



The Black Ice Score

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A corrupt African colonel has converted half his country's wealth into diamonds and smuggled them to a Manhattan safe house. Four upstanding citizens plan to rescue their new nation by stealing the diamonds back — with the help of a “specialist” — Parker, that is. He has the best references in town. Will Parker break his rule against working with amateurs and help them because his woman would be disappointed if he doesn't? Or because three hired morons have threatened to kill him and his woman if he does? They thought they were buying an advantage, but what they get is a predicated death certificate.

“Crime fiction stripped down — as it was meant to be... Oh, how the pages keep turning.” —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Old master that he is, Stark does all of them one better.” —*Los Angeles Times*

The Black Ice Score Details

Date : Published 1968 by Fawcett Gold Medal

ISBN :

Author : Richard Stark

Format : Paperback

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Noir, Thriller

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From Reader Review The Black Ice Score for online ebook

Greg says

I can't do it, I can't write anymore Parker reviews. Not that I've written a substantial one in quite a few books, but I must go on. I must review them all, right?

In this one Parker gets involved in some tiny African countries political landscape and is hired to help plan a robbery to steal back the countries riches from the current president who is trying to steal it all for himself. It's the most far-fetched plot in all of the Parker novels so far--seriously, the entire wealth of the country is \$700,000 that can be easily converted into two small pouches of diamonds? The premise is a little silly but the execution of the plot is perhaps the most narratively innovative of Stark's novels so far.

Also, Parker is becoming less and less a sociopath, when the possibility arises of having to torture someone Parker lets it be known that the other guys are probably better at it then he is. I think he's growing more human as time goes on.

Toby says

Random Parker adventure provided by the local library service, middling in quality that mostly feels like the rushed by the numbers pulp stuff that his contemporaries were churning out. There's some nonsense with a newly independent African nation and training diplomats to steal their national jewels back from an embezzling leader that I could barely raise enthusiasm for but in between there are some nice hardboiled Parker moments. The opening chapter was pretty great though I must say.

Ed [Redacted] says

Parker helps retrieve diamonds from a corrupt African leader. This is kind of by the numbers for a Parker book. The parts with the opposing factions from the African country were pretty interesting, but the rest was fairly standard. I keep getting more and more irritated with Claire and her effect on Parker. I prefer Parker when he is single minded and ruthless.

This isn't my favorite of the Parkers by any stretch but it IS a Parker book, thereby making it a worthwhile read. I would suggest this for the completist. For those new to Parker start with The Hunter.

James Love says

While written in 1967 the plot is very similar to The Hot Rock (1972). The missing elements include Parker not being released from prison at the start of the novel and the satirical humor found in many of the Dortmunder novels. Westlake admitted that The Hot Rock had been originally intended as a Parker novel. Was The Black Ice Score the second draft?

David says

Comments on second reading: I decided to reread *The Black Ice Score*, a relatively crappy Parker novel, in the wake of having read the first Dortmunder novel, *The Hot Rock*. According to author Donald E. Westlake, *The Hot Rock* came about when a Parker novel went awry: Parker is anything but a comedic character, and Westlake found that he was writing Parker into a comedy. Thus, he rewrote the novel with a new protagonist, Dortmunder, and that novel became *The Hot Rock*. I repeated this oft-told story in my review of *The Hot Rock*, prompting a friend to ask what I made of the existence of *The Black Ice Score*, whose premise is eerily similar to *The Hot Rock*. So I decided to reread *The Black Ice Score* and think it over.

The Black Ice Score was first published in 1968; *The Hot Rock* was first published in 1970. Both novels are set in New York. Both novels center around factions from small African nations who compete for ownership of valuable jewels—an emerald and diamonds, respectively. In both novels, an African faction hires professional American criminals to wrest the jewel(s) from the competing faction. So what led Westlake to publish such similar novels so close together? If Westlake's story of converting the botched Parker novel into the first Dortmunder novel is true, then this would seem to be the logical sequence of events:

1. Westlake begins writing a Parker novel, but he realizes that the tone is hopelessly wrong, so he stops.
2. Westlake starts the Parker novel over again, maintaining the proper tone this time, and the result is *The Black Ice Score*, published in 1968.
3. Westlake, a highly efficient professional writer, hates to waste anything. He still has the partially (how much?) completed manuscript from #1, and he wants to do something with it. Therefore, he reworks it into *The Hot Rock*, published in 1970.

Westlake probably thought it unlikely readers would notice (or care) about the similarities between Richard Stark's *The Black Ice Score* and Donald E. Westlake's *The Hot Rock*, so why not? It's hard to imagine, however, that he wasn't asked about this at some point, so if anyone knows anything more, I would be delighted to hear it.

A footnote: For a Parker fan, the most remarkable moment in *The Hot Rock* comes in passing, when one of the professional American thieves, Alan Greenwood, mentions that his current assumed name is "Grofield." Alan Grofield, of course, is one of Parker's sometime partners, first appearing in *The Score* in 1964. So maybe when the abandoned Parker novel became *The Hot Rock*, Alan Grofield was transformed into Alan Greenwood? I didn't pay attention to the initials of the other thieves in *The Hot Rock*, but perhaps they correspond to characters in the Parker novels as well?

