



The Second Girl

David Swinson

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He's a good detective...with a bad habit.

Frank Marr knows crime in Washington, DC. A decorated former police detective, he retired early and now ekes a living as a private eye for a defense attorney. Frank Marr may be the best investigator the city has ever known, but the city doesn't know his dirty secret.

A long-functioning drug addict, Frank has devoted his considerable skills to hiding his usage from others. But after accidentally discovering a kidnapped teenage girl in the home of an Adams Morgan drug gang, Frank becomes a hero and is thrust into the spotlight. He reluctantly agrees to investigate the disappearance of another girl--possibly connected to the first--and the heightened scrutiny may bring his own secrets to light, too.

Frank is as slippery and charming an antihero as you've ever met, but he's also achingly vulnerable. The result is a mystery of startling intensity, a tightly coiled thriller where every scene may turn disastrous. *The Second Girl* is the crime novel of the season, and the start of a refreshing new series from an author who knows the criminal underworld inside and out.

The Second Girl Details

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From Reader Review The Second Girl for online ebook

John Jantunen says

I defy anyone to find a more exciting opening scene than David Swinson has written here. From there it moves along with the pace of a runaway train and somehow he manages to keep it from jumping he rails, bringing a deft facility with words and an insiders knowledge of the game to the story of an ex-cop desperately trying to keep one step ahead of his demons and maybe find a little hope along the way. One helluva a good read.

Debbi Mack says

This book is an excellent example of modern hardboiled crime fiction with an anti-hero protagonist. The story starts as Frank Marr, retired D.C. cop and drug addict, stakes out a house which he hopes to plunder for its drug stash. Instead, he finds a teenaged girl from the Virginia burbs, tied up in the bathroom.

Given the circumstances, Marr handles the situation in a way that helps the girl and covers his own ass. But as the old saying dictates, "No good deed goes unpunished." And one missing girl simply leads to another. The parents are frantic to find her and seek Marr's help in doing so.

The book is fast-paced read, with short chapters that make it easy to finish quickly. But more than that, the book presents a flawed character with enough redeeming qualities to make him likable. It also provides a very realistic look at the D.C. drug culture, not to mention all the other qualities of life in D.C. that you don't read about in political thrillers.

This is my first time reading David Swinson's work and it won't be my last. :)

Melissa says

Frank Marr is a retired detective who was forced out of his job for reasons his former colleagues know nothing about. Since he's no longer a cop he's no longer constrained to the rules that police (ostensibly) have to follow, so he's constantly abducting "suspects" who end up being murdered in the next chapter, but that's not why he was kicked off the force. You see, Marr uses, like, so much coke.

"I've got a nice chunk of coke on the glass table to chop up. I can't think of anything better to do today."
"These thoughts I'm having are more than likely the result of fatigue, too much alcohol, and not enough blow. But what can I do? Stop drinking? God forbid!"

"Drug abuse if something I know all too well. But it's not something I'm fighting."

"I can't remember the last time I had a hangover. A bit of a headache, maybe, but that's about it."

Yes, Frank, I get it. I found Marr to be one of the more insufferable characters I've ever come across. About halfway through I started to hope that this book was going to be about his downfall, that the many convoluted situations he kept creating for himself, the many ridiculous lies he told would eventually snowball and the book would end with his flimsy, cocaine-caked house of lies crumbling around him. But no!

He suffers no ill effects or repercussions from the tremendous amount of cocaine, Klonopin, Valium, and Jameson that he consumes in a bloodless, highly dubious fashion, so why should I care about his drug use? At best this is a middling crime story that's not particularly interesting or compelling, featuring a bland protagonist who is supposed to be some sort of renegade yet vulnerable anti-hero because he abuses drugs unconvincingly. If you want to read entertaining books about a guy with some actual charisma who solves crimes while getting wasted in his spare time, look no further than Nick Stefanos, and certainly don't come looking here.

Sam Wiebe says

"It isn't the first time I've had to leave a body, stuffed in a suitcase, in the back of my car."

Crime fiction doesn't get better than this. A tense, multi-layered thriller set in DC's underbelly, featuring a flawed, desperate, but resourceful (and very human) protagonist. Highly recommended.

