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Hot Money



Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Recorded Books; Unabridged edition (1987)

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Customer Reviews

I rate HOT MONEY a masterpiece done up by a mastercraftsman whose high heyday spanned decades. When it published in 1987 I believed HOT MONEY to be Dick Francis' most ambitious thriller yet, teeming in its cast, engaging with its two lead characters, stunning in its complexity, and compulsive in its reading. Ian Pembroke, 33-year-old amateur jockey and assistant horse trainer, had been estranged from his father, Malcolm, for three bitter years. And yet Ian is the only person Malcolm thinks to trust when he becomes target to some unknown killer. The rift between them originated from Ian's vehement protestations three years back regarding Malcolm's intended new (and fifth) bride, Moira, she whom Ian labeled as a "rapacious bloodsucking tramp." A month ago, Moira was murdered (No worries, our lead, Ian, had an alibi). And, today, an unnerved Malcolm believes himself to be next to get bumped off. Malcolm Pembroke is easily the book's most compelling character. A gold arbitrageur of uncanny business instincts, he's earned the nickname "Midas" many times over in his field of work. Malcolm is a force of nature, a man of great daring and alarming impulses and breathtaking appetites. A close shave with death has colored his disposition, swaying him to spend and throw away vast amounts of his fortune, such flagrant expenditure subsequently sending his sprawling extended family into a tizzy - the three surviving ex-wives and their avaricious brood, the lot of them gone panicky over the state of their inheritance. There is an unwelcome attention to Malcolm, their nagging and picking away at him. Could Ian please play bodyguard? Could he play sleuth? Except that Malcolm and Ian's mending fences would prove to be the opposite of panacea to Malcolm's woes.

This was the first Dick Francis novel I ever read and luckily for me it is one of his best. It's the sort of book you will come back to many times over the years and it inspired me to go out and read just about every other novel he's written. (I haven't gotten to his non-fiction yet, but I will.) This novel is

enjoyable on multiple levels. There is a great mystery here. Malcolm Pembroke is the mega wealthy patriarch of a dysfunctional family that includes the children from five marriages, three ex-wives and a bunch of grandchildren. Wife number five was murdered in the middle of divorce proceedings. The police suspect Malcolm, but now that someone is trying to kill him, they will have to reconsider. The hero of the story is Malcolm's son, Ian, an amateur jockey and the product of his second marriage. Ian is about the only family member not-obsessed with getting his hands on his father's fortune. At the start of the story he is estranged from his father because of his opposition to Malcolm's fifth marriage. Strangely enough, Ian's willingness to stay away and "risk" his inheritance makes him the only person Malcolm feels he can trust when it appears someone is trying to send him to an early grave. This brings us to the second thoroughly enjoyable aspect of the story--Malcolm's children are all a bit crazy and it is tremendous fun, and ultimately quite heart warming, to follow Ian as he attempts to get to know them well enough to figure out who is trying to murder Malcolm. He gets to know their troubles and their strengths and makes it possible for the reader to really value them. Finally, it wouldn't be a Dick Francis novel if we didn't learn more about the world of racing. I find this utterly fascinating.

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