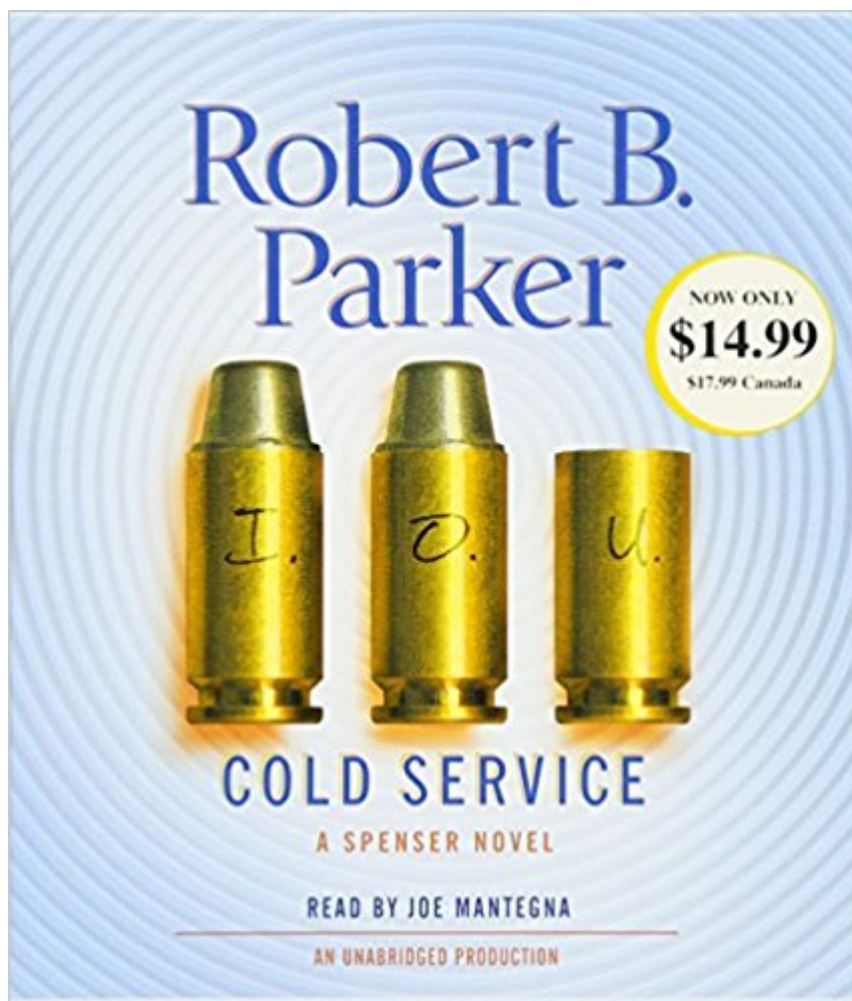


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# Cold Service (Spenser)



## Synopsis

Spenser's gift to the Boston crime scene (Kirkus Reviews) and his redoubtable sidekick, Hawk, seek revenge on a cold-blooded killer. When his closest ally, Hawk, is brutally injured and left for dead while protecting bookie Luther Gillespie, Spenser embarks on an epic journey to rehabilitate his friend in body and soul. Hawk, always proud, has never been dependent on anyone. Now he is forced to make connections: to accept the medical technology that will ensure his physical recovery, and to reinforce the tenuous emotional ties he has to those around him. Spenser quickly learns that the Ukrainian mob is responsible for the hit, but finding a way into their tightly knit circle is not nearly so simple. Their total control of the town of Marshport, from the bodegas to the police force to the mayor's office, isn't just a sign of rampant corruption; it's a form of arrogance that only serves to ignite Hawk's desire to get even. As the body count rises, Spenser is forced to employ some questionable techniques and even more questionable hired guns, while redefining his friendship with Hawk in the name of vengeance.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The newest entry in Parker's long-running Spenser series finds the detective's brother-in-arms, Hawk, struggling back to physical and soulful health after being shot. The novel, which chronicles his and Spenser's attempts to hunt down the Ukrainian mobsters who wounded Hawk and murdered Hawk's client, comprises brittle, often funny conversations, too many ruminations on male

