



Butcher's Moon

Richard Stark

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The sixteenth Parker novel, *Butcher's Moon* is more than twice as long most of the master heister's adventures, and absolutely jammed with the action, violence, and nerve-jangling tension readers have come to expect. Back in the corrupt town where he lost his money, and nearly his life, in *Slayground*, Parker assembles a stunning cast of characters from throughout his career for one gigantic, blowout job: starting—and finishing—a gang war. It feels like the Parker novel to end all Parker novels, and for nearly twenty-five years that's what it was. After its publication in 1974, Donald Westlake said, "Richard Stark proved to me that he had a life of his own by simply disappearing. He was gone."

Featuring a new introduction by Westlake's close friend and writing partner, Lawrence Sanders, this classic Parker adventures deserve a place of honor on any crime fan's bookshelf. More than thirty-five years later, *Butcher's Moon* still packs a punch: keep your calendar clear when you pick it up, because once you open it you won't want to do anything but read until the last shot is fired.

Butcher's Moon Details

Date : Published June 1st 1985 by Avon (first published 1974)

ISBN : 9780380699070

Author : Richard Stark

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Noir, Thriller

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From Reader Review Butcher's Moon for online ebook

Midwest Geek says

I finally got around to reading this well-known culmination of the early Parker novels. (Actually, I listened to the audiobook, expertly read by Joe Barrett.) If you are not already familiar with Richard Stark's Parker series, don't read this one until you are. This is a kind of summing up of the preceding 15 or so Parker novels and is nearly twice as long as most of the earlier ones. Stark (real name-Donald Westlake) published the first of the Parker series in 1962, and this book was published in 1974, as a wind-up to the series. Indeed, it came as a surprise to Parker fans when, in 1997, Stark took up the series anew with the publication of *Comeback*.

Parker is a career thief who also kills with abandon but generally only murders others who either are or would be likely to kill him if given the opportunity. He is ethical in his own way; he treats other thieves with respect and never cheats or double-crosses them. As a result, he has an impeccable reputation. At the same time, he has no real friends among them. Indeed, except for the woman whom he finally takes as his live-in companion, he seems completely antisocial.

This story is actually two-fold, the first of which is a mystery that is concerned with who stole Parker's loot that he was forced to abandon while escaping from an earlier job. Once solved, the second involves Parker's revenge, calling in about a dozen of his primary partners from previous books, although his principal current partner, a stage actor/producer named Alan Grofield, also falls into this category, having first appeared as Parker's accomplice in *The Score*. Grofield also appears as the main character in three or four other of Stark's mysteries.

The reason I recommend against reading this first is not that it cannot be understood in standalone mode but because it very much enhanced my pleasure to recall earlier stories when his partners are re-introduced here. BTW, there is a web site devoted to Parker and his partners-in-crime in all media forms. See also the blog linked there for background on the site.

Kemper says

This is a notable book in the Parker series because for a long time it looked like it'd be the last one that Richard Stark (a/k/a Donald E. Westlake) ever wrote since it was over twenty years before he finally did another one.

This one is also a personal milestone since it's the last Parker novel that I haven't read before. Westlake died a few years ago, so that means it's the last new Parker novel I'll ever read.

Stupid death.

As a personal ending point for me, it's a humdinger though. Parker has been on a string of bad luck with all his potential scores going sour, and he's hurting for cash. He decides to go back to where he left a bag of loot hidden in an amusement park while on the run from gangsters and dirty cops in *Slayground*. And by amusement park, I mean that Parker amused himself by killing everyone they sent into the park after him.

Fellow thief Grofield was in on that heist and Parker asks him to go along and help get their money back, but

when they find it missing from the spot Parker stashed it, he thinks the local criminal kingpin's people must have found it after he left. When Parker decides that you've got his money, he's going to get it back one way or another.

After the situation escalates, Parker eventually calls in a crew for a bit of stealing and revenge, and this leads to a kind of review of past novels with characters from previous jobs Parker has pulled showing up. There's also a feeling that this one is calling back to the beginning of the series where Parker had gone up against a large group of criminals to get back what he felt he was owed.

