

Robert B. Parker's the Devil Wins: A Jesse Stone Novel

By Reed Farrel Coleman

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A Nor'easter blows into Paradise and churns up the past—in the stunning new addition to Robert B. Parker's *New York Times*–bestselling series featuring Police Chief Jesse Stone.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Coleman takes the story of the mystery behind the murders and runs with it. *The Devil Wins* is such a winner of a novel that Parker's loyal fans and Coleman's new ones will be equally delighted by his skills. This series can run forever in these new capable hands and readers will eagerly await each new book about Jesse Stone. I know I will.”*—Huffington Post*

“Small town, big secret, and a community’s shame. In the blink of an eye, Jesse goes from worrying about potential storm damage to investigating three homicides…suspenseful, melancholy examination of loss and how sometimes, despite our best efforts, the past refuses to stay buried, and it will certainly please fans still craving more of Parker’s characters.”*—Booklist*

“Coleman’s solid second Jesse Stone novel finds Parker’s flawed hero, now the police chief of Paradise, Mass., still having trouble separating from his ex, connecting with people emotionally, and dealing with guilt over a subordinate’s near-fatal shooting…Coleman succeeds in adding some needed depth to Jesse’s character.”*—Publishers Weekly*

"Coleman does a remarkable job of developing the character, deepening our understanding of his struggle with the ghosts that haunt him**…**both a fine mystery story and a satisfying portrait of an emerging character that readers will look forward to hearing more from soon.**”**—Associated Press

About the Author

Robert B. Parker was the author of seventy books, including the legendary Spenser detective series, the novels featuring Chief Jesse Stone, and the acclaimed Virgil Cole/Everett Hitch Westerns, as well as the Sunny Randall novels. Winner of the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master Award and long considered the undisputed dean of American crime fiction, he died in January 2010.

Reed Farrel Coleman, author of the *New York Times*–bestselling *Robert B. Parker’s Blind Spot*, has been called a “hard-boiled poet” by NPR’s Maureen Corrigan and the “noir poet laureate” in *The Huffington Post*. He has published twenty-one novels, including nine books in the critically acclaimed Moe Prager series. He is a three-time recipient of the Shamus Award for Best Detective Novel of the Year, a winner of the Barry and Anthony Awards, and is a three-time Edgar Award nominee. An adjunct instructor at Hofstra University and an instructor for MWA U, he lives with his family on Long Island.

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1

Jesse Stone no longer ftlt adrift. No longer a man caught between two coasts, he had finally left his days as an L.A. homicide detective behind him. If not his private shame at how his life there had gone to hell. He was chief of police in Paradise, Mass.This was his town now. Yet there were still some things about the East Coast and the Atlantic he had never gotten used to and wasn't sure he ever would. Nor'easters, for one. He

found their brooding, slate-gray clouds and roiling tides a little unnerving. These late-fall or winter storms seemed to blow up out of spite, raking across whole swaths of New England or the Mid Atlantic, leaving nothing but pain in their wake.

As was his habit, he drove through the darkened streets of Paradise in his old Ford Explorer before heading horne. He wanted to get a few hours' sleep before going back to work. Maybe a drink, too. The storm wasn't supposed to make landfall until about midnight, but the winds were bending trees back against their will, sleet already pelting his windshield. Jesse shook his head thinking about that. About how storms in the east warned you they were coming. About how they told you when they were coming and then kicked your ass.

It was different out west. He remembered how, when he was a kid in Tucson, a few inches of unexpected rain would morph into the cascading wall of a flash flood, washing away everything before it. One minute people would be horseback riding or hiking through bone-dry arroyos and the next they'd be swallowed up by waters squeezed between canyon walls and ground sun baked so mercilessly hard it could not soak up a drop of rain. Jesse remembered that he had once gone out with his dad, searching for some missing hikers after one of the floods. How they had come upon the body of a drowned horse. It had been many years since he had thought of that horse, its carcass rotting in the Arizona sun.

