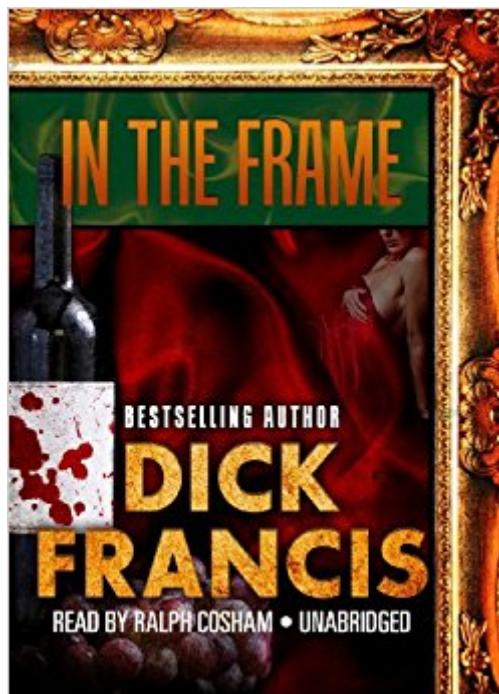


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## In The Frame



## Synopsis

[Read by Ralph Cosham] Charles Todd is an English painter well known and respected for his renderings of sleek and athletic horses at the race track. What he now faces at his cousin Donald's house is also art--the art of a perfectly brutal murderer. Donald's home has been burglarized and his wife, Regina, is lying on her back dead, her face the color of cream. Donald is shattered, shocked--and a prime suspect. When Todd discovers a connection between recent burglaries and people who bought horse paintings, the race-track lover finds himself in the biggest race of his life as he works to clear his cousin's name and trap a ruthless killer before the killer traps him.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Another Francis: A quick, exciting read, with characters it is fun to envy, but probably not fun to be in real life, the right number of plot twists and turns, and a shocking set-up. The hero, called Charles Neil Todd here, though really the same character as in other Francises, walks in on his cousin just after the latter has called the police to a burglary and then discovered his wife battered to death. In order to rescue him from the clutches of the police, who consider him a suspect, Todd tracks a curious coincidence in his cousin's recent past. Led to Australia, to the company of a welcoming old friend ~ and his not so welcoming, new wife ~ Todd investigates and, after some beatings and other frights, resolves the coincidences, solving the burglary and, probably, the murder. The racing is only incidentally important ~ much action occurs on a racecourse, around a big race, but could be anywhere ~ the main importance is that Todd and Jik, his friend, are painters ~ Todd of horses, mainly, Jik of living, lasting abstracts ~ which aids them in the investigation of art fraud, galleries,

copies and copiers. Just for the few hours a Francis takes to read, but completely for those hours, I am carried away into another world, other surroundings. And, as always with Francis, I come away wanting to know more about his particular interest ~ here the painting of Todd and Jik, but also Australia itself; can it be as fascinating as Francis paints it?

Dick Francis has written nearly 40 novels now, and *In the Frame* is in the top 7 or 8 as far as I'm concerned. The hero actually remains a bit of a cipher, but his friend Jik and his wife are two of Francis's really good characters. The information about painting and Australia is interesting, the ongoing joke about betting is pretty funny, and all kinds of images come to mind when I think back on this novel--a spot of breaking and entering while a famous race is detailed on the radio, Jik's wife and her purse, a handful of narrow escapes, the landscape down under. The mystery is good and the humor and wit are sharp. I'm glad to see that this is being reprinted again--it's one of Dick Francis's best novels, and a good place to start for those who have never read a Francis novel before.

I've never been to England and never seen a real steeplechase. As a former professional jockey, those are the basis of the Dick Francis collection. He delivers the goods in each and every book and this is the one that introduced my family to the master storyteller. I was recently disappointed when I went to my collection to reread this one and it was gone. So, I had to buy a new copy. I won't go into the details of the story, just let it be said that after reading this one, we needed more. It became an addiction and now my entire family has read every book (including the ones completed by son Felix after Dick passed) and we keep them all on the shelves in the office to revisit.

I enjoy this author's books - most especially his early ones -- the later ones seem to have more 'filler'. *In The Frame*, presents us with a mystery and takes us from England to Australia giving interesting tidbits on art and racing along with solving the mystery.

Dick Francis is one of those rare authors who can create a multitude of characters, changing characters from one novel to the next. This makes the stories stand-alone novels which can be read independently. That is a marked contrast to authors who write series of novels about the same character, a practice that often requires reading an entire series to understand the characters. The present novel is not exactly a whodunit because you can identify the guilty parties (or most of them) early in the game. The main plot is how to track them down and bring them to justice. The chase

runs from England to Australia to New Zealand then back to Australia. As usual with this author, there are horses and racing involved including, in this case, the Melbourne Cup. There is an interesting system for placing bets. The main character, Charles Todd, is an artist who paints oil paintings of horses. There is some interesting side information about the chemical deterioration of oil paints on older paintings, an area where most people are probably not well informed. There is also considerable information about counterfeit paintings. Let the buyer beware. The death of his cousin Donald's wife during a burglary sets Todd on the chase. The main story is fast action over a couple weeks.

I remember devouring most of the Dick Francis thrillers as they came out in the late 70's and beyond. I would get them from the library and then buy them in paperback. I recently revisited *The Frame* and was shocked to find it just as enjoyable as the first time. Although some elements had stayed with me (the grisly murder scene, the Australian jaunt and the unforgettable mounting tension of the Melbourne Cup), the story read as fresh and compelling as a new book. As always, one has to accept the time frame and not continually think that this or that would not happen today with Smartphones etc. In that sense, every book could be called *dated*, it's inevitable. For me, with a work of fiction so well written, total immersion in the world depicted is a given. Actually what I also find fascinating with Dick Francis is the subplots (the art world and Australia in this one, as well as the recurring horse racing theme), and I am in awe of the research that must have gone into it. It is no secret that the author's wife, Mary, collaborated in the writing of these incredibly tight stories and she even learnt to paint for this one. If you can take some graphically violent content, the fast pace, convincing characterization, excellent dialogue and inventive plot of this book will make a few hours go very fast.

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