguise her devastated mood and the tell-tale sign of far too little sleep announced itself by the dark, puffy half-moons taking up residence beneath her eyes. Such was the mask that projected the sensation she had of floating completely adrift; and having been drained of every ounce of sustainable energy, she unfortunately felt as bad as she thought she looked. In such a state she failed to appreciate the fact that not one of those temporary exterior flaws had even mattered to the loiterers on Coldharbour standing watch outside of Judy's Devine, who gave her their full and enthusiastic attention as she waited for Sydney to return with their Earl Grey and Peppermint takeaways.

Paddington Station
Central London
Friday, 19th August

The distance from Judy's to Paddington Station is roughly ten kilometers. Traveling on the Underground from Brixton would take them approximately 23 minutes and given normal traffic conditions, the average person could probably make it by car in roughly half an hour. But Sydney was not average...and Marcella's condition was anything but normal, considering the fact that she'd

recently come close to being killed. So just seventeen minutes after leaving Brixton Market she sat equivocating inside Sydney's idling Jeep, where foot traffic on Praed and the muted chorus of pedestrian sounds escaping the adjacent Train Shed was enough to temporarily dissolve her anxious recollections. Behind schedule and flirting with the real possibility of missing the next Heathrow Express, she nonetheless remained curled up between the center console and passenger door of that customized 4X4, unable to swallow her confusion and manage a clean break as fresh layers of doubt and insecurity firmed up between them. She wanted desperately to believe in his account...and he understandably was terrified that she would not.

"There was nuff rumors, but mi neva know if dem true," Sydney offered.

"But Sydney, you were her friend!"

"Till the very end dawta. The very end."

"Then how could you not have known?"

"Theresa wouldn't...try fi understan gyal. Nuh simple ting dis," the big man countered. That was a colossal understatement, one that could tip the balance out of Sydney's favor depending on Marcella's reaction when she discovered just how much. Whether and when he should part with his secrets *was* in fact the issue. But before he plowed ahead, he longed for some reassurance that his disclosures would not unhinge her. Added to that, he'd been operating within the realm of myth and speculation for so long that he'd begun to doubt his own grasp of the truth. Much of what Marcella had been told about her parents were dramatic equivocations, while some things were simply outright lies. Accounts of her late mother's relationships (with Sydney included) easily fell into either category. *And then there was the truth.* Soon, it would be his job to make sure that Marcella understood exactly where the lines were drawn. On the verge of getting emotional, Sydney looked past her towards the Train Shed, conflicted and stalling for time. Years of buried confidences longed to escape the bindings that had sealed his tongue, but his intuition called

for adherence to the habitual precautions of his youth for just a little while longer.

"And what is this business concerning you and the Spanglers?" Marcella hissed with little regard for his growing discomfiture. *Well, well...Theresa's daughter wasn't going to make things easy for him after all*, he thought with renewed appreciation. "...and please don't deny the relationship or try to change the subject," she continued. "You mentioned it that first night after the attack and since then I've asked around." An unfortunate moment of weakness in which he'd probably said too much. But Marcella had been so distraught over the events of the past few weeks, that Sydney wanted desperately to place his former relationship with her mother (and supposedly her father) in its proper context.

"Mi tun away from Bad Man ways long time now," he said with chilling calm, not bothering to mention that after a relative lifetime of peace and tranquility, the threats of a madman had caused him to step back into the fray. In the gap that followed that little admission, the unwanted silence cast a funereal mood over their conversation. Sydney imposed a hulking, physical image on their cramped surroundings and Marcella wondered anew about the potential degree of violence that might be lurking in her friend's gangster past. "Jonestown was mi turf. An Spanglers...dem was mi posse."

"I thought you were from St. Mary," she interjected. It was a recurring interrogation, one she felt compelled to launch at him from time to time and Sydney's usual response sat heavily on the tip of his tongue. But he realized he was well past the point of communicating with her in riddles and thus began the slow and painful process of her unhinging.

"St. Mary mi baan...but Jonestown...Jonestown people mi link, when me go back a yard." *And I would have taken over the entire area...if not for your father's jealousy and anger. But he betrayed me and allowed Ritchie Chang to assume the position instead.* That thought was foremost on Sydney's mind and as he sat there in the truck watching Marcella battle her stress and confusion, he nearly confessed it. Marcella reluctantly absorbed his words, a ball of something unfamiliar tightening in her chest.