Then in L.A. there were the choking Santa Ana winds that would blow across the mountains, swoop down into the valleys and through the canyons from the Mojave. The Santa Anas brought destruction with them, too, sucking the moisture out of the vegetation, wildfires following in their path. Fires that would consume whole hillsides, one after the other. Sometimes the winds blew so strongly through the canyons that they howled. His ex-partner used to say it was Satan whistling while he worked. At the moment, Jesse felt about as far away from those Santa An as as a man could get, but he thought he could still hear Satan's whistling in the winds that buffeted his SUV.

There weren't many cars on the road, but a few brave or stupid souls dared the weather. Jesse knew most of the vehicles. Robbie Wil son, the fire chief, was out in his red Jeep, looking for trouble. Jesse didn't have much patience for men like Wilson, guys who liked being big fish in tiny ponds. Little men with big chips on both shoulders. Men with something to prove, always on the prowl for a chance to prove it. Jesse could never figure out what it was Robbie Wilson had to prove. He also hated that Wilson refused to call him by his first name, always calling him Chief or Chief Stone.

Alexia Dragoa, one of the few commercial fishermen who still sailed out of Paradise, was coming from the docks in his ancient F-150.That damned pickup was nearly all rust.The thing was like an old married couple who stayed together more out of habit than any thing else. No doubt Alexia had been securing his boat, the *Dragoa Rainha,* in anticipation of the storm. Jesse gave the fisherman a wave in passing. Dragoa, a gruff Portuguese SOB, couldn't be bothered to return the gesture. *Par for the course)* Jesse thought. *Par for the course.*

Bill Marchand was out in front of his insurance brokerage on Nan tucket Street, wrestling the wind for control of a storm shutter. Jesse pulled over to lend him a hand. Bill and Jesse were friendly, if not exactly friends. Jesse didn't have friends, not the way other people had friends. But Marchand sponsored the police softball team and was generous with local charities. In all the years Jesse had served as chief, there hadn't been many town selectmen who'd earned his respect. Most selectmen had proven themselves craven and spineless, rarely backing Jesse or the department in tough situations. Bill Marchand was the exception. He was a thoughtful man who had usually based his support not on the direction of the political currents but on the facts before him.

"Let me get that for you," Jesse said, pinning the shutter to the wall.

"Thanks, Jesse. It's gonna be a bad one, this nor'easter. You been through enough of these, you can smell it on the wind."

"One is enough of these." Jesse used his free hand to lift up the fleece-lined collar of his jacket against the sleet. The wind was gust ing more intensely. "Ready for the shutter?" Jesse asked.

"I've got the latch ready."

Jesse forced the shutter closed, Marchand helping the last foot or two. When the shutter was in place, the insurance broker latched it closed.

"I hope the damned thing holds. I've had to replace these shutters twice," Marchand said, raising his voice above the wind.

'Trn sure your insurance will cover it."

"You're a funny man, Jesse Stone. Thanks again," Marchand said, offeringJesse his gloved right hand. "It's gonna be a bad one, all right. I'll be busy for weeks after this. We'll have to call adjusters in from all over the States. You watch yourself out there."

But it was Jesse's job to watch out for everyone else. He waited for Marchand to get into his massive Infiniti SUV and drive offbefore pulling away himself. *As* Jesse was about to turn for horne, he caught sight of another vehicle he recognized. It was John Millner's beat-up Chevy van. Millner was a career criminal, a petty thief who'd been in and out of commonwealth correctional facilities during Jesse's tenure as chie£ Millner was from the Swap-Southwest Area of Paradise the only rough part of town. But even the Swap was changing. It was turning into a hipper, more ethnically diverse part of Paradise. Mill ner's family was old-school Swap and John was more a lowlife than a tough guy. A parasite, an opportunist, not a mastermind.

Jesse followed the white van at a distance up into the bluffs that overlooked the ocean and the rest of town to the south. The Bluffs were where the rich founders of Paradise had built their big fussy houses more than a century and a half ago. Most of those families were gone, their manses knocked down, properties long since sold off. A few, like the Salter place, remained as summer homes. Many had fallen into disrepair.