Torger says

What a great novel! The author navigates you through the tough streets of DC and police politics. Much of which will feel familiar if you've spent some time in DC. The Second Girl leaves you wanting to read more about Detective Frank Marr.

Larry H says

I have my Goodreads friend James Thane to thank for this one.

Frank Marr is a retired Washington, D.C. police detective, revered for his investigative skills. He was good at his job, well-liked by his peers, but he decided that the job got to be a little too much to live with, so he retired early and does some work for a former colleague on the police force who is now a defense attorney.

Or so the story goes. Because only a few higher-ups in the department, know the truth behind his retirement. And only Frank knows his real secret: he is a (mostly) highly functioning drug addict. He does everything he can to feed his addiction, even if it means making some questionable decisions which could eventually put his life—and his freedom—at risk.

It is in the midst of one of these questionable decisions that he finds a teenage girl being held captive in a house owned by a D.C. drug gang. He knows he needs to save her from what will certainly be her fate, but he wonders how he can do that while also finding the drugs he so desperately needs. His conscience wins out (for the most part), so he rescues the girl, and is lauded for his heroics, although he'd prefer to remain out of the spotlight so he can continue avoiding suspicion.

When a second family from the same neighborhood asks if Frank can help them find their daughter after the police are unable to provide assistance, he's tremendously reluctant. He had vowed never to work a missing persons case, especially where a teenage girl is concerned. But his need to uncover the truth, and his ability to be one step ahead of the police because of his ability to bend the rules where necessary wins out, and it's

not long before Frank starts uncovering an operation that could spell danger for more teenage girls—and could lead to the end of Frank's secret life.

Having lived in the Washington, D.C. area for nearly 30 years, I always love books that take place here, especially when they're not political in nature. Frank Marr is a terrific, complex character, one you can't help but root for even as he does stupid, risky things over and over again. David Swinson isn't afraid to expose Frank's vulnerability, showing the irony of his strong sense of right and wrong even as he does everything wrong in his own life. I also liked Frank's relationship with his boss-of-sorts/former colleague, Leslie, and his former buddies from the police force.

I enjoyed Swinson's style and the way he let action scenes unfold. The plot of *The Second Girl* may not be surprising, but the appeal of Frank's character definitely raises the quality of this book up a few notches. I look forward to seeing what's next in Swinson's career!

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com>....

Truman32 says

I was almost unable to write a review of David Swinson's detective novel, **The Second Girl**, as I was overwhelmed in the agony and hopelessness of being denied yet again another Goodreads Giveaway. This makes **96 rejections in a row**—going back over a year. Do the folks at Goodreads simply hate me and wish nothing but destruction and doom for my life, or are they just too busy—maybe baking brownies for an ISIS fundraiser, or perhaps downloading possibly illegal pornography from the internet. Something no doubt salacious and vulgar, involving innocent livestock and clowns. Perhaps they were just too plastered from bargain wine and low-grade beer to spend the time to see how deserving, kind, and non-judgmental of a reader I am.

I knew I could probably find out. Being a reader of detective fiction (tragically, all purchased) I had developed the skills to mount an investigation into the questionable and underhanded manner in which a skilled reader such as myself was spitefully discriminated against in free giveaways. But then I realized that people who acted as dastardly and base as the Goodreads Giveaway staff more than likely carried knives (rusty) and would not hesitate to punch me in the balls. These folks would give me the business and not think twice about it, as they would later take their family out to dinner at the cut-rate Chinese all-you-can-eat buffet with coupons clipped from the Penny Saver.

But I will persevere. **The Second Girl** by David Swinson is a solid book—that tries too hard to be like Lawrence Block's Matthew Scudder series. Only instead of an alcohol addiction, the Second Girl's disgraced cop, now private detective Frank Marr is hooked on cocaine.

While raiding a dealer's house for his nose candy fix, Marr discovers a captive teen girl. He is seen as a hero for rescuing her (obviously prevaricating the reasons he was in the house) and the parents of yet another missing teen enlist his help in the search for their daughter. A second girl!