"So...you carried water for the politicians that favored Jonestown then?" The smooth delivery of Marcella's critique belied her jangled nerves and she actually held her breath as Sydney clenched and unclenched his jaw. In the past, he'd crippled men for less; but twenty five years and the start of a new life in London had calmed him considerably. Regardless, he would never dream of harming Marcella and with her he was willing to make indefinite allowances. In light of all that she had suffered, the poor child had earned at least that much.

"Mi neva really focus on political ting. But mi haffi survive...find work and keep mi belly full." Marcella made a face and Sydney held up his hand to forestall her interruption. "Mi wuk Banana an Cane field dem. Sell Pepper Shrimp and Jelly Coconut pon di market too. But dat likkle ting cyaan keep roof over mi head. Rough times dem was Dawta...an mi nuh have gate uptown pon Mona hill fi rest mi feet." *Like you.* He didn't have to say it, but the reproach sliced through her like a hot machete. The years she'd spent comfortably ensconced in the gated community of Mona Heights while attending Excelsior at the behest of her mentor and benefactor had spared Marcella from the turmoil visited daily upon the rest of downtown Kingston and its Western Garrison's, smoldering in the political aftermath of Manley and Seaga's wars. Sensing his rebuke had cut too deep, Sydney further softened his tone. "*Yeah Man...*A true blessing dat. Is what Theresa would hab wanted, Dawta...an wi all played wi part." Ashamed for being obstinate and with a trace of guilt she still carried after all those years, Marcella had to admit that fate had cast her a life preserver like no other; and for reasons she never fully understood, the former employer of her Mother and Grandmother had been waiting on the shore to reel her in. That her patron was Neville Gibson, Jamaica's Minister of Youth and Culture - whose constituency included Sydney's old Kingston haunt - opened up an entirely new set of nauseating considerations. Given her familiarity with the parties in question, Marcella had more than enough points of reference to connect all the recriminating dots; and by his own admission, Sydney had clearly operated within the sphere of Neville Gibson's influence. A thousand new questions assaulted her at once, but she felt drained by their intensity and decidedly less combative in

the wake of what Sydney had just revealed. Maas Neville had never blatantly exhibited an inclination to cozy up with the Dons and their henchmen - gangsters whose shadow governments enforced all rules of engagement inside Kingston's ghettos; but now more than ever, she'd come to realize that absolutely nothing was out of bounds. Sydney had just confessed to his former participation in this unholy dynamic and now Marcella wondered about the extent of Neville Gibson's complicity. His official title and duties were self evident; but it was the nature of his *unauthorized* role that percolated her worry over additional lies she may have been told and it sickened her to admit that what had started out as a search to learn more about her background, had turned into an indictment of everything she *thought* she'd ever known.

It was a sweltering day in August, 1978 when Marcella Jeanette Scott first introduced herself to the world. Abandoning the safety of her mother's womb, she made an impatient and increasingly vocal entrance into the back room of a modest, hillside dwelling that for years had been plagued with spotty electricity and no running water. But what her surrounding accommodations lacked in modern accoutrements was offset by the verdant beauty and industrious quality of the West Indian countryside into which she'd been born; attributes that would continue to define her over time as she grew to be an adult. The identity of her father remained a mystery and her mother would be dead within a year; and thus began the long and difficult process of self-affirmation that Marcella would struggle with for most of her life. Nestled among hills that sloped into the magnificence of Jamaica's Blue Mountains, the village of Seaton pointed towards the Island's North Coast from its perch just off the eastern tip of St. Mary - the perfect vantage point from which to spy the yolk of the sun as it spilled over the horizon on misty mornings, leaching yellow-orange stains across canopies of leaves that sprouted from the Rosewood and Mahogany trees that supported them. Seaton was the oasis where Marcella would remain until the summer of her thirteenth year; after which she would be ceremoniously and

