

ROBERT B. PARKER'S
BROKEN
TRUST

THE SPENSER NOVELS

Robert B. Parker's Broken Trust

(by Mike Lupica)

Robert B. Parker's Bye Bye Baby

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Someone to Watch Over Me

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Angel Eyes

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Old Black Magic

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Little White Lies

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Slow Burn

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Kickback

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Cheap Shot

(by Ace Atkins)

Silent Night

(with Helen Brann)

Robert B. Parker's Wonderland

(by Ace Atkins)

Robert B. Parker's Lullaby

(by Ace Atkins)

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Painted Ladies
The Professional
Rough Weather
Now & Then
Hundred-Dollar Baby
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Hush Money
Sudden Mischief
Small Vices
Chance
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MIKE LUPICA

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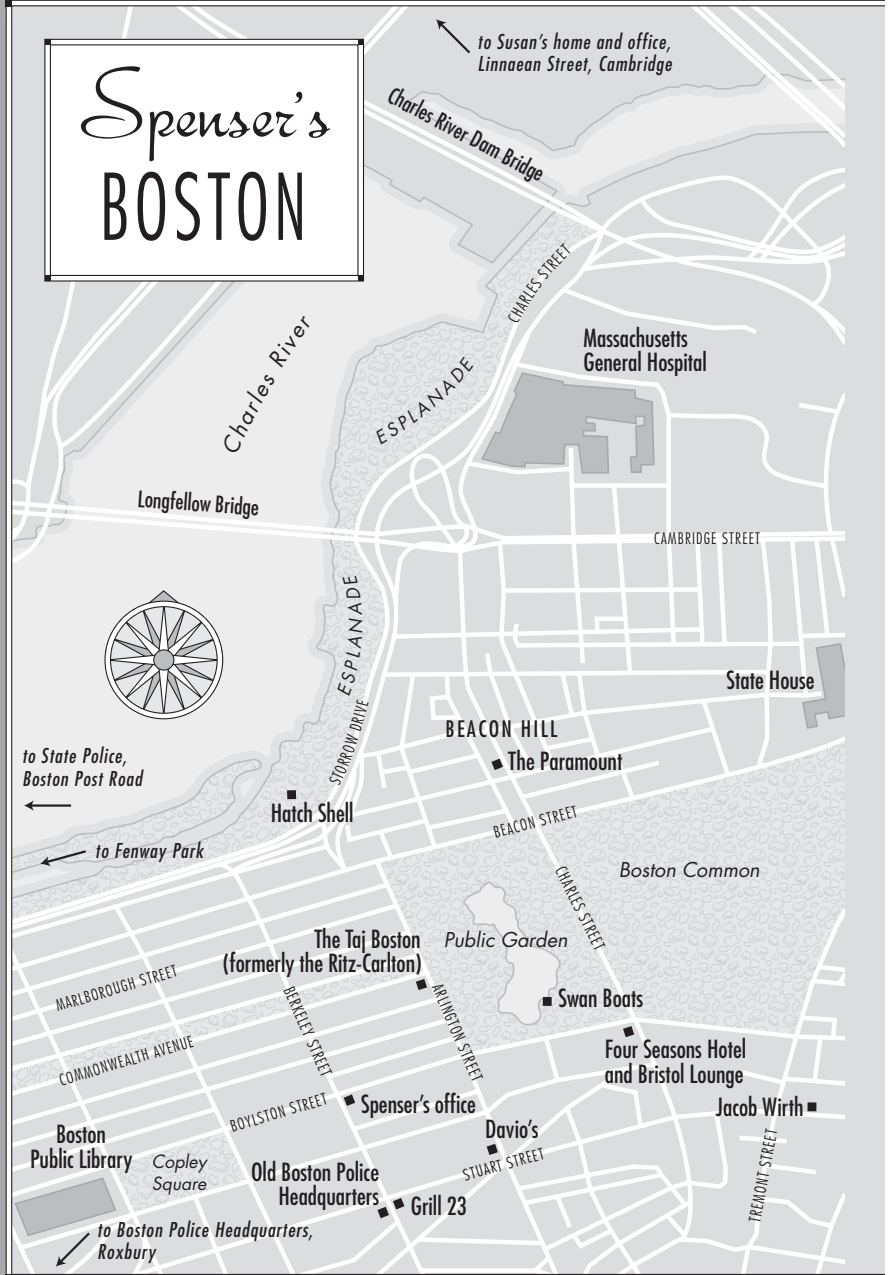
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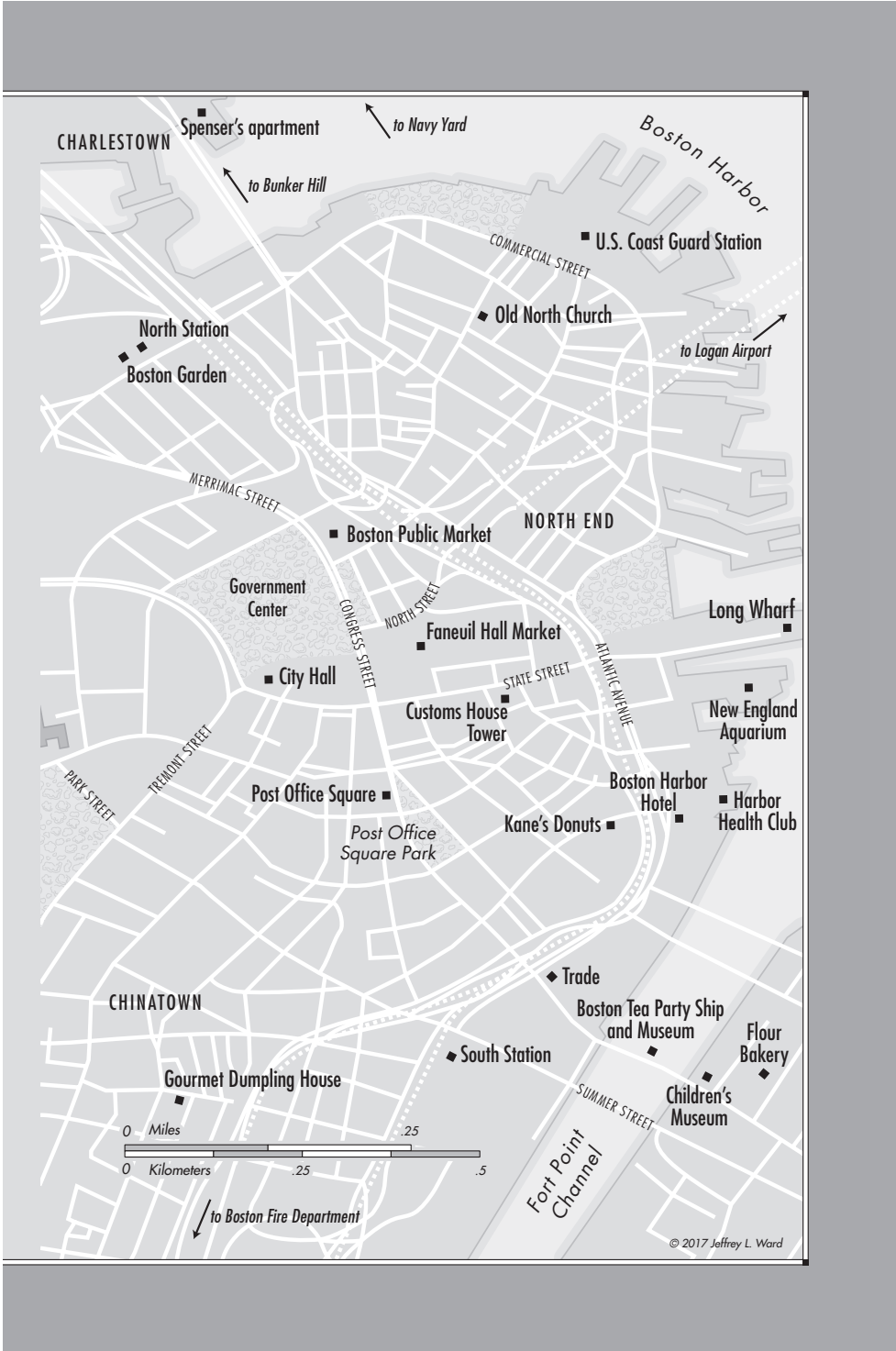
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

This book is for my friend James Patterson.

Spenser's BOSTON







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ONE

I was sitting at my desk drinking my third cup of coffee of the morning. I was doing this guilt-free, having read that two to five cups a day not only prevented a long list of diseases, but also helped you live a longer, if more caffeinated, life. But then you can always find somewhere on the Internet that tells you what you want to hear, about almost anything.

