

# HIGH SEAS DARKNESS

A  
*Brick Morgan*  
NOVEL

BURR B. ANDERSON

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A Brick Morgan Novel  
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*This book is dedicated to the memories of  
Mike Anderson and Jack Taylor*

Mike Anderson provided the author with behind-the-curtain insights into the world of musical bands and the life of professional musicians. In addition to being a superb trumpet player, Mike dedicated his life to teaching the skills of his lifework to the next generation.

Jack Taylor's interest in aviation started with his Naval Air training during the Vietnam War. After a forty-year business career, his passion for flight was not diminished. Jack's aeronautical wisdom provided a pilot's touch to this novel's time in the sky.



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To Katie Karim for your design work and maintenance of my author's website.



*High Seas Darkness*  
*Characters*

Morgan Maritime Investigations, LLC

- Brick Morgan: Owner, Morgan Maritime Investigations, LLC
- Titus: Cyber Consultant to Morgan Maritime Investigations, LLC

Nobility Cruise Line, Inc.

- Sanan Jaidee: Bartender, Big Dipper Bar, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Carolyn Luna: Passenger, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Yvette Fuentes: Chief Security Officer, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Raju Kumar Marwah: Deputy Security Officer, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Deepak Mehta: Chief Security Officer, *Rembrandt Under the Stars*
- Nurse Mercardo: Medical Center Nurse, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Robert “Rob” Spencer: Director, Fleet Wide Security
- Francesco Costanzo: Captain, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Dakila Salazar: Cabin Steward, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Kyle Throckmorton: Passenger, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Dr. Pedro Ramos: Senior Medical Director, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Dr. Jose Resende: Doctor, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Rick Lansteiner: Art Auctioneer, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Antonina Kartashov: Guest Artist, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Officer Antonio: Chief Engineer, *Matisse Under the Stars*
- Inna Kozlov: Supervisor, Digital Experience, *Matisse Under the Stars*

United States Government

- Kryss Mitchell: Special Agent, Counterterrorism, Federal Bureau of Investigation

- Nathan King: Special Agent, Counterterrorism, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Alexander “Ace” Zittel: Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Elizabeth “Liz” Monroe: Deputy Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- POTUS, President of the United States
- Vic Bodner: President’s Chief of Staff
- Herbert “Herb” Wallace: Assistant Director, National Security Branch, Counterterrorism, Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Michelle Murphy: Senate Minority Leader, United States Senate
- Martin Daniel: Speaker of the House, United States House of Representatives
- Maxine Johnston: Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

### Lashkar-e-Aalam

- Zaeem Hasan Al-Ajmi: Founder, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Yusuf Al Omar: Terrorist, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Jari Atwa: Head of Security, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Faroug Hasan Ahmed: Chemist, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Muhamed Bashir: Terrorist, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Muhammad Bin Attash: Terrorist, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Mullah Saleh Rahim: Terrorist, Lashkar-e-Aalam
- Zahir Ahmed Hahid: Terrorist, Lashkar-e-Aalam

### Special Guest Characters

- Mark Whitfield: Nationally Renowned Guitarist
- Jim “Bud” Clary: Owner, Bud Clary Chevrolet, Longview WA
- Stephen Marchione: Owner, Marchione Guitars

## Chapter One

Brick Morgan raised his finger to his lips and made eye contact with Chief Security Officer Deepak Mehta as they stood outside the door well below the waterline on the huge cruise ship. This was Mehta's cruise ship, but he deferred to Brick's expertise on matters involving security or smuggling. A silent countdown followed. Three . . . two . . . one . . .

Brick threw open the door, and they rushed into the reefer. As expected, they found two olive-skinned crew members on their knees pulling plastic bags of light-brown powder out of hollowed-out pineapples. Caught red-handed stuffing their shirts with smack, the drug runners jumped to their feet as if to fight.

The short, wiry one looked up at Brick's six-foot-four, muscled frame with eyes wide and then bravely rushed him. Brick smiled to himself. *Good chance these guys have never met a judo black belt before, much less a big black guy from the 'hood.* Brick effortlessly rolled the unsuspecting crew member over his right hip, slammed him onto the hard linoleum deck, and then jammed his size-thirteen boot into the crewman's neck.

The second man, the taller of the two, raised a piece of pallet board to knock Brick over the head, but Mehta tackled him to the floor.

Chuckling, Brick said, "Deepak, thank you. Thought you said you played soccer, not American football."

They subdued the two men by securing their hands behind their backs with plastic flex-cuffs and tossed them onto a pallet of lettuce. Brick propped them up against the cold boxes. Here down on deck three, the ship's insulated refrigerator made for a quiet, private interrogation room. And despite his appreciation for the law, Brick Morgan

of Morgan Maritime Investigations LLC enjoyed taking down criminals without worrying about America's Miranda rules.

Brick pushed his face close to the scared smugglers. "So do they speak English wherever the fuck you're from?" His voice echoed in the metal-walled room. "Just where the fuck are you from anyway?"

