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The Edge



Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: RecordedBooks (2000)

ISBN-10: 1436180163

ISBN-13: 978-1436180160

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 132 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #16,047,561 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #87 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (F) > Francis, Dick

Customer Reviews

Why doesn't anyone proofread Kindle versions? Like other reviewers, I've read this book multiple times, and enjoyed the audio versions, too. It's one of my all time favorites. Now I have it on my Kindle, and am reading it there for the first time. I wish there were some way to guarantee the quality of a Kindle book. Apparently the books are scanned in, and very little checking is done to ensure that the words are correct. I just found "the path would" instead of "the path wound" and "Cucumber" instead of "Cumber," the abbreviated form of a character's first name. There have been several other instances that I've noticed in this book, but not noted down. I have registered complaints about Kindle versions before, and even offered to proofread some of them for free, if the corrections would be made. Kindle readers deserve the same quality as readers of hardback and paperback versions of the book, and they're not getting it.

It's time again for My-Every-Other-Review-is-a-Dick-Francis-Review Theater. Okay, if I had to pick three faves from Francis' roster of protagonists, I must roll with Rob Finn (NERVE), Kit Fielding (BREAK IN, BOLT), and Torquil Kelsey (THE EDGE). So let's talk about Tor Kelsey. THE EDGE came out in 1988 and thrilled me to bits. It introduced us to Mr. Kelsey who, true to Francis' hero blueprint, is unassuming and unremarkable looking. He tends to fade into the background. Ah, but he means to do that purposely. See, Tor is an undercover security agent for the Jockey Club, has been for three years now, and his chameleon act is an indispensable knack. What I dig about Tor is that he's independently well-off, came into his sizable inheritance some time ago. He doesn't have to work ever again for the rest of his life. Before this, he'd been mucking around for years, traveling, seeing the world, seeking purpose. He's found it with the Jockey Club, helping put away them nefarious nogoodniks. I love that, always, always, Tor Kelsey feels the need to cultivate that taste for plain bread. He sees with great acuity the peril of succumbing to his wealth. On to the crux of the

matter. England's Jockey Club had been forever trying to get the goods on Julius Apollo Filmer, him what's an infamous blackmailer, an expert witness intimidator, a frightener of the first order, and suspected murderer. But Filmer is silky smooth and cautious and slippery, and the Jockey Club would've had more luck picking up a dingleberry by its clean end. When word gets 'round that Filmer had wheedled himself a spot on a highly publicized luxury transcontinental train set to navigate the breadth of the wild Canadian interior, imagine the furor that went down within the Canadian Jockey Club. "Can't you keep your villains in check?" rails Canadian Jockey Club to English Jockey Club. So here's Tor Kelsey presented as a halfway panacea. Tor's job is to be anonymously onboard that train - the one what's on a goodwill tour to promote Canadian horseracing - there to sniff out potential shady shenanigans perpetrated by Filmer. I've rarely had more fun reading a Dick Francis novel. See, in tone, his books tend to be these buttoned-down reads broken up with moments of shocking mayhem and brutality. What THE EDGE offers up is this sustained feel of spirited high adventure. It feels like a jaunt. On board the Transcontinental Mystery Race Train, can our undercover agent foil the insidious big bad who must surely be up to something? Can he do this without giving himself away? Because that's part of the mission goal, to come away unscathed and undiscovered so that he can go right back into the field and suss out further rascality. Yeah, the Transcontinental Mystery Race Train. I haven't even mentioned the murder mystery what's staged by a hired acting troupe as further amusement for the well-heeled passengers. I love mystery trains! And Tor, busy gent, inadvertently becomes embroiled in the execution of that. Francis expertly juggles a substantial cast, ranging from blue blood to blue collar, an impressive number of whom manage to keep your interest. Witness our secret agent man subtly rub elbows with the Lorrimores, Canada's golden (yet troubled) family. See him hob nob with the colorful acting troupe. See him, on the sly, romance Nell, the tactful travel coordinator. And Francis does something else that's amazing. He makes Tor's phone conversations with his racing liaison, the very sharp, very ill Mrs. Baudelaire, into these emotional experiences. This writer is so adroit at hitting you in the feels, so dexterous and sly in his observations about class distinctions and, essentially, about what makes us tick. He writes these things with seeming ease and with consummate finesse. But he's also a crackerjack orchestrator of suspense, and there are pockets of tension in this book that had me on the edge of my seat. Even though he's handy in a scrap, Tor is a thinking man's hero. I appreciate the cerebral finishing move he lays on Filmer to ensure that the villain is caught out proper. Often times I wished that Francis had written sequels about this and that character, but never more so than with Tor Kelsey, the invisible man, the quiet storm, the Jockey Club's plain-bread-eating, rich-as-Croesus secret weapon.

Francis' books are really not detective stories, or more precisely, not searching for criminals, but for insight. Questions such as - What causes hate? Where does free will start? Can we control wickedness? Whence courage? Where does love arise? Why? Mental illness inborn? How to reach the heart? The puzzle - "What made one man good, I wondered, and another man bad: one man to seek to build, the other to frighten and destroy. The acid irony was that the bad might feel more satisfied and fulfilled than the good" So true! This work does outstanding job of presenting questions and finding answers. In fact, dialogue refers to Hamlet several times. This work borrows from that drama. Great! For example, the villain is confronted with one outraged victim - " 'You told me Lenny would give evidence against me, and I didn't know you'd frightened the poor boy with such a terrible threat. You told me he hated me and would be glad to tell lies about me.' The enormity of it almost choked her. 'I don't know how you can live with yourself. I don't know how anyone can be so full of sin.' Her voice resonated with the full old meaning of the word: an offense against God. It was powerful, I thought, and it had silenced Filmer completely." Wonderful drama! Another relentless revelation - "You can't prove any of this," Filmer said defiantly. "We all believe," said Bill Baudelaire voice, "that with you, Mr. Filmer, it is the urge to crush people and make them suffer that sets you going. We know you could afford to buy good horses. We know that for you simply owning horses isn't enough. Cruelty for enjoyment - what a motive! Wow!" But why should anyone do that? "Grow up, sonny. There are people in this world who cause trouble because it makes them feel important. They're ineffective, eh?, in their lives. So they burn things and smash things, paint slogans on walls ... leave their mark on something, eh? And wreck trains. Put slabs of concrete on the rails. I've seen it done. Power over others, that's what it's about. A grudge against the Lorridores, most like. Power over them, over their possessions. That's what those investigators think. This is wickedness as sin, not sickness. What a relief! This work is written as a constant conflict of good vs evil, righteousness vs wickedness. And yet, Francis does not fall into self-righteousness. He shows not all badness is wicked choice. For example, one youth is uncovered with a history of torturing cats. Narrative notes - "I wasn't so sure about that: didn't know to what extent she was responsible for his behavior. But perhaps not much. Perhaps no one deserved a son like Sheridan. Perhaps people like Sheridan were born that way, as if without arms." This is

not just blanket condemnation, but awareness of human weakness. Many other careful insights, all done smoothly and with taste. Wonderful!! read this years ago in paperback. Lost it. This time on kindle (won't lose it!). Like kindle better, highlights and fonts.

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