Comments on first reading: More support for the International Parker Theorem: The more Parker gets involved in international intrigue, the less interesting he becomes. The best Parker books convince you that they take place in the real world of professional thieves. Those books that fall under the International Parker Theorem convince you that some of the Parker novels should have been left out of print. A weak three stars.

First reading: 17 March 2011

Second reading: 17 February 2013

D. says

Another strong entry in the Parker series. I've heard some people say that this one of the weaker entries, but I liked it quite a bit. Westlake/Stark uses some interesting narrative and structural choices that make it a fun read.

As usual, complications ensue as Parker is asked to help some foreign nationals steal some diamonds. Parker becomes a little more personally involved than usual, and it leads to a compelling denouement. There are a few rough spots here and there, particularly when it steers a little close to **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE** and **MAN FROM UNCLE** territory, which is not a comfortable fit for Parker.

Well worth your time, as usual.

Lynn says

I just loved this installment in the Parker series. Parker shines here as a planner. He's completely dispassionate and non-political when multiple factions try to appeal to greed and sway his loyalties. He just wants to execute his contracted work and move on. He's always professional.....it's the only virtue his reader can count on.

I convinced my local library to purchase the missing books in this series collection.....another reason this book was an especially good read.

David Schaafsma says

The weakest of the Parker books so far (out of 11 of 24 so far), but still a solid story with things to recommend it. Claire is the new girlfriend of Parker, who had been married but slammed and left to die by his first wife and then, well, skeptical about women for some years after. And he likes women in the intervening years, but let's say, for rather short periods of time. Until he meets Claire, whom he actually makes a commitment to, which is surprising given Stark's unsentimental nature.

Claire also supports Parker's new gig, though she hates guns and doesn't generally want to know anything about his work. Parker has been approached by a group of men from a small African country who has had diamonds embezzled by their African dictator. The men want the money back to strengthen their country; Claire likes and respects the men; Parker has not political leanings, but likes money, and sort of seems to like making Claire happy.

Some white nationalists and a con man also want the diamonds. As usual, things go smoothly. . . until they don't. Claire plays a larger part in this one than Parker had hoped.

Well, this is solid, but unspectacular in spite of the international intrigue, and Claire.

James Thane says

"The Black Ice Score" was originally published in 1967, and for a good many years has been out of print and virtually impossible to find. Fans of Richard Stark's "Parker" series owe a debt of gratitude to the University of Chicago Press for republishing the book, along with several others in the series.

Parker is a hardened professional criminal who has virtually no moral reservations about the crimes he plans and commits, even when he must occasionally kill someone who gets in his way. He may be one of the most amoral figures in all of crime fiction, and yet Stark (a pseudonym of Donald Westlake) never wimps out and attempts to curry favor with the reader by giving Parker some ultimately redeeming feature. Still, you can't help liking the guy and rooting for him to succeed.

In this case, Parker is on vacation in New York when he is approached by the representatives of a small African nation. Their president, they claim, is about to abandon the country, taking much of the country's treasure with him. In fact, he has already sent the loot--hundred of thousands of dollars worth of diamonds--to New York ahead of him with some confederates. The men who approach Parker want to hire him to plan a way for them to steal the diamonds back and return them to the country's treasury.

Parker ultimately agrees and then, as is always the case in these books, complications ensue, testing Parker's abilities and throwing the plan and everyone involved into jeopardy.

"The Black Ice Score" falls into the middle of this series, and it's not as good as most of the other entries, which is not to say that it's a bad book, just that it's not up to the standards of many of the others.

As a result, this is a book that will probably appeal mostly to hard-core Parker fans who want to read the entire series. Readers who want to experience it for the first time, would probably be best advised to begin with "The Hunter," a very good read, which is the first book in the series and which has also been published under the title "Payback," the title of the Mel Gibson movie that was made from the book.

Skip says

I like this one more than others, perhaps because Parker is actually working for something besides himself for once, partially at the behest of Claire. A corrupt president of a small newly-formed African nation (Dhaba) has plundered the national treasury and smuggled \$700,000 in diamonds to NYC in the possession of his wife's family. The two possible successors (one black, one white) each want the loot, and make their pitch to Parker. Their initial candidate, a con artist, also wants it. Parker decides to work for the good guys, and helps them plan the heist (from an African museum), and as always, things go awry. Much more killing in this one than usual.

Jane Stewart says

3 1/2 stars. Most of the story was average - ok, but the ending was good - when things went wrong.

THE SET UP:

There are three groups of guys from a small African nation. The A guys work for the President. The B guys work for a General who plans to take over with a military coup. C is a guy who stole millions from the African treasury and converted it to diamonds. C's people are holding the diamonds for him in New York City.

