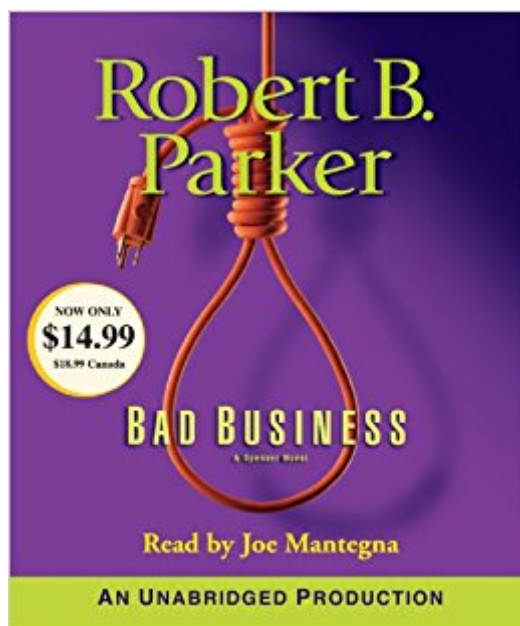


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Bad Business (Spenser)



Synopsis

When Marlene Cowley hires Spenser to see if her husband Trent is cheating on her, he encounters more than he bargained for: not only does he find a two-timing husband, but a second investigator as well, hired by the husband to look after his wife. As a result of their joint efforts, Spenser soon finds himself investigating both individual depravity and corporate corruption. It seems the folks in the Cowleys' circle have become enamored of radio talk show host Darrin O'Mara, whose views on Courtly Love are clouding some already fuzzy minds with the notion of cross-connubial relationships. O'Mara's brand of sex therapy is unconventional at best, unlawful--and deadly--at worst. Then a murder at Kinerger, where Trent Cowley is CFO, sends Spenser in yet another direction. Apparently, the unfettered pursuit of profit has a price. With razor sharp characterizations and finely honed prose, this is Parker at the height of his powers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Spenser #31 finds the veteran Boston PI tackling corporate crime in a routine yet absorbing outing. As usual, Spenser enters the case at an angle, this time because he's hired by one Marlene Rowley to prove that her husband Trent, CFO of energy firm Kinerger, is cheating on her. Before long the PI learns that marital cheating is all the rage among Kinerger's players, with the hanky-panky orchestrated by radio personality Darrin O'Mara, who runs popular sex seminars on the side. Maybe all that cheating explains why Spenser keeps running into other PIs hired by Kinerger folk, but it doesn't point to why Trent is found shot dead at Kinerger headquarters. Spenser links Kinerger's slick

founder/CEO to the sex ring and blackmails him to gain access to Kinergy's records, unveiling a pattern of accounting deceptions that reveal a company about to go under. There's less violence than usual in this Spenser novel but more detecting, which may explain why there's little of the PI's tough sidekick Hawk but much of his psychologist girlfriend Susan, which may not please the many Spenser fans who grew tired years ago of the love banter between the soul mates. The novel ends with suspects crowded into a room to be questioned by Spenser, a classic yet tired climax that is emblematic of the tale: Parker is treading water here, albeit with some flair and a good deal of humor. One suspects that his heart belongs not to this story but to his other book due out this year, in May, the highly anticipated Jackie Robinson novel *Double Play*. 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.

Parker, declared a Grand Master in 2002 by the Mystery Writers of America, delivers another combination of wry satire and sly action in his thirty-first mystery starring Spenser, the Boston private eye. This time he employs to devastating effect one of his signature devices--an observation on how someone dresses or walks into a room, or a few lines of dialogue between the victim and his hero--to fillet the greed and arrogance of corporate types. At novel's outset, Parker indulges in Keystone Kops comedy played out by private eyes. A distraught wife hires him to tail her husband. Surveillance turns complex and comic when Spenser finds that the husband is having his wife watched; an outside party is having both husband and wife watched; and Spenser himself is being tailed. Spenser is soon being watched by the Boston PD, since he is sitting in the lobby when the husband he's following is shot to death in his office. The action takes a more serious turn here, as Spenser is hired by the energy-selling corporation's CEO to investigate the murder. Of course, Spenser uncovers big-time corruption. Longtime love and psychologist Susan Silverman figures in as a commentator on the action. Spenser sidekick Hawk seems more like a vestigial remnant from other books than a realistic character here. Spenser swaggers a bit too much, and the dialogue can get one-two punch formulaic, but even so, Parker still runs at the front of the private-eye pack. Connie Fletcher Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Definitely not a light read. You really have to pay attention when you're reading this novel. Mr. Parker has intertwined several characters, and at times, I had a bit of trouble keeping track of them. Sometimes he referred to them by their given first name, other times by their sir names. If you aren't

paying full attention when they are first introduced into the story, you might find yourself going back to find out which character Mr. Parker was referring to at this time in the story. The storyline is intriguing, although a bit complicated at times; the writing is tight, and the characters multi-dimensional. I give this book three stars only because of what I said earlier about keeping the characters straight in my head. You as a reader may have this problem, also.