It hit me in this one that although Parker has always been seen as an anti-social bastard who only cares about the money, that he has gone out of his way for the few people that are the closest things he has to friends on a few occasions. He has also earned a lot of respect from his fellow thieves for his bold jobs and never double crossing anyone. You'd almost think that Parker is getting soft in his old age. Until he starts murdering a whole bunch of people.

This is yet another great book about one of the legendary anti-heroes of crime fiction. I just wish there were a couple of dozen more new ones waiting for me to read.

James Thane says

First published in 1974, this is the sixteenth book in Richard Stark's acclaimed series featuring Parker, the amoral antihero criminal mastermind. While the book can be read as a stand-alone, it is really the capstone of the series to that point and the last Parker novel that would appear until Comeback, a full twenty-three years later.

The original plan seems simple enough: Two years earlier (in Slayground), Parker and several confederates hit an armored car in the Midwestern town of Tyler for \$73,000. But before they could get away, the cops closed in and Parker was forced to hide out in an amusement park that was closed for the winter. A group of mobsters and a few corrupt cops laid siege to the park in the hope of separating Parker from the money. Ultimately, Parker hid the money in the park and managed to escape.

Now, after another job has come up empty, Parker decides to go back to Tyler and retrieve the \$73,000. He recruits Alan Grofield, one of his long-time associates, and the two of them quietly go to Tyler, wait for the amusement park to close for the night, and head for the spot where Parker hid the loot.

It isn't there.

This will come as no great surprise to the reader because this is the longest of the Parker novels and Parker and Grofield discover that the money is gone on page 21, which means that they will have to spend the rest of the book attempting to get the money back.

Parker is not really surprised to find the money missing either. He reaches the logical conclusion that, in the wake of his escape, the mobsters searched the park until they found the money and appropriated it for their own purposes.

Parker explains to Grofield that he knows who the boss of the local mob is. Parker calls the guy and politely

asks that he return Parker's money. Not surprisingly, the mobster claims that he doesn't have it. He insists that his men *did* search the park but couldn't find it. Parker naturally refuses to believe him and takes several steps to demonstrate that the mobster should not take his threats lightly.

As it happens, Parker and Grofield have arrived in town at a critical time for the local mob. A gang war is brewing and Parker decides that he'll show the locals what a real gang war looks like. He recruits his own gang, composed of a number of characters from the earlier Parker novels, and goes after the mobsters, leading to a sensational climax befitting what Stark originally intended to be the last book in the series.

This is a gripping and very entertaining book that will appeal especially to those who have read the earlier Parker books and who will recognize so many of the characters that Stark resurrects. But it's hard to imagine that anyone who loves crime fiction will not thoroughly enjoy *Butcher's Moon*.

Mike (the Paladin) says

This is the longest Parker book I've read and I think the longest in the series (more than twice as long as the others). That said you don't lose any quality here and there is very little if any flagging. Here Parker goes back to retrieve the money he left behind in *Slayground*. For Parker (in the book) only a couple of years have passed (though for the reader when the books were published for the first time more than 20 years had gone by). Now Parker and the surviving partner from the fiasco that the armored car job in *Slayground* turned out to go back to "simply" retrieve "their" money...

But it's not there and before things are over Parker is involved in (possibly starts?) a full-fledged gang war...

Worth reading, recommended, enjoy.

Randy says

The last of the Parkers for me. And my favorite of the series.

Parker is on one of those occasional dry spells and decides to retrieve the money he'd hid from a previous job so that he could manage his escape from the pursuing police and their criminal associates(Slayride). He gets his partner from the job, Grofeld, and when they get there, in the amusement park, the stash is gone.

He knows the people who were looking for him back then and goes to them for his money.

At the time, it was the last Parker novel for over twenty years and a fitting conclusion. He brings in a number of folks he's worked with in other books and goes after the bad guys, whether cops or out-and-out criminals.

