

The Double

George Pelecanos

An Iraq War veteran, Spero Lucas takes work from a D.C. defense attorney who needs help securing reasonable doubt for his client; at the same time Spero freelances by retrieving stolen property, in this case an expensive painting, for a standard 40 percent recovery fee. As he hunts for the thieves, Spero also finds time for a torrid affair with a married woman. But longtime readers know the details of a Pelecanos thriller are never the primary focus; it's the music his characters listen to, the clothes they wear, and where they stack up on the manhood spectrum that matter more, beginning with his main character: Pelecanos's title is the name of the missing painting, but it also refers to Spero himself, a man portrayed as thoughtful and humane but who will work for criminals and has killed (in combat and out) without compunction. VERDICT In his second book (after *The Cut*) featuring private investigator Spero Lucas, Pelecanos juggles multiple narratives without sacrificing the austere narrative style he's perfected. Though the author doesn't break new ground thematically, this sequel brings his ambiguous hero into sharper focus, making him a character readers will want to know better.

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