



## Pressing Freedom

### Roger Armbrust

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*Propelled forward by looming threats, this thriller is packed with action and drama.*

A reporter enters a web of deception and corruption in *Pressing Freedom*, a nested thriller from Roger Armbrust.

Reeves Franklin, a retired Vietnam vet turned investigative reporter, stumbles across a statewide conspiracy while digging into a seemingly benign story. As he doggedly pursues the new lead, a cadre of corrupt cops push back.

Franklin keeps his military history under wraps, so the officers are in for a surprise when they show up to violently persuade him to drop the case. Threatening Franklin's family proves to be a mistake; he becomes determined to persist, penning an exposé. With an eclectic cast of allies to help him along, Franklin is drawn into a massive conspiracy with national ramifications.

*Pressing Freedom* features a unique thriller-within-a-thriller plot device. Corrupt cops are only a jumping-off point to more extreme political intrigue. The narrative holds interest, constantly propelled forward by larger and larger threats, and working toward, it seems, another series title. The adventures here are quick but packed with action and drama.

Franklin is a fascinating character. At nearly seventy years old, he stays in shape and keeps busy by interviewing people, writing articles, and composing poetry. Despite his PTSD and alcoholism, he's built a life filled with family and friends. His troubled backstory is fleshed out through flashbacks, detailing traumas that nonetheless gave way to positive territory. The decision to not use his PTSD and military history as a gratuitous plot device is refreshing.

The story's thriller elements grab attention, but at times they also feel rushed. Story lines of citywide corruption and military espionage are only loosely connected. At times, the book reads more like two books in the same series might, if they were smashed together. Pivotal events suffer from a lack of sufficient detail, unfolding off scene, particularly if they didn't happen to Franklin himself. This narrative distance from key moments of action makes the work and its substantial climax less suspenseful.

Characters are well constructed and dialogue is strong and natural, though a few stereotyped accents are a minor distraction and some discussions seem repetitive. The positive dynamics between Franklin, his family, and his friends are at the center of most events, with Franklin most motivated by a desire to protect the ones he loves; this aspect of the text comes across perfectly.

*Pressing Freedom* is a unique thriller with an explosive ending and a complex lead.

JOHN M. MURRAY (December 19, 2017)

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