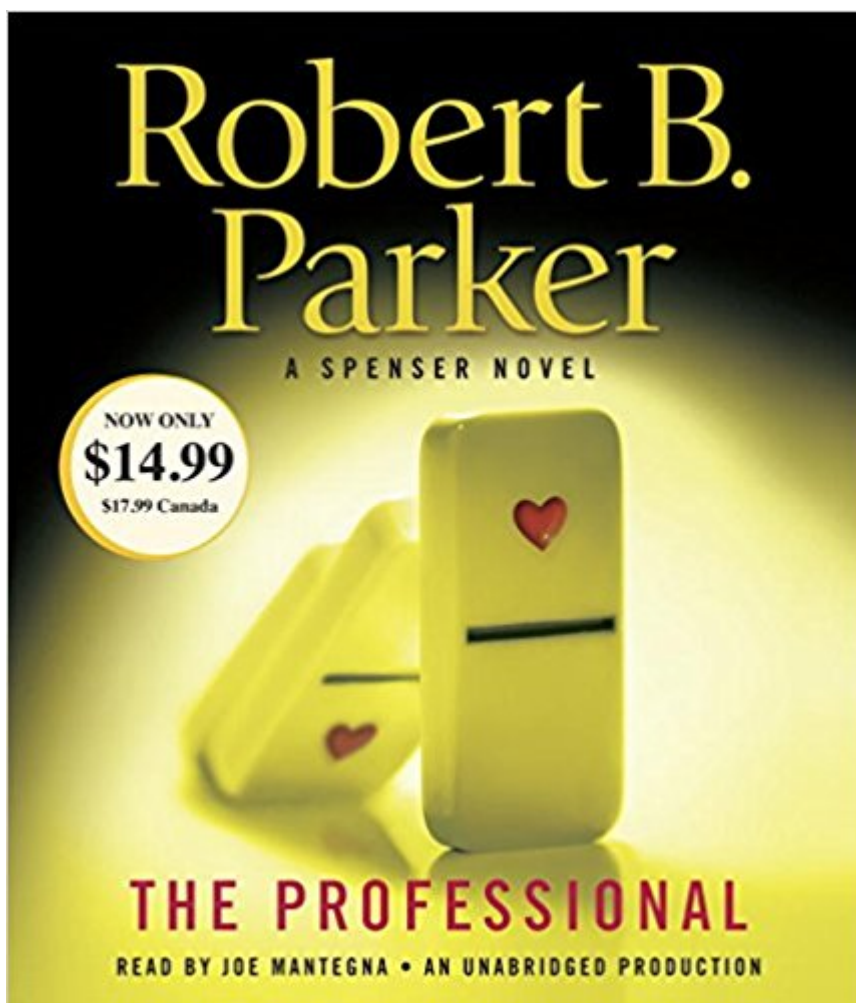




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The Professional: A Spenser Novel



Synopsis

A knock on Spenser's office door can only mean one thing: a new case. This time the visitor is a local lawyer with an interesting story. Elizabeth Shaw specializes in wills and trusts at the Boston law firm of Shaw & Cartwright, and over the years she's developed a friendship with wives of very wealthy men. However, these rich wives have a mutual secret: they've all had an affair with a man named Gary Eisenhower- and now he's blackmailing them for money. Shaw hires Spenser to make Eisenhower "cease and desist," so to speak, but when women start turning up dead, Spenser's assignment goes from blackmail to murder. As matters become more complicated, Spenser's longtime love, Susan, begins offering some input by analyzing Eisenhower's behavior patterns in hopes of opening up a new avenue of investigation. It seems that not all of Gary's women are rich. So if he's not using them for blackmail, then what is his purpose? Spenser switches tactics to focus on the husbands, only to find that innocence and guilt may be two sides of the same coin.

