

The Martini Shot

George Pelecanos

The first story collection from the prolific Pelecanos (*The Double*) collects several previously published pieces and two new ones, including the title novella. Mining the author's own experience as a writer and producer on HBO's *The Wire*, "The Martini Shot" nearly collapses under the heavy industry jargon but emerges as a clever tale about television dramas and the nomadic people who create them. "Chosen," which first appeared as an ebook add-on to the first "Spero Lucas" novel (*The Cut*), touchingly fills in the blanks of the elusive private investigator's past as one of three adopted children of a Greek American couple. Most of the stories here appeared in various noir anthologies over the last two decades, when Pelecanos emerged as one of the country's most distinctive and reliable crime writers, and they showcase an author whose gritty prose style and sympathetic characterization have remained remarkably consistent in that time. VERDICT The best pieces in this collection do linger in memory ("Miss Mary's Room"), but many readers will view this title as a stopgap until the author's next full-length novel. A welcome but inessential addition to any public library's collection.

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