Then the double cross happens.

One thing one doesn't do is cross Parker. He doesn't take that sort of thing well.

Jeremy Hornik says

The last Parker written before the long break. It's got characters from like ten books in it, but it still all works. He wants his money. People should give it to him.

David says

The Hunter + The Score = Butcher's Moon. For more than two decades, it seemed that *Butcher's Moon* would be the last Parker novel, and I have to admit that some small part of me wishes that it were, as it makes a perfect coda to original series of novels (and is even richer still if you have read the Grofield novels, too). Having said that, however, I will relish reading *Comeback*, and I will not feel obligated to wait 23 years before I do it.

Erik says

“Running toward the light, Parker fired twice over his left shoulder, not caring whether he hit anything or not.”

Easily the best Parker novel, wrapping up the preceding fifteen novels in a neat little ultraviolent package.

F.R. says

I actually quite like those later Parker novels, but you can see why Richard Stark may have preferred to go out on a nitroglycerin bang with this one. The phrase that follows is normally a trite old cliché, but in this case is genuinely true – this is the Parker novel to end all Parker novels. ‘Butcher’s Moon’ rolls together all the attitude, themes and even the various crews of the earlier books into an genuinely thrilling read.

After a particularly bad streak, Parker remembers that he stashed some money in an amusement park in Tyler (at the end of ‘Slayground’) and so enlists Grofield to go and fetch it. However the local mob isn’t overly happy with the thought of giving the money back and so Parker determines to teach them a lesson. When that doesn’t work, he enlists some old friends to burn their world down.

This is a bravura performance. Stark keeps the momentum of the plot progressing like a speeding getaway car. At the same time managing to flesh out Parker’s crew, give us a well defined selection of bad guys (bad guys, of course, being a relative term), as well as the normal selection of innocent and not so innocent bystanders. With foot on the accelerator, the pace never lessens for a paragraph, with the result that this is the first book in a long while where I was desperate each and every time to get started on the next chapter.

It’d certainly best to have a working knowledge of the Parker novels before this one, but if you don’t – then just enjoy the ride and think what fun you’ll have filling in the gaps in your understanding.

Michael Emond says

I'm a huge Parker fan and this novel is the best of an incredible series. What a perfect way to wrap up the series by making a double length novel that fits nicely into two parts. First part - Parker and Grofield team up to recover the money Parker lost in Slayground. Second part, Parker gets the gang together to rescue Grofield. Now, you might say "it wasn't the end of the series - many books came after that" BUT for over a decade it was the end and it looked like Rickard Stark (aka Donald Westlake) wouldn't write another Parker novel...until he couldn't help himself and Comeback was released.

If you are a Parker fan you have to read this. If you aren't - this isn't the book to start with because the joy of reading it is multiplied because it brings back characters from earlier Parker novels. In fact - the edition was originally going to have footnotes about which books the characters mentioned first/last appeared and its a shame it didn't. But true Parker fans can make the connections without the footnotes.

Why do I love Parker so much? Tightly plotted stories, a protagonist who is of few words but is smart and efficient, fun and enjoyable heists. I appreciate that Parker is a character that we can root for because he is so smart. The crises in the stories aren't because of his mistakes or failings but because of things beyond his control. He is of so few words but the writer, Stark, fills out his personality with his actions. In fact - this story is also notable for the "emotional outburst" Parker has when he decides to rescue Grofield. One of the other crooks asks why he is doing it - it is so unlike Parker to risk his life going back for someone. Parker gets mad he even has to explain himself. Probably because he can't. It is unlike Parker but at the same time it is perfectly Parker, because the people holding Grofield made it personal. And you don't want to make it personal when that person is Parker.

