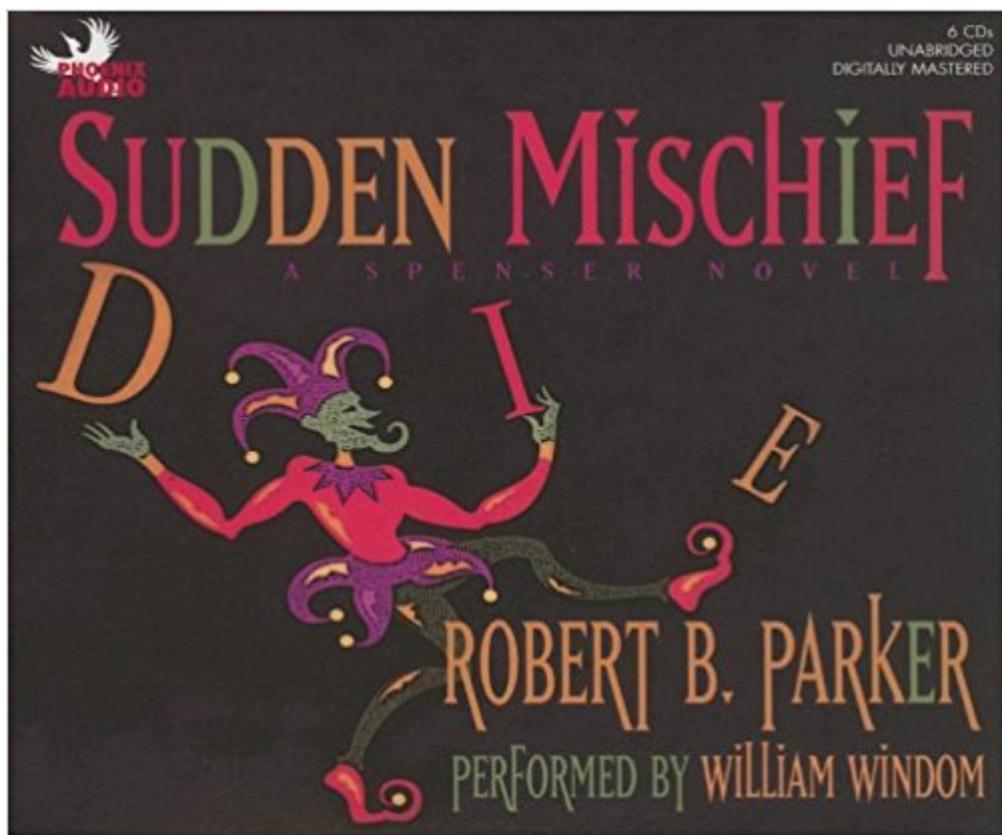


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Sudden Mischief



Synopsis

"Parker's finest in years . . . one can't-put-it-down story. Again . . ." proclaimed San Francisco Chronicle of Robert B. Parker's most recent New York Times bestseller, *Small Vices* . And The Washington Post Book World agreed, "Small Vices deserves instant inclusion in the Spenser canon." In *Sudden Mischief*, Parker's stouthearted hero unwillingly takes a case that tests his sleuthing skills-and his commitment to the woman he loves. Brad Sterling-former Harvard football player, ne'er-do-well, and Susan Silverman's long out-of-touch ex-husband-is, by all appearances, a successful businessman. But when, in the course of running a vast fundraiser called Galapalooza, he is charged with sexual harassment, he turns to Susan for help. Though Brad denies the charge, he's desperate, behind in alimony and child-support payments to other exes, and on the verge of dissolution. When Spenser reluctantly agrees to take the case, however, Sterling claims everything is fine-he's free of debt and free of problems. While the harassment charge begins to look more and more specious, Spenser senses there is something wrong with Galapalooza, as leads to charities turn into dead ends. Susan, meanwhile, becomes steadily more problematic as she wrestles with demons reinvigorated by the resurrection of her ex-husband. As the questions mount, Brad disappears, a body is found, and clues to a shadowy mob connection begin to coalesce. Spenser finds himself fighting a two-front war: against some very bad men, on the one hand, and against an increasingly difficult Susan, on the other. Dark, contemplative, and morally complex, *Sudden Mischief* is a brilliant meditation on the meaning of justice, love, and passion. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Sudden Mischief, the 25th Spenser novel, finds Robert B. Parker's seemingly ageless sleuth once again engaging Boston's bad guys and sorting out life's moral dilemmas, all (or mostly) in the name of love. When Spenser's girlfriend, psychiatrist Susan Silverman, asks him to investigate charges of sexual harassment leveled against her ex-husband, Brad Sterling, the detective agrees, though the assignment "shows every sign of not working out well." As the sexual harassment allegations melt like April snow, Sterling drops out of sight, a dead body appears in his office, and Spenser discovers a murky slush of clues that suggest Sterling's work as a marketing genius for local charities has been a front for some truly despicable criminal activities. As always, the more-than-slightly-shady Hawk is on hand to help Spenser sort the good from the bad, but Spenser is left to his own devices when it comes to making sense of the emotional havoc the case creates in his relationship with Susan. And what devices they are: emotionally mature and physically dynamic, Spenser once again proves himself as detective, friend, lover, and human being as Sterling's reappearance forces Susan to examine her past and her conscience while searching for her own autonomy. As always, Spenser endures as an intelligent, ethical, and poetic private eye, even if his endless middle age seems a bit supernatural. Parker's nimble, Spartan prose suits a character who carries his years in wisdom rather than body fat. If the heart of any truly great detective series is a truly great detective, Sudden Mischief and the rest of Parker's Spenser novels surely fit the bill. --L.A. Smith --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The 25th Spenser novel isn't a romance, but it's all about love. In early springtime, Susan Silverman, the elegant psychologist and lover who long ago softened the heart of Boston's preeminent thug-sized PI, asks Spenser to investigate the sexual harassment suit that has been