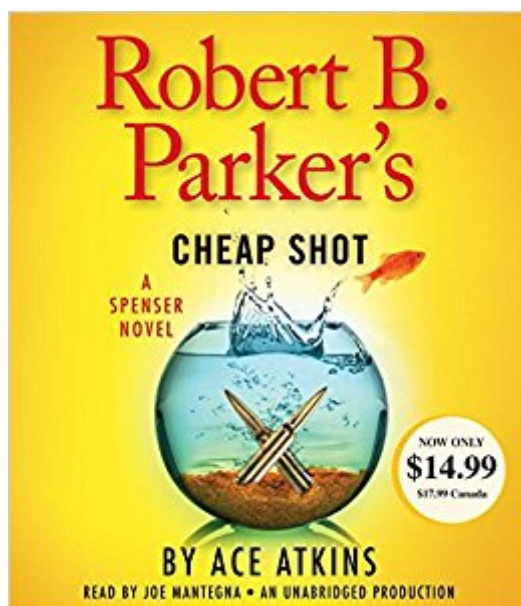


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Robert B. Parker's Cheap Shot (Spenser)



Synopsis

True to his practice of exceeding his own standards with each new novel, Atkins gives Robert B. Parker's long-running series one of its best installments to date • (Bookreporter.com) with the Spencer novel, Cheap Shot...Kinjo Heywood is one of the New England Patriots' marquee players "a hard-nosed linebacker who's earned his standing as one of the toughest guys in the league. He may be worth millions but his connection to a nightclub shooting two years before is still putting a dangerous spin on his life, and his career. When Heywood's nine-year-old son, Akira, is kidnapped, and a winding trail through Boston's underworld begins, Spenser puts together his own all-star team of toughs. It will take both Hawk and Spenser's protégé, Zebulon Sixkill, to watch Spenser's back. Because Heywood's next unpredictable move puts everyone in jeopardy as the clock winds down on Akira's future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kinjo Heywood is a ferocious middle linebacker for the New England Patriots, but he has a penchant for off-the field violence as well. When he thinks he's being followed, his agent hires Boston private investigator Spenser to find and discourage the followers. If a confrontation between Kinjo and his shadows occurs, Spenser will handle any rough stuff. But Spenser's simple bodyguard duty turns serious when Kinjo's 10-year-old son is kidnapped. Perhaps it was masterminded by the boy's mother, Kinjo's ex-wife. Nope. She has an alibi and is every bit as invested in the boy's return as Kinjo. How about the current trophy wife? Nope again;

Spenser eliminates her fairly quickly. Perhaps the kidnapping goes back to Kinjo's possible involvement in a shooting death at a New York dance club. The three thugs are Spenser, longtime running buddy Hawk, and Spenser's protégé Zerk employ their usual investigative techniques of intimidation and smart-ass repartee in the service of solving the case. Atkins' third shot at the Spenser caseload shows steady improvement over the first two. Spenser is as tough and funny as ever, and Atkins has become a worthy successor. --Wes Lukowsky --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Praise for ROBERT B. PARKER'S WONDERLAND "Atkins finds his footing this time, settling into the character and concocting a fairly complex caper with urban development, organized crime, and sex all playing roles....Quite a good crime novel."--"Booklist" "Solid... Atkins's ability to perfectly mimic the originals will please diehard fans hungry for familiar pleasures."--"Publishers Weekly" "An entertaining effort." -- "Kirkus Reviews" "These books are real gems...the old Spenser magic is back."--"Aspen Daily News" Praise for ROBERT B. PARKER'S LULLABY "Handpicked by the Parker estate to be the keeper of the flame for the Spenser franchise, award-winning author Ace Atkins rises flawlessly to the occasion. In addition to the signature dialogue, all the familiars are fully resurrected: Susan, the sexy shrink; Pearl, the wonder dog; Hawk, the wonder sidekick; good cop Quirk, and, of course, Spenser himself, that consummate knight errant for the 21st century."--"Kirkus Reviews" "Even the most fanatical Parker fans would be hard pressed to identify any aspect of this Spenser novel that doesn't read as if it were penned by Spenser's late creator....Atkins hits all the familiar marks - bantering scenes with Spenser's girlfriend, fisticuffs, heavy-duty backup from the dangerous Hawk - as he offers familiar pleasures."--"Publishers Weekly" "A brisk read. Atkins gets the important things right, from Spenser's dark sarcasm to the gritty attitude of Mattie Sullivan, a 14-year-old Southie girl trying to solve her mother's murder."--"Boston" Magazine "Atkins succeeds. He doesn't sound like somebody trying to emulate Parker.... Spenser, thankfully, sounds like Spenser. You also get the vivid sense of place, flexing of muscles and spare plot that were hallmarks of Parker's 39 Spenser books....It's a feat when a writer creates characters who live and breathe on the page and make readers care and keep coming back for more."--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Robert B Parker books not written by Robert B Parker are usually a disappointing read for me as they lose his take on the main character. Their personalities are definitely not the same with the new authors. In addition, the main characters sense of humor is forced or not there. Not a genuine feel at

