

Red Leopard: Dalton Drake

Paul Vincent Jacuzzi

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Red Leopard is a fascinating thriller in which the Cold War may not be finished after all.

In Paul Vincent Jacuzzi's mystery novel *Red Leopard*, a deadly relic from the Cold War resurfaces, bringing a slew of murders in its wake.

In Cuba in 1962, the Cold War seems to have ended. Russia is set to collect the last of their nuclear missiles from the island. However, Premier Fidel Castro had other plans: unbeknownst to the Russian and US governments, he kept one missile.

Now, decades later, talks between the Cuban and Venezuelan governments about the missile begin, and several people with no apparent connections are found dead. The US government is on high alert and sends a Canadian operative into Cuba to investigate—and to find out how the plans for the missile are connected to the sudden car bombing of an innocent retired farmer in South Dakota.

The novel takes real historical events and incorporates them into a thrilling plot featuring spies, government corruption, and an impending nuclear war. Complete with accurate historical dates and locations of past events pertaining to the Cold War, the book's attention to detail carries throughout. Characters, government branches, and military equipment are all developed with attention, as when weapons and military flight craft are listed down to the make and model. Further, those connected to the government use code words when contacting one another, employing different phrases for each situation they are entangled in and resulting in verisimilitude.

Dalton, the Canadian agent, assumes the brunt of the narrative duties. His endeavors take him from his home in Winnipeg to the shores of Cuba. Secondary characters contribute their perspectives as well to round the story out, including officials of the US, Cuban, and Venezuelan governments. Some bystanders and victims also speak, with illustrations of a missile used to indicate internal narrative switches. Most intriguing are the revealed motivations of those who plan to start a nuclear war, whose generational entitlement and hate fascinates: they even involve Castro's granddaughter in their plans to seduce and take down US operatives seeded in Cuba. Greed is the driving force for Cuban allies in the US, who help Cubans infiltrate and deceive their government for millions of dollars; their lack of concern for the inevitable fallout of their actions results in ongoing tension.

A war that's decades in the making may ignite in the thrilling novel *Red Leopard*, a tale of murderous intent in which the Cold War may not be finished after all.

GRACE ROGERS (May 6, 2024)

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