The Second Girl is violent, the cocaine use is often distracting, and the dialog can come off as somewhat silly—especially with the bro-speak among the cops. However, it does hit it's stride and becomes quit fun when Swinson puts all the drug taking and introspection on the back burner and gives in to the driving force of the P.I. tracking down a girl in danger.

Jaksen says

I received a copy of this book through the Goodreads giveaway program. So thanks, Goodreads, I really appreciate your doing this...

But as for the book? I got a little more than half-way through and said okay, that's enough. The MC is a retired cop and a drug addict but he has few redeeming characteristics. (If I can think of one I'll add it to this review.) He saves a girl, yeah, okay, big deal. But he does so in the course of stealing drugs from a gang which was dealing. As for finding her? It's an aggravation; it cramps his style. He'd rather just feed his habit and walk away. Oh, and he kills one of the drug dealers, just kicks him down the stairs. But wait, he's a 'bad guy,' and a rapist, and probably deserves to be brutally murdered, and that's what you get in a book like this. You want to be a dealer/rapist who lives, goes to jail, does his time, etc. etc., you need to go inhabit some other book.

I agree the book is gritty and cold and realistic, but it's also depressing as hell. As one reviewer here said, Frank, the drug addict and former cop, starts in one place and ends in the same place. There's no great arc to this story. Later in the story he does goes looking for a 'second girl' who's also been kidnapped, but I wondered who's Frank going to kill this time in the course of rescuing her and scoring free drugs?

Just not my kind of book.

Toby Neal says

A gritty detective story with authentic dialogue and a plot like a cold, fast-moving river where bodies are dumped

I had the pleasure of an advance read of this authentically-told tale of finding a missing girl on the mean streets of DC. I loved seeing the evolution in David's writing from his first book--this is a tight, tense tale that sucks you in and, while sometimes repellent, won't let you go. There is a feel of the TV show "the Wire" about this book, along with writing that's reminiscent of Michael Connelly or Jo Nesbo's best work. Gritty, authentic action, spot-on dialogue, sense of place and voice, and a plot that just moves. I felt like I stuck a toe in and got caught in that cold river where he liked to dump people...I was swept away, and washed up in the end with a sense of relief and hope...which is just what I like in a crime story.

Well told, David Swinson!

Linda Strong says

Frank Marr is an ex-cop, now working as a Private Investigator, sometimes for a Defense Attorney.

Frank is a functioning drug addict ... but no one seems to know. He's very good at hiding things. He's also very good at breaking into drug houses to keep his supply of drugs and money. It's during one of these runs that he accidentally finds a young girl being kept prisoner. He frees her, does

some hocus pocus, spins a well-thought out story and turns the girl over to the attorney he works for.

It so happens that another girl has gone missing she attended the same school and her parents hire Marr to find her.

This book is full of drugs, dope runners, errand boys, syringes full of whatever, lots of what I will call street language. There is also a lot of graphic violence ... and not all of it is done by the bad guys. There are people killed ... guilty and innocent alike.

On the upside, I actually like Frank Marr. He is good-hearted to a point .. he wants to be the good guy, but he crosses way too many lines. His drug addiction is a huge problem ... he's always thinking about what he has, how much he needs to maintain during the day, or on a stakeout.

There are other characters who play a role. Although most of them are drug dealers, or thugs who are buying the drugs, there are a couple of cops that don't cross those lines that Marr does. They seemingly are intelligent and do their jobs well, but they accept whatever story Marr tells them without batting an eyelash.

From the book blurb, this is the start of a new series. I didn't love this book, but I am intrigued at what Marr will do from here. I will, most likely, take a look at the next one.. but no promises after that.

I gave it 3.5 stars - mainly for the distinctively unique storyline.

My thanks to the author / Mulholland Books / NetGalley who provided a digital copy in exchange for an honest, unbiased review.

Jeanette says

Ouch! Was this novel good approaching great. Especially for this particular gutsy "dick" genre. If bad = good. Because Frank Marr is bad.

This reminded me more than a dozen times the mood/feeling/tension that I felt within "True Detective" series- the first year with Mathew Mcconaughey and Woody Harrelson.

In order words and a quote from that series:

"You touch the darkness, the darkness will touch you."