Dave says

How good is the sixteenth Parker novel "Butcher's Moon"? It's so damn good that, after reading it, people sat around with their hands folded for twenty-three long years, staring at the walls and waiting for the next Parker book. This book reminded me of the first and third Parker books when a young Parker decides the Outfit owes him money and there will be nothing but havoc until he gets his money. In fact, here, Parker even has the head of the local outfit call Karns and ask whether or not he should pay Parker. Two years earlier, Parker and Grofield pulled off an armored car robbery that went wrong. As detailed in "The Blackbird," Grofield ended up in a hospital and sent on a mission by the CIA. As detailed in "Slayground," Parker made off with the bag of loot: \$73,000. But he had to hide in an amusement park where he was chased by twenty hoods who wanted his dough. In escaping he had to stash the loot. Two years later, he suddenly decided to back for the loot, grabs Grofield, and goes. Convinced the local mob grabbed it, he sets out to wreak absolute havoc in their world until they pay him what they took. This is Parker tough, unyielding, uncompromising, and in the middle of a local gang war that will leave few standing when the smoke clears. A terrific crime novel and one of the best of the series. Sardonic, nasty, tight.

John Culuris says

I wonder if I would still feel the same sense of closure if I didn't already know it would be over twenty years

before Parker would “comeback.” (Of course this is not counting his appearance as a character in a novel **within** the Dortmunder novel: *Jimmy the Kid*; a book I don’t consider a part of the Parker progression but still plan to read one day.) *Butcher’s Moon* immediately brings to mind *The Hunter*, where we first met Parker. Somebody has money that belongs to Parker and he’s going to get it back no matter what, a plot element that now brackets the series. Other observations: this is a much thicker book than the others and Westlake also abandons the four part structure.

And it is a reunion of sorts. Half of the take is Grofield’s, so he’s there for the recovery attempt. And it becomes complicated enough that more help is needed. Handy McKay comes out of retirement. And others that we’ve met--and Parker hasn’t killed yet--appear. A professional gathering for the thieves and a celebration for us. It was the satisfying ending that Westlake intended.

Fair Warning: Part of what makes this a 5-Star rating is how it wraps up the series, and it may not translate to those who do not know its history.

David Joseph Mikels says

This is my favorite series of crime books Parker never gets old. I hope they make more movies of the Parker series. Ashton Kutcher would be a spot on match for Stan Devers, just as Jason Statham was perfect for Parker

Piker7977 says

The fallout from a two year old armored car robbery (Slayground) has left Parker in a tight spot. When he goes looking for his lost loot, he finds it missing. He wants his money but the "organization" who was at odds with Parker over the heist claims they don't have possession of it. So where does this leave our main man? Driving with part time thief and actor Grofield to the city of Tyler in order to reclaim Parker's money and be on their merry way. Only it's not quite that simple. The town is run by the same hoods that may have Parker's money and worse yet ... it is days away from a mayoral election in which the interests of organized crime are at stake. The last thing these thugs want is Parker sniffing around, causing trouble. Parker must decide if interfering with local politics and organized crime is worth the return of his loot. He will also find out who his real friends are and how far his code of "play the hand your dealt" will stretch in order to fulfill his intentions.

Butcher's Moon contains some of the best staples of the Parker series while adding some new elements in the mix. First, let's start with the good and familiar. It's got the number one amoral badass that everyone loves: Parker. Like always, he's chasing a payday and is behind due to some unforeseen circumstances. But he gets right in the thick of the action in order to see his quest through. Punching, shooting, slapping, sneaking, hiding, and driving are all methods that our antihero utilizes throughout the book. And it's great.

We also have the return of some awesome side characters. (I've got a soft spot for Grofield). For those who have been loyal readers of the series, many of the names and backgrounds will bring back some fond memories of criminal mayhem. Parker has assembled a group of tough sonsabitches to do battle with modern gangsters and let me tell ya ... pretty good lineup.

There is something new about Butcher's Moon ... well at least for a Parker entry. It's long, which is a good addition. The reader gets double the trouble with a 300 page offering. Stark (Westlake) also provides more context and dialogue. This was definitely not the case with the previous books which gives it the feel of a more traditional crime novel but no like an old Parker. The narrative flow doesn't quite have the same pace as the others. The different: more dialogue as Parker says some really cool lines as opposed to stacking up corpses and the plot has a very long fuse that leads to a big boom in the last 25 pages or so. All of this is new and all of this was appreciated.

