FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

Special Interes
Chris Benson
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This debut novel works successfully on two levels, most obviously as a murder mystery and more subtly as perceptive commentary on the “battleground of power and influence” that thrives inside the environs of Washington, D.C.

Angela McKenzie is a savvy reporter newly arrived on the D.C. scene and looking for the big story that will get her off the Metro beat and onto the front page of the Washington Examiner. She re-connects with Veronica Sutton, a college friend who is now partner in an elite research firm and who is known as “a triple threat—Black, female, connected.” Veronica’s ideological shift from “Miss Black Power U.S.A.” to influential supporter of white conservative political groups, most notably the pro-tobacco lobby, surprises Angela; nevertheless, the two quickly resume their relationship as soul mates.

Veronica’s sudden death, called a suicide by the Washington Police Department, sends Angela on a compulsive mission to find out what really happened to her friend, and nearly causes her to lose her job. Even as her editor warns her that she has crossed into an “ethical no-fly zone,” Angela digs into Veronica’s mysterious parentage, her relationship with a liberal black lobbyist opposed by her own firm, and her secret and probably unwanted pregnancy. As Angela uncovers the hidden layers of Veronica’s past and present, the author skillfully fleshes out his portrayals of even the most minor characters, including senators, their aides, and those working to bring them down. After Angela enlists the help of a co-worker and bends the ear of a sympathetic cop, the mystery begins to unravel quickly. Only the overdramatic demise of one of the characters mars the ending of Benson’s debut; his timely plot and well-drawn characters bode well for future endeavors.

Deborah Donovan