pride and a few brief, smartly rendered scenes of violence. But its overall effectiveness is severely tested by narrator and veteran actor Mantegna (Godfather III, Bugsy), who's known for his spot-on portrayals of antiheroes and silky raffish types. Conspicuously absent from the actor's credits, listed on the back of the audio, is any mention of his television incarnation of Spenser, possibly because he didn't fit the role. He was too slight and young for the weight-lifting, middle-aged detective and, more significant here, he doesn't sound like Spenser. His voice is soft, with the hint of an accent that's nowhere in the vicinity of Spenser's Boston. And for some reason, the usually shrewd actor overplays Spenser's irony and sarcasm to the point of parody. When a shady government official refers to a character as "a professional," Spenser's reply is "Aren't we all?" This works on paper, but Mantegna treats the line to a singsong rendition that not only makes the sleuth sound like a hipster wannabe, it stops the action cold. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** With Parker's Spenser series now numbering more than 30 installments, it's no surprise that some of the fast-talking, gourmet-cooking sleuth's fans tend to drop in only now and then to see what's new. Now is definitely the time for a drop-in. The series' best entries all feature a liberal dose of Hawk, Spenser's soft-speaking, big stick-carrying soul mate, and this one is a veritable Hawk showcase. As the tale begins, the heretofore-indestructible Hawk is recovering from a near-death experience: shot in the back while protecting a bookie from the upstart Ukrainian Mob. It's payback time, of course, but not before Hawk nurses himself back to psychic and physical health. Meanwhile, Spenser does a bit of sleuthing on his own, determining that Hawk's assailants are the tip of a Ukrainian iceberg that has stuck its tentacles deep into Boston's underworld. Payback, Hawk style, requires eliminating not just the shooters but also the entire Mob. The action comes in a rush near the end, but the satisfying part here is watching Parker dig deeply into the remarkable friendship between two tough guys constitutionally averse to the whole touchy-feely side of life. "Ain't really your fight," Hawk says. "Yeah," Spenser replies, "It is." "Hawk was quiet for a time, then nodded his head. 'Yeah,' he said. 'It is.'" When he's on his game--and he's on it here--Parker is capable of packing a Hemingway punch into a few brief words and the occasional grunt. Bill Ott Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Parker's Spenser books are a joy, not merely because of how well-plotted and suspenseful they

are, but because of how well the relationships are cast and drawn. Since his African-American partner Hawk features so prominently in this one, and is such a compelling figure in his own right, this is a can't miss for all Spenser fans even though the action becomes a bit outlandish near the end. Never mind, like all great books, its not really about the events and actions about the characters and relationships. Suspension of disbelief and all that. . .

For a story that starts out with such a basic, simple premise, it ends up as quite a complex tale. Hawk is gunned down and left for dead by some thugs from the Ukraine after he is hired to protect a neighbourhood bookie. Naturally the two life long friends can't fight fate and decide literally at the end of chapter one that vengeance (and revenge) will be theirs. By book's end we are reminded of many, many things, not the least of which is by how much the world has changed since September Eleven. This novel is essentially about Hawk. We learn more about the great unknown Man than we ever have and we are reminded, too, of how alike he is to our man Spense. By book's end the baddies have got what was coming to them and we turn the final pages in a state of joy and a little sadness as we come to realise the tale is about to finish. I must admit to not being completely sure how the story ended romantically for Hawk, but there was no shadow of a doubt how it ended for Susan and Spenser. COLD SERVICE reads as if you were looking at a jigsaw puzzle backwards. That is, you saw how it was meant to turn out, but you kept asking yourself, "how did they do it? how on earth, did they do it?". The answer, of course, lies with the master. It's magic. Another classically original tale featuring one of the modern day wonders of detective fiction. But this time with a different focus.

