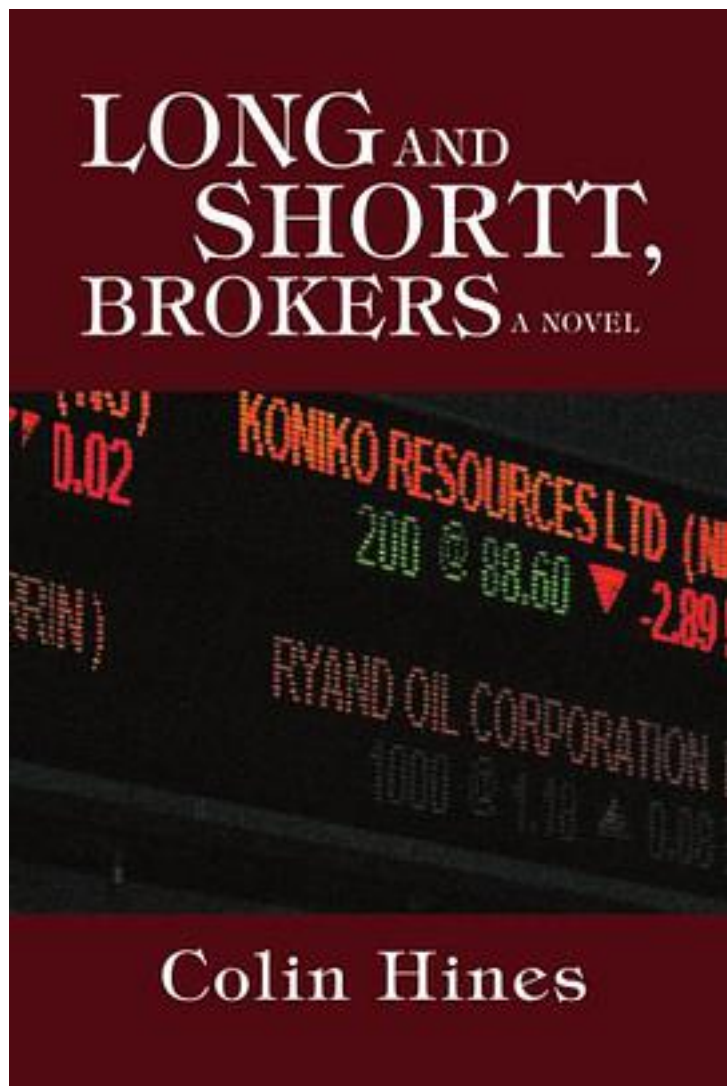


Long and Shortt, Brokers



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出版者:

出版时间:2008-3

装帧:

isbn:9780595492497

Once upon a time, before people's ears grew cell-phones and their hands grew blackberries, before stock-market orders were filled electronically in less than a second or the commission was waived, ordinary mortals who wished to dabble in stocks or options did so by phoning a real person, commonly (but erroneously) known as a "broker," who wrote the requested order on a paper form and relayed it via an "order desk" to a real "floor trader," who arranged with a human counterpart to fill the order, if possible. In "Long and Shortt, Brokers," we can enter and relive that quaint era, being guided by Laureen Fortune, the breezy nymphomaniac who recently entered the world's fictional literature through "The Croesus Club," and who here seeks a new life in the brokering business and must learn what retail brokering is all about. Though the regimens she pursues are now largely outdated, the corporate culture she finds is not. If the scams and subterfuges she uncovers have changed by now (and many have not), the underlying motivations and attitudes of the participants, from novice client to senior management, reveal a warren of human frailties that echo through the ages and are with us still.

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