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Customer Reviews

Sue Grafton and Robert B. Parker: Author One-on-One In this exclusive, we brought together blockbuster authors Sue Grafton and Robert B. Parker and asked them to interview each other. Sue Grafton is the New York Times-bestselling author of the beloved Kinsey Millhone mystery series, which continues to delight millions of readers across the globe. Read on to see Sue Grafton's questions for Robert B. Parker, or turn the tables to see what Parker asked Grafton. Grafton: During your career, you've generally worked as a solo writer. Aside from your collaboration

with Raymond Chandler (quite dead), how did you enjoy the experience of writing with your wife, Joan? I notice a long break between *Three Weeks in Spring*, which was published in 1978, and *A Year at the Races*, which was published in 1990. Parker: Joan is an idea person more than a writer. She has done a lot of uncredited thinking for me. But *Three Weeks in Spring*, about her first bout with breast cancer, was a special case. And *A Year at the Races*, also nonfiction, was about our initiation into the world of thoroughbred racing. I have found it wise for me to write and Joan to think (egad, what if it were the other way?), but I have also found it wise not to speak for her. I liked working with her. In fact, I like pretty much everything with her. Grafton: I notice in your bibliography that you wrote a nonfiction book called *Parker on Writing*. I'd be interested in reading it, but I decided I couldn't afford the \$499.99 the book is selling for online. How do you feel about a reprint? (P.S. This is not a sly hint that you should send me a copy—) Parker: *Parker on Writing* is a collection of random items loosely about writing that Herb Yellin at Lord John Press collected into a finely manufactured limited edition. Herb is a friend, and given what he paid, I can convincingly say it was affection not money that captured me. I feel fine about a reprint—If I have an extra I will send you one, but I'll have to look—it's quite possible that I don't. Grafton: I'm curious about your experience in writing *Chasing the Bear: A Young Spenser Novel*. What prompted you to write about Spenser's early life? Did you learn things about him you hadn't known before? Parker: My publisher, agent, and wife all wanted me to try a YA novel. I did three, culminating, at my publisher's request, with *Chasing the Bear*. Since I knew a great deal about Spenser's adulthood, it was mostly a matter of jacking up the adulthood and sliding a consistent childhood under it. YA novels are hard because you know a great deal that you can't use. Grafton: I saw the movie *Appaloosa* last night on DVD, and while I haven't had a chance to read the novel and study the two side by side, I got the impression that the movie was close to what you had in mind. Will you write about Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch again? You did seem to leave the door open to that possibility. Parker: I've written two sequels to *Appaloosa* (*Resolution* and *Brimstone*) and am finishing up a third (*Blue-Eyed Devil*). Ed Harris did a wonderful job, I thought, with the movie. It is as close as it could possibly be to the book, and those parts that had to be added are hard for me to tell from my own stuff. Harris is genius, as is Viggo [Mortensen]—they nailed the characters and the relationship. You can also take Ed Harris's word—in your own adventures in Southern California you may have noticed how infrequent that is. Incidentally, Bragg's lawyer in the courtroom scene was played by the great Daniel T. Parker. Grafton: How do you spend your time when you're not writing? Hobbies? Leisure activities? I'm not very good at having fun, but I'm hoping you are. Please advise. Parker: My friend John Marsh once remarked, "I hate fun." I concur. Mostly, I

just live my life, which turns out to be fun. I work out, box with a trainer, watch ball games, go out to dinner with Joan. You've met Joan. We've been married fifty-three years. Now that's fun.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Bestseller Parker makes producing snappy banter look easy in his 37th Spenser novel (after *Rough Weather*). He also manages to draw new readers into the Boston PI's major personal relationships with love interest Susan Silverman and friend/ally/bodyguard Hawk without shoveling on the backstory. Spenser agrees to help a quartet of married women fend off extortion demands from stud Gary Eisenhower, with whom each has had an affair. Meanwhile, the husband of one of the women under blackmail threat hires some thugs to deal with the matter. The action takes its time getting to a dead body, but, as usual, the smooth, entertaining prose more than compensates for any deficiencies of plot. The absence of major personal developments for Spenser or his associates marks this as a less memorable entry than others in this iconic series, but it remains a solid, enjoyable contemporary detective novel. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

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I have always loved Robert B. Parker's writing, and in particular the Spenser series, so I'm pretty much a fan of his books before I open the covers. This is not his strongest book (I like "Hugger Mugger" and "Potshot" off the top of my head), but it's very good and it's interesting in that I don't agree with Spenser's assessment of whether the lead villain is doing right or wrong: Spenser doesn't seem to see the harm in some of what this guy is doing which is surprising since Spenser was once a cop and a crime is a crime is a crime. Still, the writing is typically excellent and Parker keeps the pages turning despite the fact that not a lot happens in each chapter. And that's the mark, I think, of a first-class writer: he or she can keep the writing moving forward at a good clip without a ton of action or violence. I found that this book just breezed along and I think that it shows just how polished and elegant (and sparse) Parker's writing is when he's completely on his game. I loved the book despite some of my philosophical differences with Spenser and I'm in awe of Parker's writing genius. This may seem like a pretty simple style of writing, but being a writer myself, I can tell you that simplicity is the toughest thing to create. When you use fewer words, each word you use matters more. A great book, a great read, Parker is the best.