Millner's van pulled off the road by a darkened behemoth of a house: the old Rutherford place. It had been vacant for Jesse's entire tenure in Paradise. For years there had been efforts by the town's his torical society to get it named to the commonwealth's register of historical places, but those avenues had finally been exhausted, and come spring the Rutherford place would be demolished. Jesse had a pretty good idea of what Millner meant to get up to. Giant old houses were lined with miles of copper wiring and other metals that could be sold off to scrap dealers at good prices. The problem for crooked scav engers like Millner was opportunity. You needed time to break through plaster walls and lath to get to the wiring. And a big storm had opportunity written all over it. Emergency situations stretched the cops thin, especially small-town forces like the Paradise PD.

Normally, Jesse would have given Millner enough rope to hang himself. He would have let him break into the condemned house before arresting him, but Jesse didn't have time for that now, not with the storm blowing in. When Millner, all six-foot-six of him, got out of his vehicle and went to swing open the van's side door,Jesse shined his Maglite in the thief's face.

"Who the hell is that?" asked Millner, holding his hand before his eyes to block the light.

"It's Chief Stone, John. What are you doing here?"

Millner hemmed and hawed, thinking of any reasonable lie. "Don't bother," Jesse said. 'Tm not in the mood for your crap.

Consider yourself lucky I don't want to deal with youtonight. Now get out of here and don't let any of my people catch your ass up here again."

Millner didn't say a word, just got back into his van and drove away down toward town. Jesse watched the van's taillights until they disappeared. Then he stepped to the edge of the bluff on which the Rutherford house stood. He looked out at the vast blackness of the Atlantic. He listened to the bones of the old house creak in the wind, listened to the wind whistling through the broken windows. He thought he heard the devil at work. He decided he really needed that drink.

2

He supposed they were all thinking the same thing: This can't be hap pening. Not again. Not after all these years. But it *was* happening, only this time they weren't a bunch of kids with too much Southern Comfort and Thai stick in them. That first time, it was some inno cent fun gone sideways. Severely sideways, plunging them into a para lyzing hell with slick, jagged walls from which there would be no escape. None. Not ever. That they were here to kill their old friend proved as much.

They had been given a temporary reprieve, a cruel reprieve, lasting just long enough to fool them into believing they had put real dis tance between that old evil and the fragile lives they had built in the meantime. Lives that included wives and lovers, children, careers, small successes, and grander failures, but haunted lives just the same. Haunted because distance from evil is a myth of time, because they were never more than one restless night or, worse still, a tainted moment of joy away from it.

The wind rattled the windows and the loading bay door. The plinking of sleet was less urgent now that the snow was falling in sheets and collecting on the corrugated metal roo£ Raw, cold air seeped into the maintenance shed like an accusation and made heav ing clouds of their breath. Small plumes of breath carne from the mouth of the nude man on the floor at their feet. His wrists and ankles were trussed behind him and his sun-streaked brown hair was caked with the drying blood that had leaked from the welt at the base of his skull. His broken lower jaw was unhinged, his mouth a wreck of splintered teeth and bone. After the pipe had been laid into him, the spray ofblood had given the air a coppery tang that the two other men could almost taste. But the blood had settled out of the air like silt out of water. Now the place smelled only ofburnt black motor oil, gasoline fumes, and antifreeze.

"What'd you do with his clothes?"

"The furnace in the church." "His duffel bag?"

"It's a big furnace. Burnt that up, too. Nothing but old smelly clothes and a Bible, anyways."

"Okay, drag that canvas over here and wrap it around his head."

"You really gonna do this?"

"We are."

"But that's Zevon, man. He was our friend once."

"Friends don't come back to town to fuck up everyone else's lives. If he wanted to stay my friend, he should have stayed lost. You may not have anything to lose, but I do."