Last but not least, the descriptive violence is ramped up. This creates a more serious, rated R Parker story with a, again, different feel than the other capers. I'd say the body count was low but when someone gets popped it often involves a grotesque description of what body part got nailed. This renders the action more thrilling but less fun and creative as the older books. Plus there are a ton of F bombs which feel right in the mix and also show that this was written in a different time (1974) than the Hunter (1962).

Parker is different in this one. He sheds his "doesn't give a shit unless it concerns my money" persona and actually implements a seething desire for revenge. This is new and refreshing but yet seems a little alien. Same with the crew that Parker has assembled. With so many former references and characters, it can be a little overwhelming to comprehend them all without rereading a few chapters from previous books. Come on University of Chicago Press! You publish all sorts of academic works...throw in a footnote here and there. Even though they come together nicely, many of the best supporting crooks have been killed off in previous entries. This cohort is good, but I wouldn't consider it to be Parker's The Last Waltz farewell concert or anything like that.

If you've gotten here I imagine that you have read all the books up until Butcher's Moon. Congratulations! You've spent hours with the world's greatest heistman and learned a thing or two about great crime fiction. This criminal capstone (at least originally intended) was worth the ride and journey. Now let's see who/what is/are robbed, slapped, punched, beaten, fleeced, shot, dropped, betrayed, partnered up with, ratted on, and/or paid off in the upcoming novels in this superb series.

Mohammed says

I can see why this was the last one written of the original series. Stark perfected the Parker story, formula. The writing, the many different viewpoints, the characters, the pace, the story, the heists. This is Parker at his most cold blooded and brutal, his smartest. He is so hardcore, ruthless when he takes on his enemies. The action, the twists, is breakneck, believable and thrilling.

It is not only the best in the series, it's a massive novel and an alltime great. It was truly the Parker novel to end all Parker novels. Before I thought how could Stark leave Parker series to hang for 24 years but now I understand. Stark, Parker went out at their peak and no reason to keep writing the year after this novel really.

David Schaafsma says

"I'm only the messenger!"

"Now you're the message," Parker said, and shot him.

Butcher's Moon, the 16th Parker book from Richard Stark (Donald Westlake), the last he would write for 24 years, is more than twice as long as any previous entry in the series, looking like a big finish, with appearances by characters from many previous books, making it feel like a Big Finale. This book is one of the best, but it is not to be read first in the series. The feel of it is on a grand scale, operatic, more expansive than any other Parker book.

The book returns to the location of Slayground, Fun Island, an amusement park where Parker had left \$72K. The book begins with a failed heist, and the last couple books have seen other failed endeavors, so we know he is broke. And here we are again, with the witty and popular Grofield, who deserves his half of that take. Of course the local mob already took the money, and spent it, and refuse to talk to Parker.

"Call him and ask him," the voice said, "what you should do if you owe some money to a guy named Parker."

Some Stark fans don't like this expansive aspect of the book. Too long. We get to know more than we ever knew about Grofield and his theater life, and his pursuit, during the set-up of the job, of a pretty librarian.

"Wake up, sweetheart," Grofield murmured. "We seem to be having intercourse."

We get to know more than ever about the local political corruption, which is deep and complicated. But I think it is part of the making of the grand scale, to create the slow(er) march to the fireworks at the end.

Then Grofield is captured, and the local mob does something to him to try to dissuade Parker from continuing his quest, and that triggers some of the bloodiest violence in the series.

The critics ask: Would Parker want to help Grofield? Would he want to enact revenge for him? Parker takes the act(s) against Grofield personally, but he also intends to rescue Grofield (after making sure he gets money). He is loyal to his partners. Parker rarely kills people, but in this book he seems enraged at the mob's refusal to repay him. Remember the title, Butcher's Moon?