permanently coaxed from her ancestral nest into the urban freefall which defined Kingston proper; eventually learning to fly on her own through the guidance and ongoing support of the Gibson household. The finality of her mother's passing brought a measure of acceptance that her father's disappearance would never command and so it wasn't long before Marcela began to speculate and plan, testing out various schemes for how the identity of her birth father could eventually be obtained. In the meantime, she accepted Kingston - and the generosity of the Gibson's - as the foundation from which to establish her *new* home. Neville Gibson was the glue that held them together and his daughter Stacey Ann provided the spark that would ignite Marcela's commitment to achieve great things. Sisters, confidants and friends, their bond developed naturally over time and through the engine of that very special relationship, the young girl from the St. Mary Bush was finally able to lay claim to something that had previously eluded her: the tangible expression of an actual family unit - the very thing that was denied her when her mother died and her father refused to claim her. Marcela made her Grandmother proud when she was accepted into Excelsior and in so doing, nullified the criticisms of those who questioned the wisdom of Neville Gibson's involvement by graduating with honors and further distinguishing herself at UWI. By using her patron's contacts, she honed her management skills through internships at the Resorts along the North Coast and when the opportunity presented itself, Marcela was in a position to leverage her collective talents towards acquiring a scholarship to live abroad - working at a luxury Park Lane hotel, while she sat for her MSc in International Management at Kings College London. It was a full plate that managed to keep her busy around the clock; but no distraction would ever really be great enough to keep her from wondering about her father. While living in London the desire to learn more about her background only grew stronger. It was important to learn about her father and if she was lucky...to eventually have an opportunity to face him. She had questions...and there were so many things she needed to say. It was a connection she was determined to make no matter how difficult or cowardly his reasons had been for abandoning her. But Marcela hadn't been prepared for the answers

that ultimately found her and she was even less comfortable when she came to understand the context and apparent source of that frightening illumination.

Despite much practiced effort, Sydney failed to mask his own anxiety. Harried and anxious, his Island Patois eventually thickened to a consistency that only Marcella's native ears could decipher. He reminded her of her Grandmother, *Mum*...and the old, country people from St. Mary she'd encountered in her youth. He'd been looking out for her the entire time she'd been in London and in spite of what he might have said and done (*or not*), she would always owe him a debt of gratitude. A sudden awareness of her surroundings took its toll on Marcella's mood and she felt herself becoming affected by Sydney's vulnerability. She didn't know how long she would be in Jamaica - and by extension - not there in London where Sydney would remain. But before she could contemplate further how badly that made her feel, Sydney weighed her down with another, more worrisome point of reflection.

"Nuh worry bout Nox," he said with particular emphasis. *Nox*. Otherwise known as *Lennox Xavier Graham*. Marcella's features twisted, robbing her face of its natural beauty. It had been three days since the Rude Bwoy-stalker had attacked, flinging curses and fantastic claims about her father. But those assertions had rung true and so far, Sydney had done nothing to dispute them. "Mi gwine wait till im slip." Marcella wanted to say something, but couldn't find the words. "An mi nuh merciful," the big man concluded in the gap of her silence. After that, Marcella took a sudden interest in the view outside the windscreen so that she wouldn't have to look at him. She did not wish to challenge or consider the import of this latest threat, nor see the confirmation of deadly sincerity in Sydney's eyes. Better to just leave it be and allow the comment to stand on its own. The persistent danger represented by Nox hovered over them like dark clouds gathering before a storm and Marcella felt fortunate to have someone else in whom she could place her implicit trust. Resigned, she pressed the heels of both hands securely into the hollows of her eyes, barely

winning the battle for her self control as she skirted round the edges of a full blown panic. "When yu reach yard...yu gwine speak wid im?" Sydney asked, forcing Marcella back into the moment. For a second she thought he was still talking about Nox, but her grimace lost none of its severity when she finally picked up on her friend's true meaning. She had no idea when she would see Neville Gibson, nor what she would say to him when she did. *Her* Maas Neville. *Jamaica's* Minister of Youth and Culture. He too had become an enigma...*someone she'd known since she was eight years old, but who she had only recently discovered was her father.* Nox the criminal had been the first to disclose it - wicked confirmation of the *rumors* Sydney had alluded to days earlier. She was puzzled by Maas Neville's involvement with Lennox Graham, but had neither the time nor energy for substantive contemplation. It was just one more disturbing aspect of the recently illuminated flaws in Gibson's character.

"I have no idea. I just...I just don't know." How could she possibly face him without losing her composure? She had so many questions...and her anger intensified when she thought back on her lengthy and unproductive search, since Gibson held the key to the answers she sought all along. Neville Gibson had taken liberties with one of the domestics and in the process, Marcella had been conceived. That she'd lived among his wife and children...*GOD...her siblings...*for more than half her life - blind to his deeds and the web of lies he'd spun to cover them up, was an emotional blow that sucked the breath right out of her. She felt as if a heavy boot was wedged against her neck and for the past two days, she'd been gasping for air. "I wouldn't know where to begin. Any suggestions?"