And not only is it dark, but it's daily urban ghetto to the highrises real. In fact, this is the only book this year that I've read out of 206 that I think approached the reality of urban jungle big city mean street 2016. It definitely could happen exactly like this in Chicago. No, it does. Every single day. Last weekend was 44 shootings- 19 of them in one face down / drive by- just exactly like the one in which "Tommy cop" becomes the centerpiece. Gang banger specials all. And not as bad as the weekend before. This is D.C. mostly Adams Morgan, but it's a close twin.

Gangs rule vast areas. Some portions that don't even look like ghetto too. And the "best" cops, the most effective to getting the worst criminals off the streets are just exactly in that same line of territory foul themselves with every breath they breathe. They walk deep into the same actions. The same procedures to

get information, that especially. Some like Frank, break the rules or change the game. Not especially and exactly like Frank for his own addiction reasons. But close and undercover or not, similar. I wish I didn't know it as well as I do. One of the reasons my brother most often had no partner. Tricky, tricky, tricky. And not only because of the cop department politics either. It's a matter of trust. Like Frank trusts his old homie "Albino" in this one.

But then again, he isn't always telling him the entire truth either. Is he? No.

Here Frank has ditched the job officially, but never mentally or in fact. So he doesn't have to follow all the "cop rules". And has followed other gigs for his own reasons. And yet, the cop inside still won't ignore. Do I know it. It's truly hard to be an ignorer. Time and time again, I've seen how that goes when cops try. Some would come to school by me and still never lost the searching eyes. Not even while joking on school assignments or within cigarette group break time. Always noticing and seldom does the context of what they notice reflect in the their eyes.

This David Swinson can write. I almost gave him 5 stars on this one, because he knows the territory and the association. And the talk. No copper can get through to the sources without either- but especially the talking ability. I did not have to read the back fly leaf to know he was a big city cop for many years.

And the characters are finely drawn here. And the language is completely theirs too. So beware. No cozy mystery lovers' territory- never on any page. Gang talk related to cop talk related to boss talk. Invective anger, constantly and never ending inflation of their own anger as they vent it. Pushing all those neural centers to a habit of more and more anger and violence. Always expressed in forms of obscene swearing.

So our hero? Is he a hero? He saves the first damsel in distress. And then he will NOT cease to find Miriam (the "second" girl) and return her to her parents.

This is what a hero looks like in 2016.

4.5 star. The only .5 lost because I got tired of hearing about how Frank used the two piece medicine capsules for multiple purposes.

If you can read Southern Grit. Lit. - you should be brave enough to take a realistic glance into Frank's world here. Beyond that, D.C. was nailed. I'm taking a trip there this Fall and I'm glad I'm not getting a car now. David Swinson reminded me why.

I'll be reading all of his. He knows the lay of the land. And exactly what it takes to pry out the vilest. Oh, does this Frank Marr scream out for an entire series. If his health can last!

Mal Warwick says

Frankie Marr is not a good guy. After seventeen years on the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police, he was forced to retire when the brass discovered he had been helping himself to the drugs recovered in narcotics busts. Now, he works as a private eye to supplement his meager police pension. To feed his habit, he breaks into drug dealers' stash houses to steal cocaine, marijuana, and prescription painkillers. Frankie persuades himself that he has everything under control because he resists using crack cocaine. "Cocaine is a monster," he says, "but crack is the devil. You can keep the monster in a closet, but not the f***ing devil." Somehow, he

has managed to hide all this not just from the drug dealers and the detectives he used to work with but also from the plaintiff's attorney who hires him from time to time.

David Swinson's engaging detective novel, *The Second Girl*, opens as Frankie has just crashed his way into another stash house. In a futile search for drugs, he tears the place apart. Then he discovers a padlocked door that seems promising. Breaking it down, he finds a naked teenage girl trussed up on the floor. She has several track marks in her arm and has clearly been drugged. He frees her but has no explanation for being in the house. So, instead of taking her to a hospital or turning her over to the police, he drops her at the office of the attorney he works with.

