



Chasin' the Wind: Mick Murphy Key West Mystery

Michael Haskins

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“Chasin’ the Wind” takes place in Key West, Florida, and Havana, Cuba. It is written in the first person view of journalist Liam Michael Murphy - his friends call him Mick - and he lives on his 40-foot sailboat, ‘Fenian Bastard,’ in Key West. The book opens with Mick finding his friend Tom Hunter brutally beaten at the Key West Sail Club’s clubhouse on the day Mick, Tom and Bob Lynds were meeting to organize the next Key West-to-Havana sailboat race. Days later Tom dies. The story involves the corruption of small town politics in the southernmost city of the United States - Key West. It revolves around a scheme to topple the communist government in Cuba, that could have international repercussions and unites Cuban exiles, Cuban military deserters, and neurotic federal agents against ordinary, but unique, local citizens. Hampered by the American federal agents at every attempt to avenge their friend’s murder, Mick and his pals track the Cuban exiles’ whereabouts. During the pursuit of justice, three young women are tortured; one is saved by Mick’s shadowy friend Norm Burke and two of the girls are murdered on a boat the exiles believe belongs to Mick; a rainy night finds Mick and a Tita Toledo, his love interest, trying to escape armed exiles in the Key West Cemetery. When Mick and his pals are sure the Cubans will make another smuggling run to Havana, he uses his journalist’s credentials and flies to Havana to see what is really going on. From early on, Mick is in a battle of conscience on his decision to seek justice at the cost of stopping a plan to topple the Cuban government. The federal government’s version of the end justifies the means, virus Mick’s belief that his end justifies the means, is part of the theme. In Havana Mick has to choose between justice and patriotism. If he wants justice for the murder of his friend, he has to turn the exiles over to the Cuban government, an action many would consider treason. Will his desire for justice actually impede the toppling of communist dictatorship? The question turns the situation into a moral battle between justice and corruption, for Mick. A cast of eccentric characters include a priest who sees and talks to angels; two federal agents who choose their nom-de-guerre from old TV shows; a retired federal agent, a friend of Mick’s from their years in Central America and California; a female Korean-American bartender; a green-eyed female Puerto Rican attorney, and a collection of idiosyncratic characters that help make Key West the end of the road. Many of Key West’s infamous and intriguing locals find their way into the story, as does some of the island’s history and color, while Mick and his friend go about seeking justice for their murdered friend. In the background remains the lingering question of whether the murder of Mick’s friend is really due to the Havana sailboat race or something from his past that has finally caught up with him. The book ends in Havana, where Cuban authorities apprehend the exiles, with Mick’s assistance. Mick believes Tom’s murder has been avenged and justice has finally been served with the help of the Cuban government. But, has he interfered with a plan to topple communism? Has he committed treason?

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