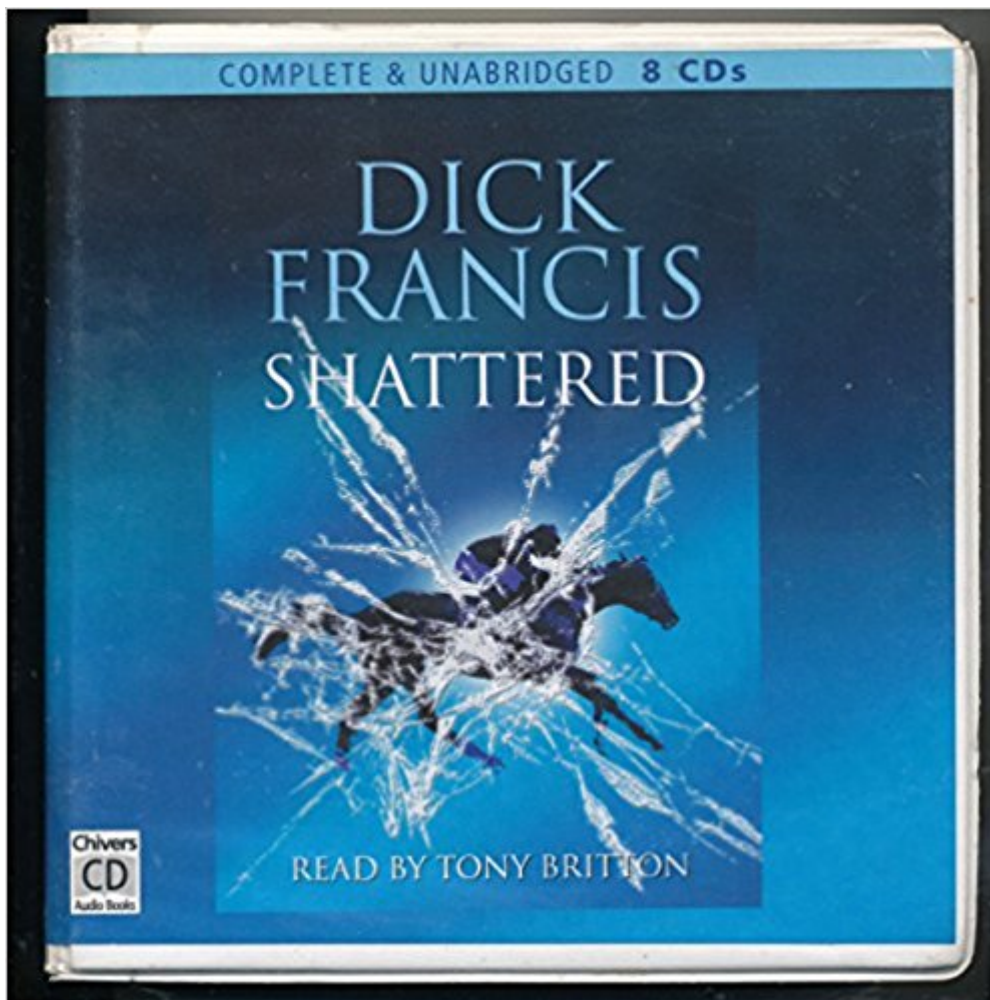


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Shattered: Complete & Unabridged



Synopsis

Logan embarks on a perilous search for a stolen videotape when his jockey friend Martin Stukely dies in a steeplechase. Logan is a glassblower long accustomed to the dangers of working with molten glass, but now he is faced with a series of threats not only to his livelihood but also his life.

