

One Big Damn Puzzler



Is he or is he not, is he one big damn puzzler...On the day the plane brought the white man to the island, Managua was, as usual, preoccupied with his translation of Hamlet. As the only islander who could read, let alone write, he felt the burden of his culture rested plenty damn heavy upon his shoulders. The plane's arrival meant he'd have to put aside his work, strap on his leg and make his way to the landing beach to greet the newcomer. The island had welcomed visitors before, of course. The British had been there, rather noncommittally, but they had bequeathed their language, half a hotel, the small pigs that now ran wild in the jungle, and Shakespeare. Then the Americans with their military base, its soldiers and guns. That had not been a happy time - as the many landmine casualties testified - apart from the Coca Cola. And there was Miss Lucy, who had embraced island life and its traditions, even if she did over-indulge those silly She-Boys. But what to make of this new arrival, this young lawyer from America with his strange nervous gestures and his fervent belief in doing the right thing and winning reparation for the Islanders? Managua sensed that William Hardt's coming to the island would change everything. And he would be proved plenty damn right...This achingly funny, rich and supremely moving novel confirms John Harding as one of contemporary fiction's most entertaining and observant chroniclers of the human condition.

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