

## SHORE LEAVE

DAVID WHISH-WILSON

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Frank Swann is at home, suffering from a debilitating illness, when he is called to investigate an incident at the local brothel Ada Rose. It is Fremantle, 1989, and the USS *Carl Vinson* is in town. Pretty soon, it appears that there is a link between the arrival of the Vinson and the death of two women in the port city. Meanwhile, there are rumblings in the underworld when a cache of M16s smuggled from the aircraft carrier goes astray. And when an ex-con on the run seeks to permanently solve a problem for another ex-con, Frank Swann is inadvertently drawn back into the crooked operations of the Gold Squad, and an unravelling sequence of retributions and counterstrikes he is powerless to halt.

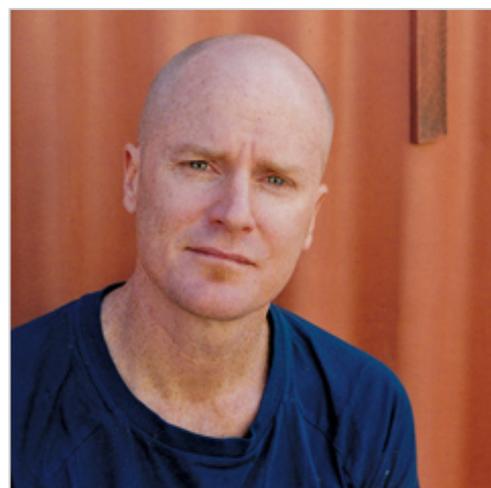
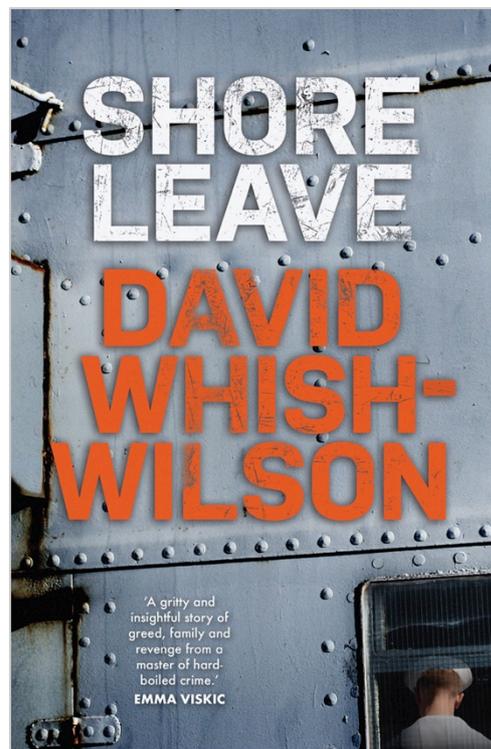
This is the fourth novel in the Frank Swann series, but it can be read as standalone.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Whish-Wilson was born in Newcastle, NSW, but grew up in Singapore, Victoria and WA. He left Australia aged eighteen to live for a decade in Europe, Africa and Asia. He is the author of *The Summons*, *The Coves* and three crime novels in the Frank Swann series: *Line of Sight*, *Zero at the Bone* and *Old Scores*. His most recent novel, *True West*, was published by Fremantle Press in 2019. His non-fiction book, *Perth*, part of the NewSouth Books city series, was shortlisted for a WA Premier's Book Award. David lives in Fremantle and coordinates the creative writing program at Curtin University.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This crime novel explores the seamy underside of a city – its trade in sex and violence, its criminal allegiances and gangs, its drugs and weapons trades. Do you think crime novels can make a reader think differently about the place they live?
2. Who are the victims in this novel and why?
3. Do the different communities and affiliations in this novel – the women who work in the brothel, the bikies, the crooked cops, the sailors, the Australian Patriotic Movement, the skinheads, the cons and ex-cons – share any common elements?
4. What is your sense of the law and order in this town (Perth, 1989)? Is it fair to describe WA as the 'wild west' or is it no different to any other city in Australia at this time?
5. Do you think that places generate their own unique kinds of crimes?
6. How would you describe Frank Swann? Why do you think he chooses to inhabit such a world?
7. What kind of a character is Kerry Bannister? Can she be regarded as just another small business operator in the port city of Fremantle?
8. What motivates Tony Pascoe, the escaped con? How would you describe his moral compass?
9. What kind of a character is Devon Smith? In what ways is he a product of his upbringing and environment? How do these affect the decisions he makes?
10. Can life aboard the USS *Carl Vinson* be seen as a microcosm of US culture? How would you characterise this world?
11. Does it look any different to the kind of US we see in our newsfeeds and online today?
12. How do those in charge in the US Navy work to protect their own?
13. What, if anything, does Devon Smith learn from his time in the cellar with Charles Bernier?



14. What kinds of moral conundrums are thrown up for Frank Swann in Chapter 56? Does he have any choice in the outcome?
15. What does Chapter 56 have to say about the law of the jungle and about the kind of world that men, in particular, can inhabit?
16. What difference does Tony Pascoe's revelation make at the end of Chapter 63?

## INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

***What made you decide to tell a story that was in part set aboard the USS Carl Vinson – and what aspects of Western Australia's recent history did you wish to explore in this novel?***

It seemed to me that when I was a kid and the American ships were in port, it was always a big deal. I wasn't aware then that there was a longer relationship with the US Navy and the port of Fremantle too, which dated back to the Second World War and which profoundly influenced the sex trade in Perth (principally, the idea that the police force might unofficially 'manage' the businesses), whose consequences were something explored in earlier Frank Swann novels. Then when I was living in Tokyo in the early nineties I worked as a barman and occasional doorman in a dive bar that catered mostly to Yank sailors, and I got to know some of them pretty well, despite sometimes breaking up their brawls. The stories they told me about life on board the aircraft carriers, in particular, were fascinating, as a distillation of the society that they'd left stateside. Some of the criminal goings-on piqued my interest, in particular, and as a crime writer I've tried to draw all of that personal and social history together. And besides, at the end of the last Frank Swann novel, *Old Scores*, he was left pretty battered and bruised, so I wanted to next write a narrative that kept him close to home in Fremantle, and it seemed that the kind of story explored in *Shore Leave* was fit for purpose.

***Do you think that historical crime fiction in a real setting does more than just tell a good story?***

Yes. While telling a good story is paramount, and while as writers we draw our influences from all over, it seems to me that if you aren't tapping into the specific meanings, stories and subcultures associated with a particular place, then you run the risk of writing fiction that ends up being merely a representation shaped by other representations, rather than being drawn from the cultural and historical aspects of a real setting, and a real society. Most good writers know this, and it's been a particular interest of mine to research and document, in the form of crime fiction, some of the lesser-known aspects of Perth's specific history.

***What is next for David Whish-Wilson? Will we see more of Frank Swann in the future?***

While my next novel returns to mid-nineteenth-century San Francisco, at a time when it was heavily populated by Australian desperadoes, in the form of a narrative that charts the life and tragic death of an escaped Australian convict who became a celebrated figure in America, I'm currently working on a book for Sea Shepherd about marine conservation in general, and pirate fishing in African waters specifically. At the same time, I'm working on another crime novel that features Lee Southern, the protagonist of *True West*, and Frank Swann together, set in mid-nineties Perth, which so far is a lot of fun.



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