--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After 41 novels, most writers run out of energy before the final gallop. But Dick Francis's latest thriller is as good as his earliest. Perhaps it's because this one is dedicated to the Queen Mother, who celebrated her centennial in 2000, and who, like her famously horsey daughter, shares Francis's passion for the races. Or maybe he's just found his stride again, after a few less-than-outstanding starts. Here he does one of his best tricks: lures you into a somewhat arcane area you might know little about and explicates it so brilliantly that you don't even realize how much you've learned (in this case, about glass blowing) while a mystery is unraveled, a crime is solved, and the hero gets the girl. This time the *mise en scÃ©ne* is the glass blowing studio owned by Gerard Logan, friend of the late Martin Stukely, a jockey who takes a fatal fall at the Cheltenham steeplechase during the last race of the century. Still mourning Martin, Gerard is savagely beaten, his workshop ransacked, and his life threatened by a gang of thugs. Investigating, Gerard discovers that the gang includes a domineering woman who's the daughter of Martin's valet and a scientist who's stolen valuable data from the laboratory that formerly employed him. They believe Gerard has possession of a videotape entrusted to him by Martin before his death and that the secrets on the

tape are worth Gerard's life. It's a good set up, with just enough of the usual horse lore and a pleasant love story involving Gerard and a pretty policewoman, neither of which overshadow the taut pacing and the well-worked-out plot. Francis's protagonists may be accidental heroes, but they're not antiheroes; they're usually eminently decent, likable men, and their sense of self is always interesting. Here's Gerard at home, in a break from the action, thinking about the new woman in his heart in a typical Francis love scene: I walked deliberately through all the rooms, thinking about Catherine, wondering both if she would like the place, and whether the house would accept her in return. Once in the past the house had delivered a definite thumbs-down, and once I'd been given an ultimatum to smother the pale plain walls with brightly patterned paper as a condition of marriage, but to the horror of her family I'd backed out of the whole deal, and, as a result, I now used the house as arbiter and had disentangled myself from a later young woman who'd begun to refer to her and me as "an item" and to reply to questions as "we." We think. No, we don't think. And, a few pages later, The speed of development of strong feeling for one another didn't seem to me to be shocking but natural, and if I thought about the future it unequivocally included Catherine Dodd. "If you want to cover the pale plain walls with brightly patterned paper, go ahead," I said. She laughed. "I like the peace of pale walls. Why should I want to change them?" It may be Francis's English reticence that keeps him, mercifully, from spoiling a good mystery with what other writers consider the obligatory sex scene, or it just may be the mastery of his form that few of his peers approach. In every page of this terrific new book, he's at the top of it. --Jane Adams --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Francis's latest may be one of his less memorable rides, but even at 80, the old master proves he can still go all out in the final stretch. The hero here is Gerard Logan, a dashing English bachelor who owns and operates his own glassblowing shop in a charming village in the Cotswolds, popular with other artisans and tourists. Logan's problem is that his good friend, jockey Martin Stukely, gave him a videotape shortly before dying in a fall during a steeplechase at Cheltenham racetrack. That videotape is now missing, stolen by a tall, bearded gent who made off with it while Logan's back was turned. Now, a crew of thugs wants the tape. They are led by the cruel, aptly named Rose Payne, a ruthless bookmaker who knows what's on the tapeAmedical breakthrough secrets worth millionsAand will do anything to get it. Logan tries to reason with Payne, saying he no longer has the video, and besides, he doesn't even know what it contains. But Rose won't give up. She and her crew beat up Logan on several occasions, viciously trying to break his wrists so he can no longer practice his craft. Logan, no slouch when it comes to payback, finally mounts an all-out defense that

includes not only physical reprisals, but also a crafty recovery of the missing object. Francis's 41st novel (To the Hilt; 10 Lb Penalty; etc.) lacks the pounding drive of his best efforts, and several elements of the plot are hard to swallow without cutting the author a lot of slack. Yet the spirited repartee, cleverly laid cues, infectiously likable characters and bang-up finale are all vintage Francis, and the fascinating glimpses the novel furnishes into the glassblowing trade are a bonus. 300,000 first printing. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

An excellent story and very well told by a person who, when much younger, was a fighter pilot fighting the Battle of Britain with the RAF. Following the war, he was a steeplechase Jockey, riding horses belonging to the Queen Mother. He was a champion jockey on several occasions. When he became "too old" for jump racing, he started writing a racing column for a newspaper. He then started writing books and he became one of my favorite authors. His books were all well researched and told in a very interesting and informative manner. His son, Felix, is now continuing his legacy and I think that he is doing a great job.