The shorter one with slick black hair, wearing a kitchen apron, said in falsely broken English, "Mexico. *Si!* We are from Mexico!"

Brick was certain that both jerks could speak English just fine if they were motivated. He stared at them for a full thirty seconds, formulating his plan of action. He needed to find out how many on the ship were involved in this smuggling operation, where the drugs were manufactured, the merchant who supplied the heroin-stuffed pineapples, and who in south Florida would take possession of the dope. He knew just how to make them talk.

Brick looked at the two captive crew members and asked with marked casualness, "Hey, have you guys met my partner, Stash?"

Both men raised their eyebrows and shook their heads.

Brick stood and placed one foot on the box of lettuce. "You with the apron, what's your name?"

"Miguel—Miguel Garcia."

"Mr. Garcia, Stash just loves puzzles. Finding concealed drugs isn't just a job to him; it's his calling. I mean he's a real animal when it comes to catching drug runners. In less than fifteen minutes, he tore through this reefer and found your dope. Now I'm not such a fan of the cold. But Stash? Working in this thirty-eight-degree temperature was an extra bonus for him."

The two men looked at each other in confusion.

"Oh, and that whole smack-in-the-fruit thing? Stash really eats that shit up. And I have to compliment you, too. If it wasn't for some chatter a friend of mine found about some Afghani heroin cruising into Florida on this ship, we probably wouldn't have thought to look here."

"We don't know anything about that! We're just kitchen helpers!"

Brick nodded and then spoke in a quiet, clear voice. “I apologize. My name is Brick Morgan. You probably already know Chief Mehta.”

Mehta smirked, but the crewmen never took their eyes off Brick as he continued introducing himself.

“I investigate maritime crime. You know, things like assaults, theft, terrorism—and my partner Stash’s favorite, drug smuggling.”

The crew members exchanged worried glances. By this point, Brick knew they understood his words quite well. It was time for another introduction.

“Hey, Mr. Mehta, go ahead and get Stash. After the workout they gave him this morning, I bet he would love to meet these two. I’ll let you back in.”

Officer Mehta hurriedly left the room, the door closing behind him with a loud slam. The two men jumped. The one in the apron, Miguel, gulped as he looked up at the big commanding black man who now had them all to himself.

Brick’s nonchalant chatter continued. “So, my friends—can I call you my friends?—I want three things from you. First, I’d like the names of everyone else on this ship involved in this smuggling ring.”

The two glanced at each other with fear in their eyes.

“Then I want the name of the guy who pays you. And finally, I would really appreciate knowing just how you planned to get this tasty brown sugar off the ship. Please explain how this heroin made its way across the world. If it’s part of a terror-funding scheme, that would be a big bonus and make this easier on all of us.”

Miguel looked at the other man and then spoke up. “We know nothing! Nothing about terrorism! Some Indian guy in the engine room said he would pay us each one hundred American dollars to bring the bags in the pineapples to a trash can on deck nine.” He nudged his conspirator for backup.

“*Si!* Yes! The man said we could use the money for our families back home.”

“Okay, well, I can understand that. Family is important.” Brick saw the men starting to relax at his soothing words. He removed his foot from the crate of lettuce and began to turn away. “Oh, but wait . . .” Brick turned back and pulled Miguel to his feet. Reaching into Miguel’s shirt, he pulled out a Ziploc bag filled with heroin. Brick’s face betrayed no emotion as he pulled the shocked smuggler to him and stuffed the bag down the crew member’s pants. He then grabbed another bag, ripped open the plastic, and poured some of the heroin over each of their heads.

Stunned at Brick’s brazenness, one of them said, “You can’t do this! You’re an American! You have laws!”

Brick reseated the smuggler on the pallet of lettuce. “I know. I love the law. Stanford Law, actually. You might be impressed by that degree, but really, it’s not that big a deal—especially since we’re not even in America now. You see, you guys should have done this back in the Bahamas or at least waited until we got to Florida. Now that we’ve sailed into international waters, we’re a lot of nautical miles away from those pesky rules and regulations of the United States.”

Just then, a loud bang on the reefer door echoed through the room, followed by sharp barking and scratching on the door. The barking turned to deep growling, and the helpless smugglers looked at each other in horror. Brick banged on the reefer door twice, and the growling and clawing stopped.

“Gentlemen, please calm down. That’s just my partner Stash. He’s a tactically trained drug dog. He’s schooled to claw and bite his way through any material to get to illegal substances like heroin and cocaine. Turns out he really doesn’t like drugs at all. And you gotta know that his bite force is something crazy, like 238 pounds.” Seeing the pair’s eyes widen in fear, Brick knew he had them where he wanted them. “I once saw him tear right through a wooden crate and make a mess out a bunch of chickens stuffed with pot. You should have seen it. Feathers and skin and blood everywhere. Looked like a fucking

bloodbath. And I know bloodbaths . . .”