filed against her first husband, Brad Sterling. Susan's ambivalence about Brad's predicament doesn't make the case easy for Spenser; nor does the gradually disclosed involvement of the noted Harvard Law School professor whose young wife is one of the plaintiffs. As Spenser and his sidekick, Hawk, trace Brad's business dealings (he's a professional fund-raiser who's hired to run mammoth charity events), they also come up against a lawyer employed by the local organized crime crowd and some hired muscle associated with same, one of whom is found fatally shot in Brad's office. The next murder victim, a woman, turns out to be the director of a counseling service for ex-cons, which was also listed as benefiting from the most recent charity bash. What's more, the dead woman had her own connection to the still-missing Brad. Threatened repeatedly with fists and guns while coping with Susan's rare emotional uncertainty, Spenser stays the course to a resolution

in which he and Susan both prevail. The mystery in this valentine may be insubstantial, but readers who pick up Parker's bestselling series for its characters and atmosphere will be delighted. BOMC main selection. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

SUDDEN MISCHIEF, # 25 in the Spenser series, provided another prime work up on the Man/Woman relationship scene, dealing with ex-hubby scars, Susan's turtle-snap moods, and a new-and-improved conversational skill from Dr. Sigmund Spenser. I'm roaring onward toward the end of the series with continued amazement at how many miasmas of human angst Parker has been able to muck into, for Spenser to clarify and deodorize; and how many relationship scenes and character cards he can lay bare on any table, with Spades called true. Opening what I might term "The Pandora in The Relationship," a scene between Spenser and Susan slipped suddenly from the most comfy of cozy, with humor set and staged on-a-roll ... to sour milk, paused peace, and stomach knots. I felt that hit along with Spenser, possibly more than any other emotional toll taken in the series (except when Susan left in VALEDICTION, # 11 in the series). The way Spenser worked with and through the situation was a perfect expression of ... not of psychological actualization ... but of the wisdom of a dynamically-operating human maturity. This scene and Spenser's "self-talk" in understanding the dense drama underlying Susan's behavior took the reader ozone holes beyond the trite advice to "roll with the punches." I particularly enjoyed the few glove punches of tribute to X-Files here, in the slight, playful change in the style of humor between Hawk and Spenser, and in the Lone Gunman computer geek. SUDDEN MISCHIEF was another example of the cultural evolutionary intrigue contained in this triple-decade-running series. In this one and in a few previous recent offerings readers were also given hints of the beginning of The-Waitress-Hurry-Rush-Syndrome, which appeared to have begun in the nineties. In SUDDEN MISCHIEF Spenser stepped up to the tallest measure of being Susan's hero, savior, Knight-in-Shining Armor, and her Shrink. Acting as her shrink, Spenser's jangled the jargon from the popular surge of psycho-self-help books which carried "come-communicate" concepts from the 70's and 80's into the 90's. Spenser's part of every dialogue with every character seemed to have suddenly altered in MISCHIEF in a manner which felt somewhat but not totally, tongue-in-cheek. The alteration came through the famous style of the Shrink's SILENCE, the true listening mode ... of no response ... to stretches of out-loud contemplations from whomever happened to be the partner in repartee (or payer of shrink-wrap fees). I enjoyed the fact that the dialogues often took place over meals or in interesting restaurants, so that when Spenser worked the no response deal, he replaced

