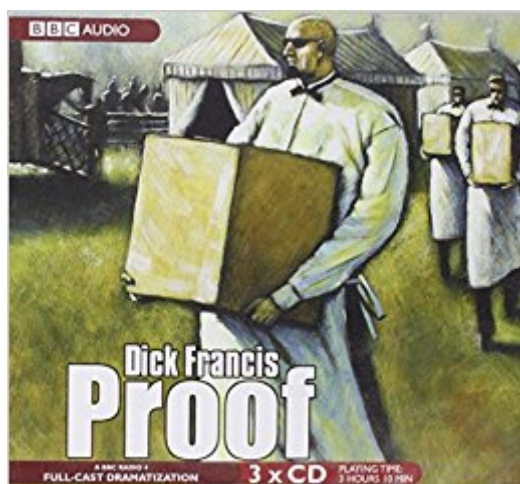


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Synopsis

A classic mystery from Dick Francis, the champion of English storytellers. Wine merchant Tony Beach will do anything for a quiet life. But when a party to celebrate the end of the racing season ends in eight violent deaths, he is drawn reluctantly into the subsequent investigation. Meanwhile, the police, having evidence of the sale of illicit alcohol at a local club, ask for Tony's help in closing it down. Thanks to his intervention, Tony comes to the attention of the criminal underworld. And that's when he reluctantly realizes that the deaths and the illicit alcohol are connected. Tony doesn't want to be a hero. But if the choice is that or dying... Praise for Dick Francis: 'As a jockey, Dick Francis was unbeatable when he got into his stride. The same is true of his crime writing' Daily Mirror 'Dick Francis's fiction has a secret ingredient - his inimitable knack of grabbing the reader's attention on page one and holding it tight until the very end' Sunday Telegraph 'The narrative is brisk and gripping and the background researched with care . . . the entire story is a pleasure to relish' Scotsman 'Francis writing at his best' Evening Standard 'A regular winner . . . as smooth, swift and lean as ever' Sunday Express 'A super chiller and killer' New York Times Book Review Dick Francis was one of the most successful post-war National Hunt jockeys. The winner of over 350 races, he was champion jockey in 1953/1954 and rode for HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, most famously on Devon Loch in the 1956 Grand National. On his retirement from the saddle, he published his autobiography, *The Sport of Queens*, before going on to write forty-three bestselling novels, a volume of short stories (*Field of 13*), and the biography of Lester Piggott. During his lifetime Dick Francis received many awards, amongst them the prestigious Crime Writers' Association's Cartier Diamond Dagger for his outstanding contribution to the genre, and three 'best novel' Edgar Allan Poe awards from The Mystery Writers of America. In 1996 he was named by them as Grand Master for a lifetime's achievement. In 1998 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2000. Dick Francis died in February 2010, at the age of eighty-nine, but he remains one of the greatest thriller writers of all time. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

The narrator of Francis's 26th mystery is Tony Beach, a young widower who fights his grief by keeping busy at his wine shop and by socializing. Eventually he teams up with private detective Gerard McGregor to find the hijackers of several trucks of spirits; the pair then take on a case involving the adulteration of whiskey and wine at a cafe. In rapid order the cafe's steward is brutally murdered, and Tony and Gerard just miss being killed. Tony's severest test occurs at the "stunning climax of what may be judged the best of Francis's bestsellers so far; it's a corker," PW commented. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A regular winner . . . as smooth, swift and lean as ever * *Sunday Express* * As a jockey, Dick Francis was unbeatable when he got into his stride. The same is true of his crime writing * *Daily Mirror* * --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dick Francis and his wife Mary wrote as a team, and as time went on that team appeared to include their son Felix, who took over the Dick Francis brand in the early 2000s, when his mother had died and father got too old to write. Up until the mid-90s most of the books were written in a very distinct style: a strong focus on the horse jumping world, beautiful spare prose, page turning plots, and detective-like main characters with similar methods of operation. However, in the 1980s, another style entered into some of the books and has continued since Felix took over the franchise. The plots take much longer to develop. The sentences are decidedly much longer. There is no rhythm to the prose whatsoever. And the horse-racing world, while there, recedes well into the distance. Proof is one of these second types of books. I can fall asleep at night after reading a page and a half, where with the earlier books, I would be awake until four in the morning unable to put the book down. I can't say it's a poorly written book, because it reads like any number of other authors I could name. But if you are looking for the classic Dick Francis page turning, spare prose, racing world

driven book, pass this one by.

I enjoy all his books. His writing style is succulent, only relevant information and description. Each book deals with a different subject but the theme of horse racing is featured in many. Good story. Fast read.

I enjoyed reading this book. As always with books by Dick Francis I have read, it is a fast moving novel with characters defined and interesting. Being narrated in the first person, I particularly enjoy the varied professions of the narrators, and the obvious investigation that has gone into studying the profession.

Most Dick Francis heroes are models of cool-headed courage. Although Tony Beach comes from a family of daredevil military men and a mother who rides to hounds, Tony has no interest in fighting or hunting or any other display of bravery. He studies the wine business in France and becomes a wine merchant. His young wife has died recently, and the reader can see that he's handling that with some courage, but in the world of macho attitudes and endeavors, courage is a sore point with Tony. Circumstances are about to give him a different picture of himself. Tony's carefully cultivated ability to tell one wine from another and identify various brands of scotch lures him into helping with an investigation. Tankers of raw scotch and wine are being stolen, and purveyors of fine food and wine are serving not-so-fine wine under fake labels. If you read this story with attention, you'll learn a tremendous amount about the booze business. Dick Francis delights in educating his readers. Or you can let the alcoholic content wash over you pleasantly and mainly enjoy the adventure - and the psychological insights into the workings of courage.

Typical Dick Francis, full of twists and turns, informative and informational. It is a great read and will be educational if one is interested in wine and adult beverages.

Very good read! I only gave it four stars because it's not the usual Dick Francis excellent jockey-as-hero stories, and those I like the best. In this book, the hero is a wine merchant who has recently lost his wife. Sadness there but always grit. The plot is thick enough for some spine tingling, there is some horse stuff, and the hero is knowledgeable about horses, after all it's a Dick Francis story. In this case, the hero was born into a huge horse-passionate family and therefore knew much about them, even though his choice of career took a far different turn. Nonetheless, his family

knowledge comes in very handy. As always, the hero is very nice, very smart, very loyal to his principles, full of integrity, creative and intrepid.

Dick Francis is a favorite, and this one shocked me the first time I read it. So of course I had to read it again. The author always changes up the background and this one, based in the world of fine intoxicants, was very educational.

Always a good story from Francis.

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