



The Cordillera

Luis Rousset

AuthorHouse, 330 pages, (paperback) \$20.99, 9781665560399

(Reviewed: July 2023)

Luis Rousset's novel centers on Jacques, a French teenager who later becomes involved in intelligence operations for his country.

Jacques narrates this fast-moving novel. He begins by recounting when, at age 16, he and his uncle Ignacio reached the summit of Mount Fitz Roy, the most challenging climb in the Argentine Andes.

Upon their return to Ignacio's estate, the plot turns sinister with the arrival of Irina, daughter of one of Ignacio's friends and an assassin for Soviet intelligence who is wanted for murder in Buenos Aires. She hopes to hide there, but Ignacio, fearing her presence threatens his household, decides she must leave and that Jacques must help her escape. They become lovers, a complication that dominates their futures.

Returning to Paris, Jacques graduates from high school and then college, where he becomes romantically involved with a classmate and is recruited by French intelligence. Irina goes her own bloody way. After rigorous training, he's assigned missions worldwide, leaving a trail of dead evildoers.

Finally, in New York, he rescues an African diplomat from assassination at the hands of none other than Irina. Their romance is rekindled, until she disappears again. However, she remains Jacques' obsession as the story unfolds.

The plot is compelling, with plenty of action—but the story also has flaws. Rousset has an almost encyclopedic knowledge of the story's locales, but rather than enhancing the narrative, it tends to weigh things down, as in: "The reception was to take place at Le Pavillon Dauphine Saint Clair, a popular hall for balls and parties, in Paris, near the Champs-Elyseés, on la place du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny."

Additionally, sometimes the characters' actions are hard to believe, including Irina and Jacques' too-sudden sexual relationship and Jacques' rapid transition from horror at killing to considering it just part of the job.

Nonetheless, readers will want to see what happens next, and *The Cordillera* should appeal to those who enjoy their spy novels intertwined with romance.

Also available in hardcover and ebook.