

Trigger

David Swinson

Retired cop-turned-private investigator Frank Marr returns in the third novel of this promising series (following *The Second Girl* and *Crime Song*), which will appeal to fans of Don Winslow's *The Force*. Newly clean after an all-consuming cocaine addiction and unhappily alone after his girlfriend Leslie kicked him out, Frank spends his time robbing the drug houses of Washington, DC, and fighting his urges when he hears that his best friend Al Luna fatally shot an African American teen when he thought the victim raised a gun—but no gun was found. In order to help clear his "brother cop," Frank recruits as his personal assistant a young man once involved in the drug trade, who almost got Frank killed. Despite the short chapters, punchy dialogue, and Frank's frenetic present-tense narration, the action occasionally lags and leads to a surprisingly underwhelming conclusion. The mystery of Al's situation ultimately takes a backseat to the burgeoning relationship between Frank and his protégé Calvin, who struggles to reconcile his new job with his fear of being perceived as a snitch, likely setting the table for future installments. **VERDICT** Swinson, a former police detective, depicts the streets of DC as knowingly as George Pelecanos, and his flawed but loyal hero will be welcomed by readers who miss Nick Stefanos.

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