

The Golden Handcuffs

A. Jay Collins

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The Golden Handcuffs is a slow-burning thriller in which a lone operative works to keep power in the hands of his superiors.

In A. Jay Collins's international thriller *The Golden Handcuffs*, an operative for a secretive group takes on a global mission.

Matthew is one of the best industrial saboteurs working for the shadowy Organization for Restructuring Business, or ORB. His newest mission is to ensure that an untapped gold mine in the Andes is brought to full operation so that control of it can be exchanged for one in Canada. The exchange is unusual, even for ORB: it involves transferring power and wealth between a Canadian company and the rebel forces working to free Peru from its current government.

The timing is paramount: Matthew hops from country to country, gathering information, allies, and the means of getting the Andean mine operating and initiating the mine exchange. Acclimating to the varied cultures and political climates begins to wear on Matthew as the deadline looms, though, with billions of dollars hanging in the balance—along with the potential for global upheaval.

Matthew's research into the lands and cultures of each location is detailed in an extensive manner; while useful for him, its inclusion in the text results in pacing slogs. Indeed, much of this long thriller is devoted to Matthew's research, distracting from the overarching mission and impeding involvement in its intrigue. But it also results in some involving descriptions of settings, including of luxurious hotels and rough-and-tumble mining operations; and Matthew's connections with local people also make for fascinating interludes. When he befriends the Peruvian rebel group, whose members are wary of outsiders, his charm and understanding of psychology work in his favor; the resultant developments are engaging.

However, at each of his pivotal stops, Matthew also takes time out for a steamy sexual conquest. These moments are out of place in the narrative, in which Matthew is more often embroiled in political and industrial conspiracies. The book's sex scenes aren't well integrated until the final chapters, in which a woman is used against Matthew; even this sequence is rushed through, though. And because there's little time spent developing the book's suspenseful elements after they're first introduced, interest wanes. Matthew encounters few obstacles to his mission, aside from accounting and human resource issues. Aside from his jet-setting and salacious encounters, much of his work proves to be mundane. His six-month-long mission is wrapped by the end, but the conclusion is a let down given the lengthy build up to it. The epilogue is an additional distraction.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (January 26, 2022)

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