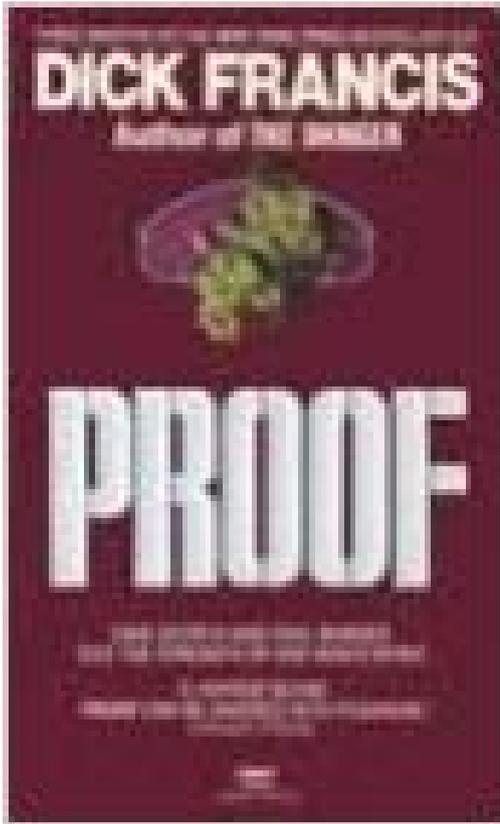


Proof by Dick Francis



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When a typically perfect party at wine merchant Tony Beach's is brutally crashed, he finds himself caught in the terrifying midst of a mystery that begins with sham scotch and counterfeit claret and escalates to hijacking and murder...



Reviews of the Proof by Dick Francis

Zugar

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.

Coiron

"As a detective what pleases me is proof... so what's proof?"

"If you mix a liquid with gunpowder and ignite it, and it burns with a steady blue flame, that's proof."

He looked faintly bemused.

"Proof of what?"

"Proof that the liquid is at least fifty percent alcohol."

Like all of Francis' titles - 'Proof' includes multiple meanings . . .

First to 'prove' the alcohol content.

And then to 'prove' the guilty of the crime.

Finally, more subtly, Beach to 'prove' his courage.

Why Beach driven to 'prove' himself?

"Not his father's son," was how the uncharitable put it.

Or more plainly, "Lacks the family guts."

"My father, a soldier, had won both the Distinguished Service Order and the Military Gold Cup, dashing as valiantly into steeplechase fences as he had into enemy territory. His bravery on all battlefields had been awe-inspiring, and he died from a broken neck on Sandown Park racecourse when I was eleven, and watching."

Just his famous father's legacy?

"My grandfather, a distant Titan who had finished second one year in the Grand National before covering himself with military glory in World War I. My grandfather's Victoria Cross lay beside my father's D.S.O. in the display case I had inherited. It was their dash, their flair, their daredevilment that they had not passed on."

"Are you going to grow up like your father, then?" had been said to me in friendly, expectant fashion countless times through my childhood, and it had only slowly dawned on everyone, as on me, that no, I wasn't."

So this heritage drives Beach to 'prove' his courage. Adds a lot of depth to this story.

Another theme - 'prove' that evil is chosen, not imposed . . .

"Do you ever try to find out what becomes of the people you catch... afterwards?"

"No, not often. On the whole they are vain, greedy, heartless and cunning. I don't care for them. One can feel sorry for them, but it's with their victims my sympathies normally lie."

"Not like the old joke," I said.

"What old joke?"

"About the man who fell among thieves, who beat him and robbed him and left him bleeding and unconscious in the gutter. And along came two sociologists who looked down upon him lying there and said, the one to the other, 'The man who did this needs our help.' "

Not the popular opinion. Conversation continues . . .

"Absolution, it had always seemed to me, was a fake. To err was human, to be easily forgiven was to be sentimentally set free to err again. To be repeatedly forgiven destroyed the soul."

So the villains are shown as freely choosing evil. Beach presented as freely choosing to fight and conquer the evil - even at extreme risk.

He 'proves' his worth to his heritage.

Concluding page . . .

Beach finds a long lost note written by his father . . .

I stared at the page, transfixed. It was a scrawl, a cri de coeur, hurried, barely punctuated, ending without a question mark. I knew my mother wouldn't have sent it, if she'd seen it. It too nearly destroyed the myth.

I felt nearer to him than ever before.

I felt his true son.

He had written ... at not quite my present age, he had written:

"The battle must be soon now. It is essential not to show fear to the men, but God, I fear Why can't I have the courage of my father?"

Francis ability to quickly draw interesting, vivid, even fascinating characters makes his work precious.

Some of his portraits stay with me for years. This book has many people so finely drawn, that it really adds to the drama. Not just a story, but human emotion and individual reactions.

Great!

Umor

A different character type from the usual one that was somehow involved in the horse racing business. This main character ran a liquor and wine store. He gets involved in trying to help combat a scam in which cheap wine and scotch were substituted for high quality wine and scotch. He is able to discern the nuances of especially the scotch. The wine was bottled as a brand from a French chateau that didn't exist.

Another excellent book by Dick Francis. It says a lot that his books, that were written many decades ago, are still timely and don't seem dated. Evidently though, commas, or the lack thereof, were not his forte. Obviously the editor, if there was one, didn't know when to use them either. These days, they aren't a priority in writing often either. Not that I am an expert.

In my opinion, avoid "The Edge," "Smokescreen," "Slay Ride," and "Knockdown."

Tamesya

My wife read this book when it was first published. As a scotch drinker and reader of mysteries, she gave it high marks then. After a discussion with a friend about scotch, in which she referenced Proof and expressed sorrow at having given her copy away years ago, I reordered it for her. She still gives it five stars as a source of information and as a mystery.

Little Devil

This novel is classic Dick Francis without the pervasive focus on horses and horse racing although that passion of the author will appear albeit more briefly than in his other novels. This novel has interesting characters, starts with action and moves quickly, and provides enough questions and interesting twists to keep a reader turning pages. If you wish to read a mystery that is fun, one that will teach you about wines and scotch whiskeys, and a little about horses, this is a book you will enjoy.

Gldasiy

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.

Dominator

I have the paperback version of Proof but wanted the kindle version. The kindle version is the same as the paperback which can't always be said for kindle versions. I have enjoyed all of Dick Francis' books and have read them over and over. While they all have horse racing in them they are not all horse racing. Proof involves proof in more ways than one. It is a great story.

This is one of favorite Dick Francis books. If you haven't read any of his work before, this is a great place to start. He has only one character that appears in more than book, so you don't have to read the novels in any particular order. This book also contains many interesting facts about the liquor industry, which I found very enjoyable.

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