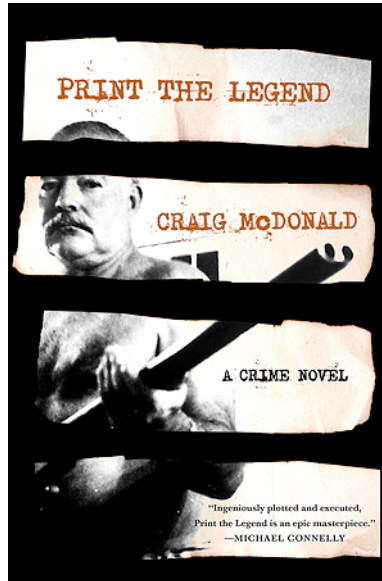

***CREEDY:
CUBA, 1942***



“(Hemingway has commenced) to patrol certain areas where submarine activity has been reported...{censored}...he has secured from the Ambassador a promise that his crew members will be recognized as war casualties for the purposes of indemnification in the event any loss of life results from this operation.”

— FBI Agent Raymond Leddy,
confidential to J. Edgar Hoover

Hem sat on the flying bridge of the *Pilar*, sipping his cocktail and staring off at the sun on the water. Far off across the bay, something glinted on the horizon. Hem frowned — it might be a boat.

Maybe they were watching him again.

Hell, they probably were doing that: They'd been on his ass hard since Spain and the civil war there. And now, since he'd set up his spy operation, the "Crook Factory"? Well, now Creedy was *always* there, watching, it seemed...Creedy or some other Hoover stooge.

It probably *was* running the Bureau crazy wondering what he was up to — the crazy, paranoid FBI stewing over what Hemingway was up to *now*...

Well, if he stopped to think about it, being the man he was, he probably *was* just the kind of guy to be up to something to give the FBI sweats.

The thought made Hem grin; then something glinted on the water again. Hem put down his drink and scooped up his binoculars and scanned the horizon: just some piece of shiny, wave-tossed debris.

Careful, Hem told himself, *You're getting paranoid, old sport. Can't have 'em thinking you're buggy.*

As Hem's boat got underway to return to port, the *Pilar* slowly turning into a wave, several hundred yards beyond the shiny debris, in a black-hulled yacht, Donovan Creedy and his audio man sat in the shade, monitoring the bugs they'd placed all over Hemingway's fishing boat, watching Hemingway through a high-powered scope.

Still feeling spied upon, and somehow the lesser for the feeling, Hem tossed the dregs of his drink over the side of his boat. He stepped off the deck of the *Pilar* and slapped Gregorio on the arm. “*Mañana*,” he said.

He lifted his long-billed fishing hat and slicked his damp graying and shaggy hair back behind his ears, then tugged off his wire rimmed glasses and polished the lenses with the tail of his shirt. He wiped the sweat from the nose bridge and put them back on, curling the curved arms behind each ear.

Hem ducked into the shade of the open-sided bar and ordered a double daiquiri to his idiosyncratic recipe, stipulating honey in lieu of sugar. He looked up from his drink and saw him there on the other side of the bar: white slacks, white shirt and white cotton jacket...a straw hat and black sunglasses. Hem bit his lip, grabbed his sweating drink and wandered around the bar to the other side. He parked his ass on a stool next to the man.

As he sat down, Hem saw the man had stowed a pair of binoculars on the stool to his left. Hem said to the barkeep, “Whatever this one is drinking — a *single* round — on my tab. But watch him close: he’s Gestapo.”

When the waiter asked for an order and didn’t get a response, Hem said, “Give Donnie here an iced tea — he’s on duty.” He grinned: “And you never know who might be spying on *you*, right Donovan?”

Creedy let out a breath, said, “You should know by now you can’t provoke me, Mr. Hemingway.” He smiled meanly. “Been a while since your last novel, hasn’t it? Thinking of retiring? Think you’ll ever write another?”

“Go to hell, Agent Creedy,” Hem said. “Think you’ll ever publish a novel?”