the saved mouth motion with warm, moist bites of fresh, spongy bread, and savored the yeasty flavor. Usually his comment in that venue went something like, "I took a bite of It was good." Spenser did the shrink silence with as much perfection as he has done all else. Even so, one of the reasons for success of his perfection was his ability to see (and note) his and Susan's flaws here. And, Susan's self-actualization scene in chapter 48 was truly incredible in Parker's perfection of process of her coming to that catharsis, with Spenser providing support in an awesomely effective way of stand-aside-but-be-ready. As noted above, it appeared to me that the humor had changed slightly in this one, with appetizer overtures in recent previous offerings as well. Some of the conversational fun-poking definitely seemed to have taken on a warmly entertaining edge of the X-Files, Fox Mulder type. The combo of these subtle changes continued to herald the "Signs of the Times," reinforcing my sense of one of the major values in this series being its feathered function as a cultural-evolution-landmark for the 70's, 80's, 90's, and 00's. Sometimes series authors have espoused a wish that they could get out of the limitations of a genre and write something "significant." Parker has repeatedly and unfailingly honored his series genre, while packing his products with the ultimate in literary significance. Possibly the greatest gift in this accomplishment is that readers can choose to see this significance (and be awed by it). Or, they can merely let go of cares and worries, and be entertained by pure escape fiction. I wonder if RBP was born on the precise point of an Annular Solar Eclipse, to have continually generated and successfully manifested so much primal, pivotal creativity. Or maybe ... like today ... Robert B. Parker was born during a Blue Moon peaking full in the company of Jupiter and Vesta (the asteroid). All I know about that is that he was born in 1947 (or 48?), a Baby Boomer like many of us. Another man, born in 1928, wasn't a Baby Boomer, nor an author, yet he reminds me of Parker, in the sense of the above described type of continued creative generation and manifestation. See the *Short, A I Worked: A True Story* Immensely thankful for fascinating feats such as these, Linda G. Shelnutt

This book is a favorite of mine. I read and reread it often. It contains familiar characters interacting in different ways. That makes it quite interesting.

While enjoyable most of the time, this book reminded me of a "This Is Your Life" episode. Without any real reason, Spenser runs into any number of people from previous books (e.g., Rachel Wallace). It's the equivalent of a class reunion, completed with bored significant-other (Susan). I enjoyed the book because Spenser spends a lot of time with Hawk. The plot isn't very flash (e.g., he beats up thugs in his office, he tries to intimidate various tough guys), but the dialogue with Hawk is

fantastic. Susan whinges a bit less than usual. Unlike books where she's carrying on like a pork chop, I didn't have to turn each page hoping for a hostage drama involving Susan which goes horribly wrong (albeit only from Spenser's point of view). If you're going to start reading Spenser books, there are better ones. However, if you like Hawk's comments, I think this one is definitely worthwhile reading.

Ok, there isn't as much action in "Sudden Mischief" as there is in some of the other Spenser novels. No matter. It has always been my contention that Robert B. Parker writes love stories that are disguised within the mystery genre. Think about it. What has always been paramount in his novels has been the relationships, especially those of Spenser to Hawk and Susan. And when the cases are most compelling, it means Spenser has taken a personal interest in his client: Paul Giacomin, say, or Rachel Wallace. In "Sudden Mischief," Spenser's client is Susan, as she asks him to help our her troubled ex-husband. There's no getting away from the fact that this is Susan at her neurotic best, but it also is Spenser at his compassionate best. The story also gives new colors (no pun intended) to his friendship with Hawk, and at the very least continues to paint Boston and environs in delightful new shades. If you can get through the early chapters without getting hungry for fried oysters, you're a better person than I. "Sudden Mischief" may not be a major work in the series, like "Early Autumn" or "Mortal Stakes." But it is a terrific diversion with characters who have become old friends, and who but a curmudgeon could complain about that?

Loved it.

Better than average Spenser.

Great book! The Spenser detective mysteries never disappoint. Always looking for the next one. Wonderful read on the Kindle.

This is another Spenser story and as always one which gives the reader a look at how to resolve what seems unresolvable! Very funny and quite brutal at times but only when necessary to get the job done! Another great read from an ever-green author.

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