Without warning, Brick became much less civil. Dragging the bound drug smugglers by their hair to just in front of the door, he banged again on the wall. Stash’s bark came back to life even more vicious and vocal than before.

“So, assholes—can I call you assholes?—here’s what’s going to happen. When I open this door to let you meet our fine canine specimen, he’s going to smell the dope that’s all over you. That’s really going to piss him off. He’s gonna charge at you fuckers like a runaway train. I can’t be sure if he’ll go right for your balls before he chews his way from your little peckers straight through to your colons. But I know that he’ll love sinking his sharp teeth into your ugly-ass faces while I sit here enjoying some fresh pineapple. The way I see it, that dog will not stop until you both resemble bloody piles of dead, mutilated chickens.”

Eyes wide, they both started shaking, sweat pouring down their faces.

Brick cranked the door handle with his large hand. “I only want three answers. It’s your call.”

The men dropped to their knees, their hands supplicating. “No dog—*por favor—no perro!* Please! His name is Fawad!”



Chief Mehta took their captives to the ship’s brig while Brick and Stash returned to the *Rembrandt Under the Star*’s security office. Deepak had suggested keeping the two men in the reefer for the rest of the trip back to Fort Lauderdale, but they decided to let the smugglers enjoy their final sailing in the cramped, windowless brig instead.

Brick rewarded Stash with five minutes of play with his reward towel. When Deepak returned, he seemed especially relieved when the Belgian Malinois returned to his kennel. He much preferred the large dog locked up. Brick couldn’t help but smile at the man’s phobia,

even though he knew how intimidating these dogs could be.

“Deepak, I promise he’s a big softie as long as you’re not packing smack. A lot of this is a game to him. What drives Stash toward finding heroin or cocaine is the potential reward of playing tug-of-war with the white towel. When Stash trained in Europe, his trainers hid five different kinds of drugs in the towel and helped Stash relate their scents to playing tug-of-war.”

“I wish you had told me this before, Mr. Brick. I would not have worn my white shirt today. I still don’t know how he was able to find those pineapples. It would have taken us hours without him.”

“His nose has two hundred million scent-receptor cells compared to five million in a human.”

“If only he could smell terrorists, eh?” joked Deepak.

Brick shook his head. “Frankly, I don’t think this is really terrorism. These guys are too dumb to be trusted with that kind of operation. And I can already tell that ‘Fawad’ is some alias. The FBI can have them when we dock, and I’ll follow up with my contact when I get back home to Tacoma.”

Brick reminded himself that he had just closed another case quickly and efficiently, even if the terrorist threat seemed like another false alarm. His ongoing contract with Nobility Cruise Line to augment the fleet’s security teams came with a mandate to monitor for potential terrorist campaigns directed at the cruise line’s ten ships. Brick enjoyed the challenge. When Nobility had first contracted Morgan Maritime Investigations on this case, they’d explained that their luxury ship, the *Rembrandt Under the Stars*, could be part of a smuggling ring operating between the Bahamas and south Florida. Brick’s own investigation connected the drugs to Afghani heroin, which he hoped to tie to funding of terrorism.

Deepak interrupted Brick’s thoughts with an attempt at reassurance. “At least we caught these drug bastards with their hands in the cracker jar!”

“*Cookie jar*,” Brick corrected with smile. “But you’re right, Deepak. A win’s a win. I’m going to leave you to your paperwork while I get ready to disembark tomorrow morning. Don’t worry. I’ll be here to hand off Stash to my pals who loaned him to us. And I’ll be sure to thank the captain for allowing him to join us on the operation.”

As he headed up the stairs to the luxurious guest decks above the waterline, Brick reflected back to his tenure at the Seattle PD and his introduction to detection dogs. During his first six months in the east precinct as a patrol officer, he’d received a lot of crap from his fellow officers about his Stanford Law degree. They pegged him as a nerdy academic even though he looked intimidating in his blue police uniform. That all changed when Brick was dispatched to investigate a large man threatening people with a knife.

When Brick arrived, three other officers were already trying to talk down the knife-wielding suspect on East Pine Street. Brick walked right through the other officers, grabbed the suspect’s wrist, removed the knife, and then used his right foot to flip the three-hundred-pound man to his face on the sidewalk. The east precinct then assigned him to the department’s K-9 unit, and he became a handler for both tactical and drug dogs. It had been years since he’d walked a beat, but every so often, Brick called in a favor to his buddies so he could spend some quality time with dogs like Stash. Now a long way from home, Brick’s beat saw him policing the entire seven seas, a challenge he enjoyed, with the freedom to choose his clients.

Back in his guest cabin suite, he packed his bag to disembark in the morning, looking forward to a few days off. After this week, he figured he finally deserved some quality time alone with his guitar and some real Seattle coffee. Content, Brick Morgan gazed out over the aqua blue water, watching the sun set on paradise.