



Hard Currency

Stuart M. Kaminsky

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When a former Russian advisor stands accused of murdering a female citizen in Cuba, Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov is dispatched to the former Soviet Union's one-time ally on a criminal investigation-cum-diplomatic mission. With a watchful KGB agent on his tail Rostnikov must grapple with his cunning Cuban counterpart as well as a perplexing murder scenario, to save face for his mother country.

Back in Russia a spate of grisly sexual-mutilation murders announces the return of a notorious serial killer to the streets of Moscow. Relentless, obsessive Inspector Emil Karpo -- "the Vampire" -- leads the manhunt for the person whose mundane appearance hides the tormented, predatory soul of madman.

With little more than their principles and theft shaken patriotism to guide them, Rostnikov and his driven detectives struggle to uphold the law -- even as the entire globe rumbles with change....

Hard Currency Details

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Author : Stuart M. Kaminsky

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From Reader Review Hard Currency for online ebook

Steve says

This is a good entry in a fine series.

In this volume of the series, Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov and an assistant, attractive and humorless Elena Timofeyeva, are dispatched to Cuba to aid in the investigation of a Russian advisor working in Cuba who has been arrested for murder.

At the same time, two other members of Rostnikov's squad in Moscow, Emile Karpo and Sasha Tkach, are trying to track down a serial killer, suspected in the murders of forty young men and women.

Both cases are complex and fascinating. The settings in Moscow and Havana seem convincing to me (although, admittedly, I have never been to either city). I wish that there had been more information about Santería, a religion evidently very common in Cuba at that time, since it has an important part in the story.

As usual, Rostnikov comes across as a three-dimensional figure. I thought that the serial killer was convincingly depicted as well. (If you think about it, Rostnikov must be older than he appears to be. He is in constant pain from an injury he suffered fighting in World War II. This book seems to be set in the time that it was written, 1995, so Rostnikov must be at least in his mid-60's in this story.)

I have never read any of Stuart Kaminsky's much-praised "Abe Lieberman" series and I was not a fan of his "Toby Peters" books, but I strongly recommend the "Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov" series.

Suzy says

"We live in a world of unnecessary complexity," Rostnikov said as he rose. "It is the curse of being Russian. We don't believe that the mad world is sufficiently mad so we create even greater madness and then point to the chaos we have created as proof of our theory."

"We have a tragic history," Elena said.

"The greatest comedy is tragedy," he said. "Do you know who said that?"

"Lenin?"

"Gogol."

Suzanne Kelly says

Readable, entertaining mystery set in Cuba and Russia.

M Rothenbuhler says

Sleuth Porfiry Rostnikov is a great character in the bleak Soviet world. This time he travels to Cuba to look

into a case against a Russian, while during the parallel time his incongruous fellow detective the Vampire tracks down a sicko serial killer.

The gritty, weary feel of the post cold war Russia and post Russia Cuba is so well presented, and Porfiry Rostnikov is such a great character, that the novel cannot disappoint.

The mysteries are reasonably intricate and interesting. In the case of the serial killer, we know who the killer is, and the mystery is, how will the Vampire track him down?

First rate cold war-y sleuth detective stuff.

Jerry Werzinsky says

I enjoyed this book very much. My first Profiry Rostinkov mystery. A twin investigations occurring in Moscow and Havana; quite interesting book with interesting characters.

John Gilchrist says

rost and girl invest go to cuba to gind ig russian embassy guy killed cuban girlfriend. karpov goes after serial killer

Ed says

The main protagonist in this story is Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov, nicknamed the Washtub, because of his physique. He reminds me of Arkady Renko of Gorky Park, one of my favorite fictional characters.

Hard Currency is basically two stories, the first involving Rostnikov in an investigation of the murder of a Cuban woman supposedly committed by a Russian advisor in Havana. The second, the search for a serial killer headed up by Inspector Emil Karpo, nicknamed the Vampire.

While neither story is directly connected to the other, the switching back and forth is seamless. We are able to see the great differences in the two approaches to solving a puzzle. I was most impressed with Kaminsky's ability to keep both stories moving and not have one overwhelm the other.

The characters are interesting and well-drawn, Colonel Snitkonoy, the head of Rostnikov's bureau, nicknamed the Wolfhound, Major Sanchez, a Cuban police Major liaising with Rostnikov, Inspector Elena Timofeyeva, who is accompanying Rostnikov to Havana and especially Yevgeny Odom, the tortured serial killer. There are a number of equally interesting minor characters who keep popping up throughout the book.

The descriptions of Moscow and Havana are very well done. I felt like I was there. I especially enjoyed the description of Rostnikov's flight to Cuba in on Aeroflot, Russia's flag carrier, or as he put it, "the most accident prone airline in the world". The comparison of newly liberated Russia with still communist Cuba was humorous and most likely very accurate.

I have now added the other books in the series to my TBR list and I look forward to reading the next one.

Ivonne Rovira says

While some readers dislike that the two plots never intersected in *Hard Currency*, I didn't mind that. Both were excellent, suspenseful crime stories.

What did bother me was the minor errors in the Havana portion. The practitioners of the religion brought to Cuba by Yorubas are called "santeros," not "santerias." "Santeria" is the name of the religion. I was in La Floridita, a favorite watering hole of Hemingway's, in November 2000, and it didn't resemble the description in the book. It is my understanding that the bar -- basically, a shrine to Ernest Hemingway -- is unchanged from the 1940s. There were some other faulty descriptions of Havana, as well. It's as if Stuart M. Kaminsky's never been to Cuba but got muddled descriptions second-hand. It makes me wonder how true to life his Russia is.

Peter Barr says

This is another in the series of Porfiry Rostnikov mysteries by Stuart Kaminsky. This involves the investigations of a Russian accused of murder in Cuba and a serial killer in Moscow in the post-Soviet Russia. The main characters are criminal investigators. The stories are very readable and the characters are interesting and likeable. I always enjoys these mysteries.

Ric says

Continuing in the beat and flavor of the characters and detective story this one branches out reaching into Cuba a land of old, death, and mystery. A set of stories that holds true to the setting of Russian police detectives trying to do their job while protecting themselves and their homeland. A good read once again leaving readers to wonder.

Alan says

Additional confirmation, for me anyway, that Kaminsky's Rostnikov stories improved with age. Both Rotsnikov and Karpo as they get older have evolved as characters. Karpo struggles with admitting he is human and that the Communist Party that he devoted his life to is no more (and that corruption was rampant in both the good old days and today) and Rostnikov as a father figure to his staff and a man who takes pleasure in things outside of his work (though he remains more devoted to justice than the law).

Rostnikov and Elena are sent to Cuba to investigate a murder. A member of the Russian embassy has murdered a Cuban woman and there are significant political implications to the case (aren't there always though in a Rostnikov story?). Karpo has deduced that a serial killer is haunting Moscow, and he believes he

has the necessary insight to draw out and capture the man.

More and more these tales become about the people and the cultural settings (here Moscow and Havana). A great mystery, no. An engaging read about people going about their lives and work, yes.

Chris says

Keeps getting better. Tighter. More depth. And wonderful description of a moment in Castro's Cuba.