Books fall into many categories, one of which is crime. This specialty is further broken down into

many sub-species, a few of which are police procedurals, who-done-its, private investigators and others. Robert B. Parker has chosen the private investigator for one of his series of novels, in particular, Spenser, further differentiated into the hard-boiled investigator type. To further differentiate it, Spenser is a former cop who maintains contact and friendship with officials from the city and state police and the FBI. These officials are so impressed with Spenser they cooperate with him in his investigations, sometimes even withdrawing from areas in which Spenser is interested and letting him proceed on his own, maybe even encouraging him since he can do things they are constitutionally forbidden from doing so a solution can be found. The private investigator is often paid by some other character in the book to do some work for him beyond what the official police would do. "The Professional" starts out in this way. Spenser is contacted by a lawyer who wants to hire him to investigate a man who has seduced a group of married women and is now blackmailing them to keep from telling their husbands about his successful seductions. Threats and physical violence do not seem to be successful and publicly revealing their affairs is the last thing these women want for then their husbands would know. Spenser meets the seducer and likes the man. Four women are involved, none of whom can go to the cops and reveal her affair for then the others would be revealed. This seducer has already been jailed for his blackmail in another case that Spenser tracks down and thus shows his willingness to do so again if necessary. Spenser pulls in some favors, or tries to and finally manages to get Gary Eisenhower to decide not to have sex with the gang Spenser is representing, mainly by appealing to Gary's sense of ethics. This is only one of a series of names he uses, Spenser learns a lot of them. And then the killings start. When a book is written with a private investigator, its ending is indeterminate since what the P. I. is after determines what the ending should be. Now with the murders Spenser wants more than just the blackmailing to end, he wants the murders to stop and maybe more, have the murderer caught. Parker pulls a switch again with this book, do the police ever know who the murderer was and how it all stopped? I do not wish to spoil the book, read it and form your own opinion. The book is interesting enough.

Review of the Audio book version
Inspid secondary characters plus silly uninteresting plot equals a tedious story. No tension, no suspense by the last disc I just wanted it to be over. The characters were so unappealing that I couldn't care less what happened to them. And speaking of characters, perfect characters can be boring characters. Take for example, Susan Silverman. She has to be, one of the most boring fictional characters one would have the displeasure to come across. And if anyone says or even thinks 'Queen Bee Syndrome', I will scream at the top of my lungs. I have read other books, where an author can extol the virtues of a woman without the reader retching. It's also

possible that the perfection of Susan stood out even more when compared to the silly and downright stupidity of every other character especially the females (save one) who were nothing more than caricatures. Even though I enjoy the narrator's acting talents and I've read that he was the favorite of the author to portray the part of Spenser my enjoyment did not extend to this narration. I found while listening to him the image of a tough, masculine, raw sexiness male fly out the window at hypersonic speeds. His portrayal of Hawk was awful. Even before the TV series, I pictured Hawk as a contradiction with a voice that could melt a person's soul, a sharp intelligent mind, explosive, tender, cold and warm. However, the way the narrator portrayed Hawk in this reading was awful. I don't know if he was going for a sarcastic tone but it fell so flat it was insulting. And the narration brought out what I felt was the truly annoying. Every piece of dialogue started or ended with 'he said' or 'she said', over and over. Now if the dialogue consisted of more than two words it may have worked in a printed format but as an audio book, it flows no better than a second grade reader. My advice read this book yourself. Do NOT buy or listen to the audio version it will only take away from an already mediocre book not add to it.

Next to last in the Robert Parker Spenser series. Constantly concise, droll and engaging. Well worth reading, especially the relationships he describes.

Can't beat a Spenser story, keeps you going to every page to see what happens next, all kinds of action and romance

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