Eventually, the girl is returned to her grateful parents in suburban Virginia. Frankie comes across as a hero. When neighbors of the girl's parents learn the story, they insist on hiring him to search for their own missing sixteen-year-old daughter. Miriam Gregory is the "second girl" of the title. Frankie's investigation into her disappearance takes him to the heart of the drug and prostitution rackets in DC. The course of his investigation is violent — and not all the violence is the work of drug dealers and pimps. Frankie proves himself to be little better than they are.

This is an unorthodox work of detective fiction. It's only the author's second novel and shows promise of better to come.

Ferne says

Frank Marr, was a police detective in Washington, D.C., but was forced to retire due to his own drug habit. Now a private investigator, Frank creates his own accountability, his own rules, hovers between the ups and downs of his habit and sometimes comes very close to his own edge.

When a novel is written by an author that has training and years of experience in law enforcement, the reader is given a gift of authenticity that penetrates the mind and tugs on emotions unlike any other reading experience. David Swinson served 16 years with the Washington Metropolitan Police Department. His creation of Frank Marr as private investigator shows us realism, humanity, and vulnerability. Frank can't be put in a mold. As the layers of Frank's thought process unfold during the investigations, it depicts a different side of life than many of us will ever experience. I found it thought-provoking.

As an aftereffect of reading this novel and again watching the news of the day, the reader wonders how many unnamed heroes helped to bring back a little balance to law and order within the last 24 hours as the wheels of justice keep turning. Would we have sanctioned his/her behavior? Was there a "Frank Marr" among them? I would softly answer, "yes." I think the author would too.

Teresa says

Frank Marr used to be a great cop, but his drug habit got in the way and made him dirty. Now he is one of the best Private Investigators in Washington DC. Liked by most of the cops he used to work with - they don't know about his secret drug habit, they only know he was a great cop and friend who retired early from the force - and feared by criminals.

While breaking into a drug house to steal drugs, Frank rescues a captive teenage girl and becomes an instant hero. His police friends are clapping him on the back, and now Frank has been hired to find a second missing teenage girl by her distraught family.

I really liked Frank, although I felt I shouldn't like him at all. His drug habit, his violence towards those of the criminal fraternity who cross his path, all make me feel that I shouldn't like him, but despite all that Frank Marr is a decent guy, scarred by an unhappy childhood, and with a weakness he doesn't seem to want to do anything about fixing, deep down he is a gentle, caring guy.

The Second Girl is a fantastic crime thriller. Different, and with a deeply flawed protagonist, I loved this book and could not put it down. At times the drug use can be distracting and the mind boggles as to how Frank can function as he does. I found myself fearing for his future, and hoping that author David Swinson gives us more of Frank Marr in a second, and even though I know I'm being greedy, a third book! Because I don't want to leave Frank here, I want his story to go on, I need to know that he will be ok, but I can't see how his destructive way of life will not catch up with him soon, as really it should.

If you like your detectives flawed, and your crime gritty, this is the book for you. I can't wait to read more by David Swinson. I hope he will give us more Frank Marr, but whatever his next book is about, I will be at the top of the queue come publication day!

My thanks to Mulholland books for providing me with a free pb copy of this wonderful book via bookbridgr.com

James Thane says

Frank Marr is a retired Washington D.C. detective with two excellent skill sets: he's a great investigator and he's also very good at managing and concealing his long-time drug addiction. After leaving the force early, Frank is now a P.I. who works most often for a defense attorney. To support his addiction, he also rips off drug dealers and in the process of doing so as the novel opens, Frank accidentally discovers a young girl who is being held captive in a drug house.

Frank takes the girl out of the house, but what does he do with her? How does he take her to a hospital or turn her over to the cops without having to explain how he found her in the first place? He comes up with an alternative solution and, in the process, sets into motion forces that are soon out of his control.

It's impossible to say any more about the plot without giving away details that readers will want to discover for themselves. Suffice it to say, that this is a great read. Frank Marr is one of the most unique and compelling protagonists to appear in a long time, and the story moves at a breakneck pace. David Swinson, who served sixteen years with the D.C. police, clearly knows the territory. His prose is spare and beautiful, and this is a book that's going to appeal to large numbers of crime fiction fans. Over the last couple of years, it's become almost S.O.P. to expect a big summer book with the word "Girl" somewhere in the title. For my money, this is the best of the bunch so far.