The A guys pay a fee to Parker to plan a heist and teach them how to do it - to steal the diamonds from C's people. The B guys threaten Parker, telling him not to help A. D is another guy who comes in to steal the diamonds.

OPINION:

Most of the story is meeting the different guys and Parker planning the heist. That was ok, but it wasn't engaging or exciting. The last part was very good. Unexpected things happen, things go wrong, Parker is in the middle and takes action. I liked the way Parker solved a kidnaping - bad guy style.

I was disappointed the author did not tell how the bad guys knew where E was in order to kidnap E.

There is a forward by Dennis Lehane (dated 2010) in the paperback. I was disappointed that the forward was missing from this audiobook.

The narrator Stephen R. Thorne was good, but I wish he had a rougher, darker, or more menacing voice for Parker. His Parker voice was too clean cut and normal sounding.

THE SERIES:

This is book 11 in the 24 book series. These stories are about bad guys. They rob. They kill. They're smart. Most don't go to jail. Parker is the main bad guy, a brilliant strategist. He partners with different guys for different jobs in each book.

If you are new to the series, I suggest reading the first three and then choose among the rest. A few should be read in order since characters continue in a sequel fashion. Those are listed below (with my star ratings). The rest can be read as stand alones.

The first three books in order:

4 stars. The Hunter (Point Blank movie with Lee Marvin 1967) (Payback movie with Mel Gibson)

3 1/2 stars. The Man with the Getaway Face (The Steel Hit)

4 stars. The Outfit.

Read these two in order:

5 stars. Slayground (Bk #14)

5 stars. Butcher's Moon (Bk #16)

Read these four in order:

4 1/2 stars. The Sour Lemon Score (Bk #12)

2 1/2 stars. Firebreak (Bk #20)

(not read) Nobody Runs Forever (Bk #22)

2 1/2 stars. Dirty Money (Bk #24)

Others that I gave 4 or more stars to:

The Jugger (Bk #6), The Seventh (Bk#7), The Handle (Bk #8), Deadly Edge (Bk#13), Flashfire (Bk#19)

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Unabridged audiobook length: 3 hrs and 54 mins. Swearing language: Good God used once. Sexual content: none. Setting: around 1968 mostly New York City. Book copyright: 1968. Genre: noir crime fiction.

Dan Schwent says

Nationals from a tiny African country want Parker to plan a heist for them in an effort to steal back a fortune in diamonds. Parker has misgivings but Claire urges him to take the job. Parker plans the heist and things go smoothly until mistakes the Africans made before contacting Parker come back to bite them all in the ass...

Reading one of Parker's exploits is like visiting an old friend. Parker is himself in this one, although maybe Claire's making him a little soft. The heist was well-planned, as usual. Parker's quip that no one is an expert on people rings true, especially when things start falling apart. With two parties after the diamonds, as well as Hoskins, the plot has a lot of twists and turns. Parker goes about his business as only he can.

Any gripes? Besides Claire softening Parker a bit, *The Black Ice Score* is pretty short, an easy three hour read. Other than that, it's the same Parker we all know and love.

Andre says

Another brilliant pulp-noir from the master. Nice tight writing and a solid plot. Recommend!

Kemper says

Parker has taken his girlfriend Claire to New York so she can do some shopping, but he gets repeatedly approached by people who think he's in on some kind of score. An African dictator has fled his country with a fortune in diamonds, and one group wants to hire Parker to plan a way to steal them so they can take them back to Africa and use the money to build the nation up. A group of white colonialists are mad that they got booted out, and want to steal the diamonds to install their own puppet government and reclaim their property. And one con man just wants to steal the diamonds for himself.

This is kind of an oddly flat Parker novel despite having some new elements in it. For one, Parker is hired solely as a planner of the robbery, and Claire is more involved than usual in the story. But in the end, there's the usual robbery-with-unexpected-twist and Parker improvising at the last minute.

While Parker is his usual no-nonsense self for most of this one, it also shows a few glimpses that there may be a bit more to him than Stark (a/k/a Westlake) has shown before. Claire notes that Parker does have a bit of a taste for the robberies that are a challenge and require elaborate planning which differs from Parker's usual claim that it's all about the money. Parker also seems to care more about Claire than I thought him capable of. I always had the impression that Claire was just kind of convenient for Parker. It made sense that a guy who liked sex but didn't really like interacting with people would have one steady girlfriend who didn't bug him and stayed out of his business, but here we get the feeling that Parker may just give a damn about her.

Not a bad book. (I think Westlake was incapable of writing a bad book.) It's just that Parker doesn't seem quite as ruthless as usual and to me Asshole Parker = Fun Parker.

Mohammed says

An improvement on the previous Parker book i read, The Green Eagle Score.

The heist story was more intense,more twist,double crosses this time. It was more challenging for Parker. He was more like the early books.

The African,Colonist/Anti-colonist story made the book more layered, reading the story from the different sides POV. Stark handled that part of the story very well,like a man who knew his world,times.

It was interesting from my personal POV,it was refereshing read for a crime book like this.
