

## The Country I Lived In

**Boston Teran**

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*The key elements of a gumshoe mystery combine with exciting historical details to build this fast-paced narrative.*

*The Country I Lived In* is a throwback detective story, mixing Cold War paranoia with lone-wolf gumshoe adventure. By setting the novel in 1955, Boston Teran allows the protagonist to get caught up in the early dealings of the post-war intelligence world, adding a historical element to a fairly straightforward and fast-paced mystery.

John Rawbone Lourdes is a former army intelligence officer whose training comes in handy when he receives a cryptic call from an old army buddy who has a secret to confide, and John arrives only to find his friend tortured to death. John is soon questioned by the CIA and FBI and decides there's more to the crime than just murder. He goes searching for his friend's killer, crossing the border into Mexico and running afoul of American intelligence along the way.

John's adventures incorporate all the key elements of a gumshoe story. He is followed by a mysterious woman who becomes a love interest, confronts threats against people he cares about, and is both hunter and hunted as he tries to get to the bottom of things. As they must in a novel like this, John's attempts to solve the mystery eventually lead him to a much bigger conspiracy with more dangerous stakes. In this case, what he uncovers is the existence of a real-life covert operation that the American public didn't learn about until fairly recently. This aspect of the story is integrated well—it plays a role in the plot, so the reveal doesn't undermine the story. Readers who know enough about a particular historical figure who appears in the story might see the explanation coming, but that won't derail it for them.

At times, the writing in *The Country I Live In* can get a little hammy. Too many chapters end on questions, some of which are rhetorical ones that sound more like cliffhangers in a serial television show: "Does loyalty to a friend supersede loyalty to one's country?" or "Does Jordon Conlon have enough journalistic savvy or financial wealth to withstand a power that means to strike you down ... and will?"

For the most part, this is an effective mystery with a little history of covert operations thrown in. The 1950s details and Mexican locale work well, and the dialogue is snappy, all adding up to a story that will appeal to mystery fans.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Spring 2014)

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