"But-"

"But nothing. We talked this through. We all agreed. It's too late now, anyway. He's already more than half dead. Now get the canvas and do what I told you.The storm's blowing in faster than we thought and he's going to be here soon to get rid of the body. C'mon."

The unconscious man moaned a little as the coarse, mildewed fabric was wrapped around his head. "What's the canvas for, anyways?" "Think about it."

"Oh."

"Exactly. You got the tarp ready for him? The rope?" "Yeah."

Outside there was already six inches on the ground and the roads were slick from the layer of sleet that had come before the snow. As he swung around to back up to the bay door, he checked his rearview mirror and saw two quick flashes of lightning and heard two muted claps of thunder. It was done. Zevon was dead. Now the time had come to play his part in keeping the past buried. Yet he understood that this particular episode of thunder and lightning, like their prior sins, was of their own doing and pushed them even further away from heaven than they already were. That the past was unrelenting and that no grave was deep enough to keep it buried forever.

3

Jesse hadn't slept a wink after getting horne. He hadn't tried. He did manage to polish off two Black Labels. That's why he'd headed horne in the first place. Sleep hadn't ever been a part of the plan, not really. It was always about the drinks. Drinkers are great rationalizers, spin ning tales that only they will hear. Tales only they would believe.Jesse kept a bottle of something in his desk drawer at the station, but he didn't generally prefer drink at work or when the sun was up. Corning horne, having a drink before dinner, then one or two afterward, was sometimes how he got through the day. He knew his bottle of John nie Walker was horne waiting for him like a faithful wife. He'd had a wife once, just not a faithful one.

His ritual entailed pouring the drink-sometimes on the rocks, sometimes in a tall glass with soda-stirring it with his finger, licking the scotch off his finger, raising a toast to his poster of Ozzie Smith, and taking that first sip. Sometimes he savored it. Sometimes, like that night, it was open wide and down the hatch. Any confirmed drinker knows that ritual is as integral to the addiction as the drink ing itself. Dix was fond of saying that ritual was a secondary reinforce ment. Jesse laughed at the notion of secondary reinforcement. He liked the drinking well enough all by itself. He enjoyed the ritual on its own merits. He'd gotten some food in him, taken a shower, and watched a half hour of weather reports before heading back to work.

Whatever sleep Jesse had managed carne on the cot in his office. He was still on the cot, staring up at the ceiling, when the first dull rays of light filtered in through his window. He noticed the window was no longer being pelted and the howl of the wind had been reduced to a whisper. Morning had brought with it a soft hush. Then there was a knock at his office door.

"Corne," he said.

Luther "Suitcase" Simpson carne into the office, a lack of sleep evi dent on his puffy, still-boyish face and in his bloodshot eyes. He was moving more slowly these days, and not from lack of sleep. It was painful for Jesse to watch. A big man, Suit had been quite the high school football player in his day. But he'd been gut-shot last spring and was only now getting back to work.

"Any coffee out there?" Jesse asked, swinging his legs off the cot.

"Sure, but I wouldn't drink it. Better to save what's left and use it to strip paint."

Jesse stood, stretched the tension out of his muscles. His right shoulder aching from the damp air.

"Making a fresh pot of coffee against your religion?"

Suit reddened."I'm not Molly, Jesse. You know I'm no good at this stuff. You got to get me back on the street."

Simpson had been on light duty since his return and chafed at working the front desk. Worse, Molly Crane had taken Suit's place in the patrol rotation.

"I know this is tough for you, Suit. I already stuck my neck out by bringing you back this soon."
"I'm sorry."

"No need. I'd be mad at you if you didn't want to get back out there."

Suit smiled that broad, goofy smile of his. Jesse's opinion meant everything to him. He'd always dreamed ofliving up to Jesse Stone's standards, of being a cop good enough to work in a big city like L.A. Living up to Jesse is what had gotten him shot. He knew it.Jesse knew it, too. That's what worried him.

Jesse asked, "You going to the counseling sessions?"

The smile vanished from Suit's face. He reddened again. "Yeah, Jesse."

