

Where Murder Waits, by Gordon Davis (E. Howard Hunt Jr.), Fawcett copyright 1965. Fawcett Gold Medal paperback M2857, 95¢, Feb. 1974. (Rubber-stamped on the top is the date Dec. 23, 1971).

Hero is Pat Conroy, a Washington attorney, veteran of the Bay of Pigs, Cuban-born of a Cuban mother and American father. He is approached by his old friend, the head of the Cuban exile group in Miami, to solve the mystery of the disappearance of the group's treasurer, who alone knew the number of the group's numbered bank account in a Panama City bank (a la Suisse) containing a quarter of a million dollars. Conroy goes to Panama, learns that someone has taken out the funds and gone to Rio de Janiero where they are being converted into a large diamond. He goes to Rio and recovers it after determining that ^{the} treasurer's assistant is the guilty person, but who in turn was hijacked and murdered by another BofP veteran, a Cuban who happens to be the brother of a Cuban chick Conroy has met in Panama in the meantime.

The writing is simpatico but relatively objective. The plot is tight, economical and well bundled up at the end. In other words, Hunt either was a different person when he wrote it or had competent help. Conroy even shows every evidence of intending to marry the girl at the end, an unheard-of idea to the Hunt we all have come to know and admire..

This is not to say that the protagonist is not slowed down every now and then by the involuntary efforts by an assortment of ladies to drag him off to bed, with close to 100 per cent success it may be added.

On the whole, however, the action moves logically and with better use of local color -- natural and relatively without effort -- than in the few other Hunt books I have seen.

Although it is not said expressly, it is clear that Conroy was acting for the CIA at the BofP, in which operation he was injured in the leg. In Panama he has some arms-length dealings with the local station chief, in which it is made clear that the station chief serves a faction of the CIA to which Conroy is hostile and bitter. It also makes clear that the CIA is telling the Panama police precisely what they shall do.

This, and the obvious but not overplayed sympathy for the Cuban exile cause, are about the only political overtones that surface. If anything, Where Murder Waits is surprising for its concentration on telling a fairly complex and well-worked out story rather than plugging an idea.

jdwl2feb74