...but better than almost anything else. After 40 some years, the words still fly off the page whenever I read a Spenser novel. I don't even have to read--the words just make their way into my head. One reviewer complained about Parker marching all of the secondary Spenser characters through this book--there were a few he left out, but how many authors give you so many new characters that are worth repeating? Parker has created his own Universe, in which Spenser and company change (he is drinking Walker Blue Label in this one!) but never age. This year's Spenser is as virile and indestructible as the one in Catskill Eagle. The plot in this one is a repeat of one he has used before--Hawk and Spenser set out to avenge someone, encounter many bad people, and shoot them to make the world a better place. Along the way, Spenser cooks, eats and drinks in great detail. This book involves Susan rather extensively, and is, perhaps a bit chattier than some we have read in the past, but it deserves to be read. It is mostly a side trip in the Spenser journey, adding

little we haven't seen before to the ongoing saga, but it is worth a read.

Spenser is so well-written you have to keep turning the pages to find out what happens next, and it does

there has not been a Spenser novel written that I haven't enjoyed and this was no different. I was so sorry to hear that Robert Parker had died, mostly because I knew that it meant no more Spenser books, now I hear they are being written by someone else, haven't had a chance to read one yet but I will

One more winner from Robert B. Parker. He will live forever in our memories as "The Best There Ever Was".

In a twist, Hawk is the center of this story - he's been shot, and Spenser must help him get better and get revenge. There's the piper to pay not only for Hawk's injuries, but also for the family that was destroyed in the process. There's a ton of talk in here about why Hawk is the way he is, why Spenser is the way he is, and how the two women in the story learn to deal with it. I admit that I found this story a bit light. I really do enjoy philosophical discussions, and there were several bits of wit that had me laugh out loud. I love the stuff like Hawk saying "Oui" when Spenser quotes the "All for One and One for All". I also loved it when Quirk was talking about the Ukes and said "He speaks English pretty good." Still, for all that this book claimed to be delving into the psyche of the main characters, it was pretty shallow. There was a lot of pseudo talk, like saying Hawk is the way he is because he's Hawk. Jeez, thanks. Spenser is a lot like Hawk, but different. Hmmmmmm. The Spenser-Hawk-Vinnie situation is great when it just "is". When you try to rationalize what it is by saying things like "it is what it is", then it gets silly. In the meantime, Spenser says "My identity ... is me and Susan". So much for him being an individual. He later says that during his shooting that he was afraid of the grey man - afraid of dying, and of not seeing Susan again. There's a lot of talk about Hawk only needing Hawk, Hawk wanting to be alone. It's OK apparently to need Spenser. There's a bit of resistance on Hawk's part to needing Vinnie but eventually he does ask for Vinnie to join them. Hawk also asks Spenser to talk to Hawk's girlfriend, but Hawk refuses to do it himself. There are several scenes of the Hawk-girlfriend crying interactions. It's fine to say Hawk is afraid, that Hawk needs to do this, but surely a mature Hawk who can talk to anybody can speak intelligently to his own girlfriend, instead of either sending Spenser or just walking out ... It was nice

to see Hawk caring for the shopkeeper and his wife, and looking to fund a kid's savings account. But Spenser trots along with the serial assassination plan without more than a quote or two. Talk's cheap, they say, and this story seemed to have an awful lot of talk in it and very little substance to the action. I also found it odd that Hawk only took maybe 6 months to heal to full strength (counting from near-Thanksgiving to early March as his true healing time) while they comment that it took Spenser a year. Surely these two men are in equally good shape, and were equally wounded ... I found it a bit annoying that the "worlds were crossing" with Tony's lesbian wife showing up here, as mentioned in one of the other series. If you hadn't read that other series, you'd be missing out on a lot of backstory here. I do enjoy these stories. But I've been reading the 'top selling books of all time' recently and when I read those, it often takes me 6 or more hours to finish a book. I finished re-reading this one in under 2 hours. It really does seem to indicate that Parker COULD write a much longer, more in depth book - if he wasn't just cranking out one a year to keep the pattern going. It makes you wonder what a Spenser book could be like if he wrote a story as if it was going to be the only one that really mattered, no matter how long it took.

Classic Spenser, #32

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