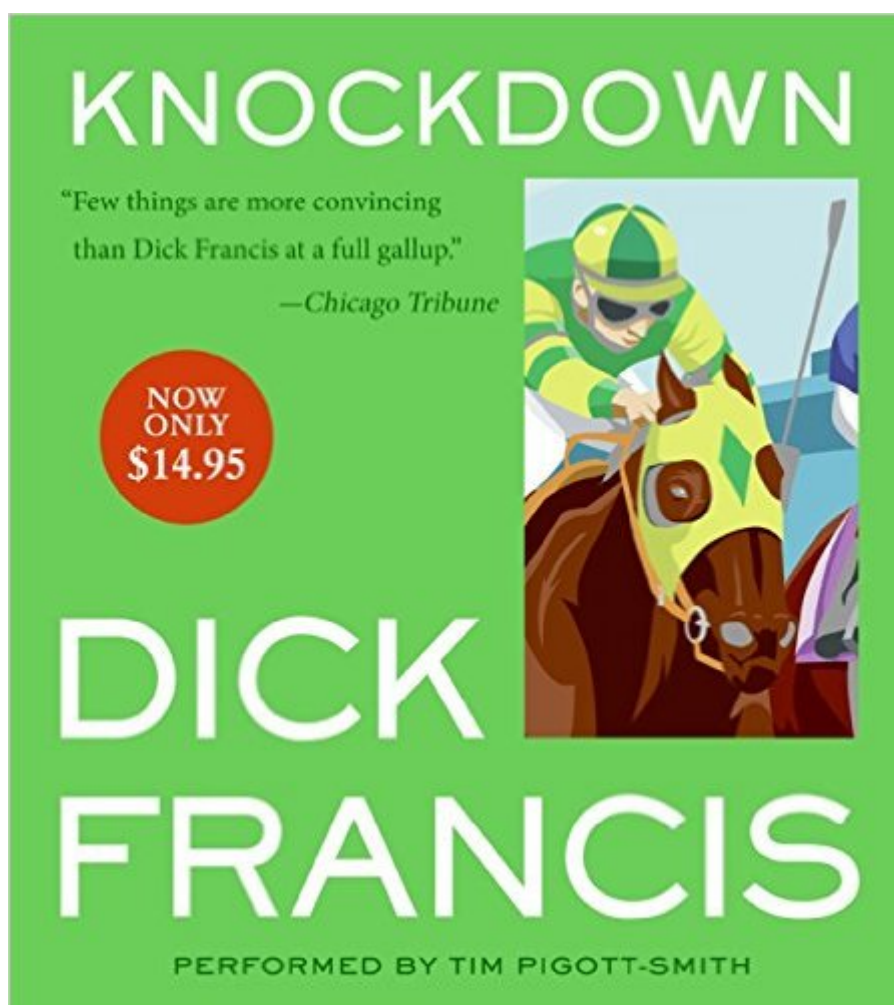


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Knockdown Low Price CD



Synopsis

For a generous commission, ex-prizewinning jockey Jonah Dereham reluctantly agrees to bid on a young steeplechaser on behalf of a wealthy American woman. But his life is thrust into danger immediately following the auction, when he receives a blow to the head by two thugs demanding ownership of the horse. Unfortunately, that's just the beginningâ and now Jonah must figure out the high-stakes game being played...before he becomes its next casualty.

Book Information

Audio CD: 3 pages

Publisher: HarperAudio; Abridged edition (September 9, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 006149223X

ISBN-13: 978-0061492235

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 5.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

A gripping start is hobbled by thin exposition, mono-dimensional villains, and a weak ending. Dick Francis fans will enjoy his steady narrative voice, but "Knockdown" struggles with the business of delivering what Francis did best - a horse-racing mystery. Jonah Dereham has a problem. He has chosen a poor line of business for being honest. As a middleman in purchasing thoroughbred horses, he deals with shady people who want him to play by their rules or get out of the game. Even though he doesn't inform on his colleagues, Jonah finds himself not just being pressured but physically attacked regarding his refusal to employ the same tricks others use so profitably. "People who bought racehorses could be more easily conned than any old lady parting with her savings to a kind young man on a doorstep," Francis has Jonah tell us in his first-person narration. "People who bought racehorses were buying dreams, and would follow anyone who said he knew the way to the end of the rainbow. A few had found the crock of gold there, and the rest had never given up looking." As a bloodstock agent - "bloodsucking agents, more like" in the words of one victim of an agent's chicanery - Jonah has a privileged view into how racehorses are sold. For long stretches, it

seems "Knockdown," published in 1974 in the middle of Francis' second decade as a novelist, is meant more as a warning - for how easily bad business practices are disguised by means of guile and complicity - than as a mystery. This idea has some promise, but as the story develops, the cheating angle becomes a key weakness. In short, to make Francis's point, the bad agents operate too obviously and clumsily to be believed.

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