"Getting shot is a serious thing, Suit. It screws with your head. I can't put you back out there if you're going to doubt yourself."

"I'm going. I said I was going."

"Okay, let's talk real police work. The donut shop open?" Simpson laughed.

"I went and got some at five o'clock on the nose. They're last night's leftovers, but they're good."

Jesse put up a new pot of coffee, ate a hardened jelly donut, and asked Suit to fill him in on the storm

damage.

"Storm's almost blown itself out already," Suit said. "We had gusts up to sixty-five, but nothing now. Dumped lots of snow. About a foot, give or take. And it's that real wet, heavy snow. You know."

"Uh-huh."

"You get a lot of that wet snow back in L.A., Jesse?" "Cute. You want to earn some more time on the desk?"

For a second, Suit thought Jesse was serious.

"Anyway, there were a few trees and power lines down. I had to dispatch some cars to block roads off and put down some flares while the repair crews did their thing. There were three fender benders. Reports already filed. Only serious thing was a partial building collapse."

"Anybody injured?"

"Nah. It was one of those old abandoned factory buildings on Trench Alley. Molly's over there handlingitwith the fire department." Then, as if on cue, Molly's voice crackled through the desk speaker.

"Unit Four to dispatch, over."

"Dispatch, over," Suit said. "Is Jesse up yet? Over."

"Unit Four, Jesse's right here, over."

Jesse dispensed with protocol. "What's up, Molly?" "You better get over here, Jesse. Right now."

"What's going on?"

"We've got a body."

"Someone was killed in the collapse?"

"Someone was killed, all right, but not in the collapse. The body's in a tarp."

Trench Alley was a dingy) crooked street in the ass end of the Swap. Backed up against Sawtooth Creek and dead-ended by Pennacook Inlet, it was as Dickensian as Paradise got. Even scenic New England villages need garages, body shops, cabinetmakers, plumbing supply houses, welders, and self-storage units.

Jesse pulled up behind a fire truck. Molly Crane's cruiser was parked across the street, half on the sidewalk. The fire chief's red Jeep Cherokee was parked behind Molly's unit. When Jesse walked around the fire truck he was surprised to see Molly, Robbie Wilson, and the entire crew of firemen standing in the middle of the street, boot-deep in snow. But when he looked at the building in question, Jesse's sur prise faded away. The building was a squat red-brick affair with ply wood where windows used to be, the plywood covered in generations of frayed handbills and posters about forgotten bands and closed musicals at the Village Playhouse. The building's front right corner had collapsed into the street. You could look into the building and see that part of the back wall had collapsed inward as well.

"Robbie," Jesse said.

"Chief Stone." "Unstable, huh?"

"Badly. If I didn't get your girl out of there when I did, you might've had two bodies on your hands."

Molly bristled at being called a girl. She was only two or three years younger than Wilson and disliked him even more than Jesse did. Jesse could see Molly was about to let Wilson have it. He shook his head no at her.

"Robbie, excuse us. I need to talk to Officer Crane for a minute." "Take your time. I'm not letting anyone in there, stiff or no stiff." As they walked toward Molly's cruiser, she kept turning back to stare at Robbie Wilson. Wilson was pretty lucky that looks couldn't actually kill.

"That obnoxious little bastard," Molly said. "I should've kicked his ass in front of his men. Then we'd see who he'd be calling a girl." They sat in the front of Jesse's Explorer, the heater blowing full blast.

"Relax, Molly. Two weeks back on the street and you're already cursing like a sailor."

She smiled in spite of herse£ Jesse could do that to her.

"And no matter what he called you, he was right to get you out of that building. I can't afford you getting hurt."

"So you really do love me," she said.

"You know I do, but that's not it. With Suit on desk duty and Gabe Weathers still in rehab for his injuries, the department's two men short."

She punched him in his left biceps. Now it was his turn to smile. Then he wiped it away.

"The body in the tarp," he said.

