Penzler Pick, September 2001: Frederick Forsyth is known as the bestselling author of classic thrillers such as The Day of the Jackal and The Odessa File, among others. He is far less known as one of our premier short story writers (even though he won an Edgar for There Are No Snakes in Ireland), so it is a pleasure to have a new book from this superb storyteller. The Veteran tells the story of an incident in one of the seedier parts of London. A Ugandan shopkeeper witnesses the mugging of a middle-aged man by two thugs. The shopkeeper has a perfect view of the crime so, when the man dies of his injuries, it would appear that the two thugs, now up on a murder charge, will be convicted. But justice does not always come easily, and it comes in many guises. The Art of the Matter recounts an ingenious and deliciously satisfying art scam. The twists and turns are breathlessly entertaining and just when you think its over, theres one more way for the bad guys to get their comeuppance. The Miracle tells the story of an American couple in Siena on their way to a festival. They are stopped when a stranger tells them the story of the courtyard in which they stand. Some very wonderful things happened right there during the Second World War. Will the couple get to the festival? Will they care? The Citizen is a heart-stopping suspense story set on board a flight from Bangkok to London. We get to know the flight crew and some of the passengers very well, and they are not all who they might appear to be. And Whispering Wind, the longest story in the book, is a very ambitious piece about the Battle of Little Big Horn and what came later for several of the participants. Each of the stories in this volume is Forsyth in top form. The writing exceeds expectations, the stories are never less than compelling, and the suspense in each of them is nonstop.

--Otto Penzler

My Personal Review:
What do a young art dealer who was cheated by his boss, an unknown murdered man in a British public housing project, an American couple in Sienna at the Palio (a race going back to the 13th century), a family returning from vacation in Thailand, and the only man to survive Custers
last stand all have in common? When Frederick Forsyth writes about them, you will find yourself following every word and turning every page. This is an absolutely remarkable collection of short stories running from the very realistic through the surprising to the supernatural. His portrait of a saint in Sienna is brilliant and compelling, and the outcome of the story is stunning and memorable. He provides a very satisfying explanation of who a murdered unknown person really is and how his identity affects the thugs who killed him. The life of the only scout to survive Custers last stand is told so gripingly that I could not stop from finishing it. Forsyth simply has the wonderful knack for writing fiction so it seems real, personal, and meaningful. His writing carries you into a world of possibilities and will stretch your own thinking and enrich your understanding of lifes possibilities.

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