This has always been a favorite among his novels because of the glass shop and "fragility" of character and "transparency" evident in the racing world once one learns how to see what goes on behind the scenes. Logan is the typical hero (typical of a Francis hero) in that he is calm, sensible, sensitive, and effectively deals with crises without putting himself narcissistically at the center. I have read this book maybe four times and see something new each time.

To start, I should say that I've been reading Dick Francis for twenty-five years, give or take a couple. I think I've read each and every one of his forty or so books, and have read most two or three times. Francis started out writing strictly horsey mysteries--jockeys, trainers, stablehands, owners, then moved out further and further into other professional and personal worlds, all the while maintaining some link to British horse racing. The clump of books in the sixties, including Nerve, Enquiry, Dead Cert, and Forfeit really pulse with that best of the writer's creations, a world, a walk of life, fully realized. Clearly, Francis was writing from his own knowledge of a world he'd known intimately as a jockey in the fifties, and of which he was still a part. In the Seventies, Francis did a wise thing--with able research assistance from his wife (I apologize for blanking on her name at the moment--she has recently passed on, by the way), he linked other occupations (inventor, photographer, hostage negotiator, portrait painter, accountant) to racing in a seamless way that

made us feel we were now walking through two worlds. By the time he wrote *Reflex* in the early eighties, he had added intricate plot twists (always a feature, actually) and strong, complex character development and interaction (a bit more than his classic stoic loner who stood the test through so many of the first two decades of novels) to his repertoire. The Eighties books--*Reflex*, *Break-in*, *Bolt*, *The Danger*, *Hot Money*, *Banker*, *Twice Shy*, etc., are the work of an author maintaining his peak for a surprising length of time. But now we have seen the nineties and are into the two-thousands. *Second Wind* and *Shattered* represent the decline of a real craftsman. The villains have cruder, less plausible motivations--Francis was never one for subtle villains (except, maybe *Risk*), but now they are cartoon characters, full of obsession and menace. The technical writing skill is there but there are outlandish plots married to it (especially *Second Wind*!). The twists are less sophisticated, the romances too easy, the main character's inner conflict not as palpable. And the classic Francis ingredient, horses, is barely there. *Shattered* is not worth your money--but go back to the sixties and seventies and eighties, and feast on a master. Or buy *Field of Thirteen*, his collection of short stories, which show a more subtle witty side of Dick Francis--a wonderful showcase for some other talents he held back in his more mainstream, blockbuster work. For thirty-five years, Francis was a true craftsman, capable of real inspiration at times, and always a satisfying read. I'm afraid I can't say that any longer. Everyone slows down; I give him thanks for a wonderful body of work.

As usual, Dick Francis delivers an interesting, exciting story. His characters are interesting. Francis is always a good read.

Classic Dick Francis. However too typical to his writing. I miss his old time novels

I enjoyed this novel for the most part. As usual, I learned something about a topic I wasn't very familiar with, glass blowing in this case. The connections between the ancient necklace, video tapes, and stolen medical research was a bit of a stretch, but all in all, this was a good read.

I've read and enjoyed almost all of Mr. Francis' books but "*Shattered*" is perhaps his weakest effort. The plot was contrived and hard to follow and the motivations and actions of the main character were hard to understand. The writing style of this book was also different from his prior books. If Dick Francis' name wasn't on the book cover, I would have thought someone else wrote it.

I thought I had all the Dick Francis books being a long time fan, then I saw this and it did not ring any bells so bought it. It was a trip down memory lane, Dick at his best (sadly no more as he has recently passed away) He wrote this one in 1999 and published in 2000 - a story of a glassblower in England - has the typical Dick Francis association with Horse Racing - but only two scenes at racecourses - pure Francis in that he researches his topics with a thoroughness that other authors should copy. Great side characters and for this first time a female detective gets a major role. Love it. For all of you who have never read Dick Francis you are missing out. You do not have to be into horses just love the thrill of the chase!

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