Clarion Review

General

A Dove Among Hawks
C. Edward Samuels
Xlibris
978-1-4415-5107-8
Three Stars (out of Five)

In A Dove Among Hawks, author C. Edward Samuels takes readers on a fictional journey through political intrigue, top-secret assignments, and high-level betrayal.

In 1964, Seaman Keith Roberts and Navy SEAL Lt. Commander Josh Logan perform a special operation to implant Paloma, a beautiful young American Hispanic woman, in Communist Cuba. The team is to make an underwater entry, leaving Paloma on the beach. They slip down the side of the submarine Amberjack SS-522, swim to the forested beach, and almost run into eight Cuban soldiers before the mission is completed.

As they leave the island, Paloma asks Keith to deliver a message to his superiors: “the Dove is with the Hawks.” Keith is left with the question, “Who is Paloma and why is she there?”

Keith is a patriotic farm boy from Missouri who joins the Navy to serve his country. As he is maneuvered into a life as an intelligence agent, he accepts each step without much questioning. He stumbles from one assignment to the next, gradually realizing that he is being used by different agencies.

Reflecting back on his life in 2008, he tells his wife Marie, “I was just a boot in the Navy when it all started…I was transformed from a snot-nosed kid into a snot-nosed OPINTEL Agent…Para-Military may be a more accurate description of my job.”

Keith served as a special agent in Vietnam, a Pinkerton detective, and a commercial diver before spending more than thirty years in law enforcement.

In 1998, he is once again called upon to help the mysterious Paloma, this time to bring her out of Cuba. His superiors reunite him with Josh Logan and they developed a strategy.

Samuels writes about what he knows. His background in law enforcement, diving, and the Coast Guard gives authenticity to the story. He served as a probation officer, deputy sheriff, and Chief of Police in various local and federal agencies.

Samuels has created an intricate plot that takes readers through Keith Roberts' convoluted life and career. As he develops the plot and his main character, he sometimes confuses readers with changes in perspective; the narrative occasionally switches between first and third person.

The characters are realistically drawn, including Paloma, who becomes a less shadowy figure when she comes back into Keith's life. The author develops the personalities slowly and systematically, and as the political situation tightens, readers learn of deceit and betrayal along with Keith.

Although the book moves smoothly between the past and present, tighter writing would improve the pace. Improved editing would also help smooth out the rough edges. Despite these flaws, A Dove Among Hawks is a creative, enticing story.

Pat Avery