“I’ve sold two to a new publisher. First appears next spring.”

Hem sipped from his sweating glass. Jesus, he said it as if mere publication was equal to validation. Christ, they’d publish *anything* now. He was always being sent novels for blurbs and endorsements — crap, all of it. And Creedy? The notion he’d ever write anything of worth was beyond the effort of contemplation.

“Good for you, Creedy. Honestly — you really have to dress like that down here? A necktie in this climate? Swear — you’re driving me to sporting houses just to keep people from wondering and talking meanly about us. Honestly, Agent, the whole village is convinced you’re *maricón*. They think you’ve got designs on my ass. I mean, different from the ones you have for me on behalf of J. Edgar. They fear for my anal virtue.”

“You should watch your mouth, Hemingway. We’re engaged in a World War against fascism. Yet here you sit, in Cuba, sniping at the execution of the war effort, sniping at the Bureau and continuing to take potshots at the current administration.”

Hem sipped his drink and smacked his lips. “I’ve never been a fan of Roosevelt. Hell, you can ask my wife for proof, if you can find the bitch. Martha’s tight with Eleanor, but you probably know that already. Say, is it true Eleanor’s a lesbian? I could effect an introduction to Gertrude and Alice if Mrs. Roosevelt wants one. I mean, if it’d get me in good graces with Franklin and J. Edgar, what’s the harm?”

Hem took another drink and added, “I’m doing my part for the war effort, right here, Agent Creedy.”

“Yes, your so-called ‘Crook Factory’; your Nazi sub-hunting boondoggle to cadge fuel for your fishing boat during these times of rationing. The Director’s on to you.”

“The Director knows what you know, which isn’t much.” Hem scooted Donovan’s untouched iced tea closer. “Drink up, Don. Cheer up: there’s more going on here than just hunting subs. I’ve got my own spy network—”

“—of drunkards and fools—”

“—and I’m doing important work,” Hem said, ignoring the FBI agent’s remark.

“For whom, Mr. Hemingway? Tell me that and perhaps I can get the Director to ease back on some of the surveillance.”

“Screw that. Screw you. Screw J. Edgar. You know, I think I might just have to report you to the Cuban authorities. Not so sure the current administration would relish knowing the FBI is exceeding its borders and engaging in skullduggery here on the island. Hell, if the Mafia — which doesn’t exist according to your boss but which nevertheless runs Havana top-to-bottom — if *they* knew you were down here...”

The man drank his iced tea. “It’s a stupid thing, testing me...testing the Director.”

“Maybe we could trade some true gen, Creedy,” Hem said. “I sense you have deeper ties than those to the Director. What are you *really*, I mean, *deep down*? CIA? Maybe on the dole for some other government? You show me some of yours, and I’ll show you some of mine. Deal?”

Creedy picked up his hat, binoculars. Standing, smiling, he said, “You savor your time here, Mr. Hemingway. Enjoy your time here...in Europe. In these places where our hands are *somewhat* tied. I swear though, if you ever set down roots again in the states, I’m going to make you my hobby, *Papa*.”

“You kid yourself you’ll do that,” Hem said, looking into his drink. Then, “Oh, hey: Few years ago when we were both in Spain — when *I* was fighting fascism and all

you back home were looking the other way with your thumbs up your asses — I mentioned about old J. Edgar having no birth certificate on file. Hear one suddenly and mysteriously cropped up in '38. I'm going to presume to take credit for that development. I'm told the certificate claimed the Director was age 43 at the time it materialized. Hear it seems spotty for such a document, though. You know: not enough stuff there about J. Edgar's genealogy...about his bloodlines, particularly. About this rumor I hear that—”

Hem stopped when he realized he was alone. For just a moment, he let himself wonder if Creedy had ever really been there.

Hem grinned: Oh well...next time he'd maybe finish that sentence. With the Bureau watching you, there was always a next time.

<http://www.craigmcdonaldbooks.com/legend.php>