I was certain that if I looked long enough, I could find a site promising a reasonably priced way for me to look like Bradley Cooper.

By now I had already made short work of the second Boston Kreme I'd picked up at the Dunkin' just down Boylston from my office, the one near the Public Library. Two blocks down, two blocks back. But I had walked briskly, telling myself it was exercise, even if the prize had

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been the donuts, which didn't extend your life, just made it more worth living.

Dunkin' Donuts had long since rebranded and was just calling itself Dunkin' now. I had considered doing something similar, but knew it was too late for that. And when it came to branding yourself with just one name, I had frankly been way ahead of the game.

Carol Sloane's voice was coming out of the tiny speaker near the Keurig machine and I was methodically making my way through the print edition of *The Globe*, as I still did every morning, front to back, section by section, saving sports for last. The man who owned *The Globe* also owned the Red Sox. The paper was having a far better September than his baseball team was.

But then just about everybody was. It had reached the point where I was no longer certain that the two guys who were supposed to be our top starting pitchers were actually still right-handed.

"Maybe you should think about finding a new hobby," Hawk had said the other day after listening to me bitching again about the local nine.

"I've got too much time invested in them," I said. "It's the same reason I'm still with you."

"You're with me," Hawk said, "because I don't have no bad years."

We had just finished moving the last of my furniture that we could carry ourselves into my new apartment, which just happened to be a few doors down from the one I'd been burned out of a few years ago. It was the event that had prompted my move away from Marlborough Street and all the way to the Charleston Navy Yard.

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At the time Susan Silverman, trying to mitigate my loss, had said that while it had been the equivalent of a forced eviction, it might have been time for a change, even though she knew better than anyone that I liked change about as much as I liked TikTok.

“Most people do move sooner or later,” Susan said.

“The Red Sox haven’t,” I said.

She had promised that I would embrace the new place once I was in it, and proceeded to move in and decorate it like an invading ground force. And eventually I had grown both fond and familiar with my new surroundings, the neighborhood, the proximity to the Navy Yard, even the younger vibe over there, as if I were the one who was young and had moved to Boston all over again.

But recently I’d done some work for a man named Kevin Boles, who owned great big chunks of property in Back Bay, getting Boles’s son out of a jam with Tony Marcus that involved substantial gambling losses that Tony had decided required more than just money in payment. Tony wanted real estate favors from Kevin Boles, specifically involving a particular building he hoped to use for a new escort service on Charles Street now that COVID was over and the sex trade was booming again.

Boles had come to me and I had gone to Tony, reminding him that he owed me a favor. Tony told me that he didn’t owe me shit and get the fuck out of his office. But being as transactional as he’d always been, an accommodation had been reached and he got the building he wanted. Kevin Boles considered it a small price to pay to get his son clear of Tony, and even after he’d generously settled up with me, he said that he was the one who now owed me a favor.

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About a week later he'd called and told me that an apartment on Marlborough near the corner of Arlington had opened up, having remembered me mentioning that I'd lived on the same part of that street before what I called the Great Boston Fire. Boles said that the apartment hadn't yet gone on the market, and asked if I might be interested in moving back to the old neighborhood. I surprised myself at how quickly I said that I was. He said he could give me a break on the rent. I told him that wasn't necessary. He insisted. A month away from the end of my lease in Charlestown, I signed the lease that day, put down a deposit, and just like that Daddy was home.

"Do you know how much I've missed walking to work?" I said to Susan the first time we stepped into the empty apartment.

"At this point, people in outer space know that."

She asked me just how much Kevin Boles had paid for my services, and how much of a break he was giving me on the rent. I told her. At which point she had smiled, wickedly. Susan has a lot of smiles, most of which make me feel light-headed and oxygen-deprived when directed at me.

This one, I knew from experience, was going to cost me money.

"I know that look," I said.

"What look is that?" she asked innocently.

"The one where you can't wait for the stores to open."

She'd kissed me then and said, "Don't you worry your pretty little head about it."

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The new apartment, about the same size as the old one, didn't actually feel like home yet. But I was getting there. Pearl the Wonder Dog had already settled in quite nicely when she and Susan would be there for sleepovers. Pearl hadn't come right out and said how much she liked it that she could walk to work with me, too, when Susan would leave her with me. It was more something I had intuited.