It is hard to conceive of a bad Parker novel. By now his skills are so honed, his characters so familiar, his dialogue so effortless, his sense of place so assured and his plots so polished that he is the safest buy in crime fiction. This is good, average Parker, with very deft depiction of the accounting scams motivating the crime. As others have noted, the Enron parallels are explicit, there is too much Susan and too little action. Still, we buy the books and enjoy them. We all continue to wonder, however, what Parker could do if he really put his mind to it, sent Susan and Pearl, incommunicado, to the farthest reaches of the globe, and focused on Hawk and Vinnie in a good old fashioned bloodfest. That might be his gift to his faithful readers for enduring the kissy face, dainty eating, cutesy-poo talk and dog slobber all these years.

When the distressed wife of a successful businessman comes to our man Spenser to find proof of her husband's infidelity, the last thing he expects to find is another private investigator hired to shadow his new employer. It turns out that this literary epigrammatism is only the tip of the iceberg in this unique mystery from the modern master of the whodunit. The trademark witticisms and psychoanalysis of the baddies are still to be found aplenty by the reader, but Hawk is conspicuous by his absence. Possibly this is due to the fact that the threat of danger to Spenser in this story is minimal. I can't call BAD BUSINESS the quintessential Spenser novel. To me, the quintessential Spenser novel is more than "just another outstanding crime novel by the master of the genre at the peak of his powers". It would be a sample of world class crime fiction that has evolved into literature so proud and so grand that it is worthy of the Nobel prize. Examples of this would be WALKING SHADOW, SCHOOL DAYS and even the very untypical and out-of-genre JUDAS GOAT. BAD BUSINESS is good. In fact, it is very good but it is simply not in the same league as the forementioned titles. But I still give it four stars. Just because.

Too many smart alex answers, It is cute initially but becomes tiresome after a while. Almost every answer or comment from Spencer is an attempt to be funny.

i am a Spenser fan, I can read any of Parker's tales of Spencer and enjoy them with several caveats. First, I can not stomach reading one after another, too similar, and character faults begin to show up, things I don't notice if I am not exposed to them too often. Yes, most of Spenser's novels are really short stories, the chapters are short, then a break of the page or even a blank page inserted to make the page count longer. Some books tell what font is used, but with Parker I am afraid not, it is a large type again to up the page count. But that is printing, not story. Parker uses terse conversation, short lines also up the page count. But it is the lack of monologue, the use of interactive dialogue between the characters to advance the story, to tell the thinking behind the actions, the very things I enjoy that also up the page count. Parker introduced a small amount of economics in "Bad Business" but not heavy on the economics and Marty took over anyhow. Quarterly and annual reports are dictated by the SEC and allow the company an opportunity to brag but stock fluctuations have no effect on business operations, the IPO is the only place the company benefits from high stock price. Market fluctuations may influence bonuses, options, and executive retention, theoretically it should not affect operations but as recent news has shown there are all sorts of places for shenanigans to occur, even in the the non-stock operations but Parker did not burden us with that possibility, Kinergy had other ways to work. Spenser is a Private Investigator, he is not one of the common fictional type who refuses to take marital cases as being too messy. He is willing to follow, to report on opportunity for adultery, whatever else the client wants. But Parker is writing detective stories, crime must follow wherever Spenser goes he takes us with him and gets into trouble as well. In this case it is murder, multiple murders, and Spenser calls on his helpers to aid in solving the whole affair. Somehow Cooper does not come across to me as a high type business executive, even department level seems to be above his character depiction and to make it even worse he wants to become a politician. Not too much like ENRON, there the CEO stayed above operation, yes, but not for political gain. The XO and CFO did the finagling but at Kinergy people got killed so others could make money from stock, even some radio hosts. It took Spenser to smoke them out but proof was lacking, confession was necessary. Spenser did not care, he did his job for one of the widows, made love to Susan, talked with Vinnie and Hawk, and was the only one in the book who knew what was going on. If not for that, the book was a mess.

This is a classical Spenser story, full of wisecracks and sly humour in Parker's time-honoured fashion, but it also contains a good deal of suspense. Spenser is hired initially to check on a husband suspected of cheating on his wife, but nothing is as it seems. Although there is a lot of spouse-swapping occurring, which makes it difficult for Spenser to decide who the guilty parties are,

the real problem turns out to be in the realm of high finance. If anyone wanted to commit corporate crime, this novel would almost provide a handbook. Then the murders start, but the obvious suspect turns out to be the only good guy, so the suspense is carried through right to the end of the book. I did find the actual denouement a little disappointing, but would still have no hesitation in recommending this book to anyone who likes a good who-dunnit spiced with humour.

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