"A passerby called the building collapse in to the desk. I had the Swap, so Suit sent me over here. It was still pretty dark when I arrived on scene. I had to look inside to see if anyone was hurt. When I got into the building I saw that another part of the roof, toward the left rear of the building, had collapsed onto some metal plates. One of the plates had been dislodged by the debris so that the plate was forced upward like one end of a seesaw. When I shined my flash in behind the plate, I saw the tarp. At first I didn't think anything of it. Maybe some forgotten equipment or building supplies or something. But when I looked at it under the flash for a minute, I saw that it was bound up with rope and shaped like a body. When I kneeled down and stuck my head into the hole, it was pretty obviously a body. I couldn't tell much about it from looking. I pushed the tarp and it felt like flesh underneath. And before you say anything, Jesse, my hand was gloved."

Jesse put up his palms. "I didn't say anything." "But you would have. I know you, Jesse."

"Maybe. Back to the body in the tarp."

"Funny thing," Molly said.

"What?"

"The tarp was pretty clean and the flesh gave when I pushed, but pushed back. It didn't seem frozen or in rigor."

"That's a lot to tell from one push with your hand. No insult, Molly, but-"

"Did I say it was one push? I pushed a few times. Then ..." She hesitated.

"Do I even want to hear this?"

"Probably not." She said it anyway. "I climbed down into the hole."

"You what? It's a crime scene, Molly. You know better than-"

"I had to check to see if the victim might be alive."

"Molly!"

"I swear, Jesse. I wasn't trying to be a hero. I thought I was doing the right thing."

"And ..."

"That's when Napoleon showed up. Suit must have called the FD after he sent me over here. Robbie ordered me out of the building. He had his guys practically drag me out of the hole when I didn't hop to. But for what it's worth, I don't think the victim was alive. He was physically unresponsive to my touch and to my verbal commands. No movement that I could detect. And when I put my hand on where I thought the chest was, there didn't seem to be any respiration."

"Anything else?"

"I think the vic's a male. Would be pretty tall if you stood him upright. Maybe six-three or -four. Broad across the shoulders."

"But you don't think he'd been there very long?" Jesse asked.

"That's my gut feeling. Of course, I don't know these things like you would. In L.A. you must have seen bodies in all sorts of places."

"Not in a snow-covered factory, Molly. We didn't get much of that sort of thing in L.A. All right, let's get back over there and see if we can't get Chief Robbie to let us retrieve the body."

But she didn't move. There was something else besides Robbie Wilson bothering her.Jesse could see it on her face. He put a hand on her shoulder.

"It's okay, Molly. You did good. I'm proud of you for-"

"It 's not th at, Jesse."

"Then what?"

"I can't put it in words. It's just when I was down there with the vic ... I ... it was just strange. It felt like I had a connection to him."

Jesse nodded. It was like that sometimes. On most occasions, a body was just a body to a cop. It wasn't callousness. It was an attitude born of repeated exposure and self-protection. But there were moments when you couldn't help but feel a kind of weird connection to the victim.

"It happens. I know. Don't beat yourself up over it. Now, let's go," he said.

They got out of the SUV.Just then an inhuman groan filled the air. "Watch it!" one of the firemen shouted. "Stand back. She's going!" The ground shook beneath their feet. Jesse and Molly ran around the fire truck and saw that the building was gone. The roof lay half way into Trench Alley.

It had taken down the rusted cyclone fence that had surrounded the empty, rubble-filled lot next door. "Everybody okay, Robbie?" Jesse said.

"Fine. We're all clear. You both all right, Chief Stone?"

"We're good."

"That stiff of yours is good and buried now."

Not for long, Jesse Stone thought. *Not for long.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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The guide untitled Robert B. Parker's the Devil Wins: A Jesse Stone Novel is the publication that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the guide content that will be shown to a person. The language that creator use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The article author was did a lot of research when write the book, hence the information that they share to you is absolutely accurate. You also will get the e-book of Robert B. Parker's the Devil Wins: A Jesse Stone Novel from the publisher to make you considerably more enjoy free time.

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