Now I just needed work, as there hadn't been any since I'd saved Kevin Boles's son.

"If you can walk to work but there ain't no work," Hawk had said, "answer me something: What's the fucking point?"

I was pondering that, and whether I should walk back down to Dunkin' for more donuts before I got too close to lunch, when there was a knock on my door and the wife of the sixth-richest man in America came walking in.

TWO

Laura Crain was a friend of Susan's from a couple charity boards they both served on in Boston, one of which—the Jimmy Fund—was as famous a charity as there was in the city, aligned with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and deeply connected to the Red Sox all the way back to when Ted Williams had first gotten involved.

Susan and Laura Crain shared a Pure Barre class a couple times a week and would meet occasionally for lunch. I knew that Susan liked her very much, as rich and famous as Laura and her husband were, and not just in Boston.

Laura had met Andrew Crain when they were both students at Harvard. Laura was an English major. He was a full-fledged, card-carrying Division of Science nerd, along with his best friend, Ethan Lowe. I knew the general outline of their shared biography, because by now most people in America knew it. Five years after Lowe and Andrew

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Crain graduated, working out of a small rented lab in Dorchester, they had invented a synthetic form of lithium that had reimagined the world of batteries forever.

Susan had mentioned in passing a few weeks earlier that I might be hearing from her friend Laura about a problem she was having, one she'd shared in confidence with Susan.

"Are you treating her now?"

"Not professionally. Just hearing her out as a friend and offering advice when she's asked for it."

"And she has a problem that you can't solve?" I said. "What is it, the melting of the ice caps?"

"She'll tell you when the two of you meet," Susan said, "if she doesn't lose her nerve."

"Couldn't she buy some nerve?" I'd asked. "I assume she can afford it."

"Let's just wait and see," Susan said. "She should be the one to tell you what's happening in her life. But I told *her* that if anybody could help her, it's my cutie."

Now Laura Crain sat across my desk from me. Tall. Honey-colored hair hanging to her shoulders. Blazer, white jeans that fit her the way God intended jeans to fit women with legs as long as hers, ankle boots. Whatever her actual age was, I had already decided she looked younger. She reminded me of a slightly younger version of Julia Roberts, not that I would ever say that to Julia.

A knockout by any measure. It was something I knew I couldn't verbalize without sounding as if I were objectifying her, and being on my way to Weinstein Island.

But Andrew Crain, I could see, hadn't just gotten stupidly rich. He had even gotten the girl.

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“So you’re Spenser,” she said, crossing one long leg over the other.

“I am he,” I said.

I had come around the desk to greet her when she’d arrived. In the post-pandemic world I’d first asked if she wanted to shake hands before extending mine. She’d said she’d risk it if I would.

“People often say ‘I am him,’” I said. “But that’s ignoring the fact that ‘he’ is actually supposed to be a predicate nominative renaming the subject.”

She smiled. It was, by any measure, a high-wattage dazzler, if not of Susan quality, at least in the conversation. Susan had prepared me for how lovely Laura Crain was. I was certain I would be cross-questioned later about just *how* lovely I thought she was.

“Susan told me about you,” she said.

I ducked my head in false modesty.

“The rugged good looks?” I said. “Or devilish charm?”

She shook her head slowly from side to side, as if in the presence of a precocious child.

Which, all things considered, she was.

“She actually told me how hard you’d try, almost immediately, to show me what a literate detective you are,” she said. “And that if I didn’t acknowledge that fact you might get the bends.”

“I can also diagram some sentences if you want,” I said.

“Maybe when we know each other better.”

Now I smiled at her.

“Want to can the small talk?”

“I’d be willing to pay you,” she said.

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I asked if she wanted coffee. She said thank you, but she'd pass, she was trying to quit caffeine. I told her I didn't want to live in that world. She managed to contain her laughter, but I sensed it was difficult for her.

"Might I offer just one last tiny bit of small talk?" she said.

"Okay, but *just* one."

"You really are as big as Susan said you were."

"Well, sure, but I come by it naturally."

We sat there in silence for a few moments, as if each of us were waiting for the other to make the next move. It often went this way with potential clients, like an awkward first date, and just how much they wanted to drop their guard.

"So how can I help you, Mrs. Crain?"

"Please. *Laura*."

"So how can I help you, Laura."

Her blue eyes were so pale as to be as clear as glass.

"That's the thing," she said. "You probably can't."