"Tek it easy...likkle at a time. Is many question dem...an wi cyaan guess im mental position." Marcella knew that if Neville Gibson didn't loose it, she certainly just might. Having finished, Sydney grunted in a way that was meant to provide encouragement, but Marcella only experienced a worsening of her emotional pain. Increasingly uncertain and grasping for something warm and familiar, she embarked upon her own linguistic journey, pouring Cane Syrup on her contractions and allowing some of her digraphs to float out to

sea - a deliberate recalibration of her speech to match the comfortable St. Mary pace which Sydney had established.

"Yu sure...bout di likkle house in Portmore?"

"Yeah Man, it fixed an ready."

"Mi cyaan say how long."

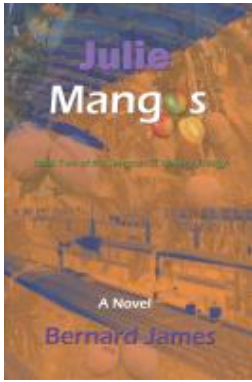
"Nuh matter. It taken care of."

"Generous dis. Who help mi out so?"

"My people, dem," Sydney replied. "Trusty fren a watch an make sure nuh trouble reach yu." Marcella's mind screamed for clarification, but it wasn't the time to push it. Sydney had always been so kind, going out of his way to make sure she was always in a good place. She knew she didn't have to worry. *Lord, she was already missing him.* Thank God Jacob had agreed to ride with her to the Airport because the thought of leaving Sydney now, while being confronted by all her ghosts and insecurities, was simply too much to bear. She wished Jacob could walk her to the gate...and hold her hand all the way down the aisle to her seat; then strap them both in and fly away with her to Jamaica. He was waiting for her now - was probably even wondering if he'd missed her given how late she was. As if capable of reading her mind, Sydney patted her gently on the knee and inclined his head in the direction of the Train Shed.

"Time fi go, dawta. Nuh make di Yankee Bwoy wait too long." He *almost* smiled, allowing a barely perceptible nod of his head as Marcella tried to hold it all together - his way of saying that he approved of Jacob and was entrusting her to the American's care. *Oh God, she was going to cry.* "Nuh worry bout tings dis side, yu hear?" She wasn't capable of formulating words, so before she could succumb to the twin currents of her tears, Marcella leaned in close and brushed her lips against Sydney's Salt-and-Pepper stubble. He'd placed her bag on the curb when they first arrived, so after hastily exiting the Jeep, there was nothing more to be said or done. Turning abruptly, she rushed towards the Station, leaving the comfort and protection of one kind of love, for the abandon and scary exhilaration of another - purposely not looking back, because the tears were flowing steadily now and she didn't want Sydney to see that. When she finally disappeared out of sight, the big man sighed and pulled out

his mobile phone. Punching in a familiar number, he listened quietly to a twenty second confirmation. It disappointed him that he could so easily re-engage with certain elements of his former lifestyle, but there was no time to be penitent or philosophical. He'd stayed out of it for as long as he could, but now Marcella's life hung in the balance and the only thing worse than not being able to save Theresa - *his one and only true love* - would be failing to ensure the protection of her child. The death of Theresa Scott was a trauma from which Sydney nearly didn't recover and as he sat in his Jeep outside the entrance to Paddington Station, he was also thinking about a little retribution for the one who'd planned his destruction from the start. But Sydney wasn't about to get distracted. The tide was turning for the haughty Minister and Neville Gibson would be getting his soon enough. When the call ended, Sydney tossed the phone in the passenger seat, put the truck in gear and gently pulled away from the curb into a steady stream of Buses, Lorries and Black Cabs...somber and resolute...*with murder and mayhem weighing heavily on his mind.*



Julie Mangos picks up the tightly crafted drama delivered in **Underground from Brixton** with Marcella Scott boarding a Train at Paddington Station en route to Heathrow. Marcella's enemies have made good on their threats and, based on the shocking revelations concerning the apparent identity of her father, Marcella is forced to return to her native Jamaica to once and for all confront the ghosts that have inhabited her dreams since she was a child.

Julie Mangos

Order the complete book from

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6601.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.