all. Now I have read Ace Atkins novels and they are a good read. The problem is this. It is hard to mimic Robert B Parker or any author if you are not them. And true fans will be able to pick up on the subtle and sometimes not too subtle differences. I have not had the opportunity to read any of Reed Farrel Coleman or Micheal Brandon personal novels so I cannot comment on their products.

I am always excited to read a new "Spenser" novel, and have enjoyed the previous entries by Ace Atkins, and though this one opened with such promise, by the time I plodded to the end, I found it, for me, to be the worst Ace Atkins' "Parker" novel for sure. I will not go into the plot summary as others will do that, and I do not think I could adequately do that without revealing spoilers...so I will not. As my title to this article suggests, I found that reading this was like plodding through War and Peace...for all the negative reasons. It makes me think Atkins was using Parker's style of writing novel ,starting with a premise, and daily write the story, not sure where you are going or who "dunnit" until you get there. The only problem is that the logical place where this book would turn towards its' conclusion (but look like another Parker novel)...it kept going, and going, and going. I think Atkins might have been paid per character as he kept introducing new and returning characters up until the final chapters, where finally he introduced us to one of the criminals. As a person who has read all of Robert B. Parker's books, and the posthumously written ones, by other authors, "Cheap Shot," was just that at about one quarter of its length too long as we had to suffer with the author at finding an ending. If like me, you are a Spenser fan, and just HAVE to keep reading the series, then do, and form your own opinion. If you want to be introduced to Spenser, Hawk, Z, and more...do not start here; you probably wont' want to pick up another.

Earlier I reviewed Ace Atkins' Spenser novel 'Wonderland'. In that review, I said that I couldn't yet judge whether Atkins could sustain my interest in the Spenser series without the talents of Robert Parker. The latest Atkins book, "Cheap Shot" is not a good omen.Among other things, I was worried that Parker's wicked wit and timely, carefully aimed barbs were missing. Atkins has made a good correction in this department. The characters were once again witty when required, witty when unexpected, and witty because it was an integral part of their character."Cheap Shot" falls apart at the end of the story. The plot often meanders, and at the end doesn't involve one character who has been a mainstay throughout the first and middle parts of the story. The plot just fell apart at the end.If the next book doesn't pull the characters and plot together, my interest in Spenser will evaporate.

As a longtime Parker fan, I was dubious about his family's decision to allow other writers to attempt to keep alive his franchise characters. It seemed likely to me that the legacy would end up tarnished. I was pleasantly surprised in Atkins' prior efforts to continue the Spenser trope. I thought he had achieved the most important aspect of recreating the rhythm and pacing of dialogue among Spenser and the various other familiar characters. On the other hand, I thought the story telling didn't quite measure up, and in this most recent effort, I found the story development to be muddled, and, at times, nearly incoherent. I gave the effort a reluctant three stars because the repartee had several entertaining moments. Many other reviewers have noted that in the last few offerings from Mr Parker, the overall quality had seemed to have deteriorated from his earlier, brilliant efforts, and I agree with that assessment. However, I was so deeply appreciative of his overall body of work, that I was willing to overlook the lack of depth of story line and plot development in favor of simply taking pleasure in revisiting the engaging dialogue of which I had become so fond. Regarding Mr Atkins' efforts at keeping alive the franchise, he does not enjoy the lifetime reader goodwill Mr Parker had earned. Future efforts will have to be much better executed for me to continue as a reader.

In the first part of the story we are assaulted by a continuous stream of one-liners designed to show how cool, cute and cynical Spenser is. Rapidly becomes tiring. The second half of the story is worse. Very little happens and what does happen is silly and unbelievable. Doubtful if this series is acquiring any new readers but, I'm sure it is losing some of the old ones. He needs to cut way back on the Susan character. She is extremely irritating. I gave it two stars out of a sense of loyalty to Parker's characters. The story only rates one star.

Very disappointed in the characters of Susan and Hawk. Ace has Susan throwing around the F word like a bimbo and Hawk talks too much and uses gratuitous violence out of character. There is none of the wry humor of Parker or the crisp dialogue. Atkins' previous efforts were more on the mark so I think he is getting lazy and greedy. On the other hand, I like Boston and mysteries so, while Parker always gets 5 stars, this book is "okay".

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