The "revenge" involves multiple hits on mob men, bringing us back us back to one of the first Parker books, The Outfit, after his first wife and a friend had screwed him over for the mob, when Parker coordinates a series of nationwide revenge attacks. In both books, hits happen on multiple fronts, a gang war.

It's a great, operatic finish, with a flourish, layered and powerful. One of his very best.

P.S. And does this end everything for the Parker series? Well, this is book 16 of 24. But he didn't write #17 until 24 years later! I don't know exactly why he stopped, or why he (Stark, Westlake's pseudonym for this series) began again. After Butcher's Moon's publication in 1974, Donald Westlake said, "Richard Stark proved to me that he had a life of his own by simply disappearing."

Jim says

June 2017 Review I'm giving this an extra star. I still think the end was overblown, but I liked it better this time. This time I read it directly after Slayground for reasons that are obvious if you've read it. I highly recommend reading all the other Parker & Grofield books first. This one wraps them all up with a bow.

April 2015 Review Twice as long as the preceding books, I was worried that Westlake had gone all Stephen King or something. He didn't. Still the same tight prose that I love. Same Parker, too. In fact, this whole story is a walk down memory lane, but just by touching on each item & character. Not a lot of detail to bore the reader familiar with the series. **There are far too many spoilers if you haven't read the preceding books!!!** You have been warned. Read the others & at least the first Grofield book before reading this.

This was a 4 star read until the end which was just too overblown for me. One of the things I like so much about this series is that while Parker & his associates (He has no pals.) have pulled more complex jobs than is believable, each story is very believable. There's very little hyperbole save for Parker's understated, almost machine-like performance. The last big scene just went off the reservation, though. (view spoiler) No, it was just too much. Some finesse would have been appreciated, but instead it was just heavy-handed.

Aside from that, it was a really fun read, though. As usual, very well read. The best news is my library has most of the rest available now, too. I'm still looking forward to the next one.

Jane Stewart says

Great suspense. Great read. A lot of killing. I was smiling a lot at the end.

This is one of the best Parker books. It's better if you read Slayground before this. This continues that story. This is sooo good. Great revenge! Parker takes on a local mob. They are no match for Parker. They are like children next to him.

I was intrigued with a comment in the Forward by Lawrence Block. When Stark was writing the first Parker novel, Block asked Stark if he knew where the story was going. Stark said "Sort of. I'll just keep writing and see where it goes." That reminded me of Stephen King. King said something like he never knows his plot or ending in advance. He just starts with an inspiration. I think that's a great way to write. Stark is doing the same.

The narrator Joe Barrett was pretty good, but I did not like his voice for Parker. It sounded too normal-guy-like. I prefer Keith Szarabajka.

THE SERIES:

This is book 16 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 ½ 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 ½ stars. The Sour Lemon Score (Bk #12)
2 ½ stars. Firebreak (Bk #20)
(not read) Nobody Runs Forever (Bk #22)
2 ½ 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: 10 hrs and 6 mins. Swearing language: moderate including religious swear words. Sexual content: one scene briefly referred to. Setting: around 1974 mostly the town of Tyler. Book copyright: 1974. Genre: noir crime fiction.

K says

This, the 16th in the Parker series, was pretty grim, longer than average, and on the whole, a bit less enjoyable for me than earlier works in this series.

I really enjoy the complex, but nevertheless, rather sociopathic Parker- a tough character who is guided by his own sense of fairness, but is just as ruthless as anyone when it serves his purpose.

He and a colleague venture into a small but predictably corrupt town to recover a stolen cache that Parker had stashed some time before. Unfortunately for the town's corrupt mayor, mobbed up "goodfellas," and dirty cops, Parker isn't one to say "easy come, easy go" upon discovering that his ill-gotten goods have been subsequently purloined by someone connected to the town's controlling mobster. Parker is determined to have his money returned to him (stolen or not), and will stop at nothing to assure that outcome.

Well, one can imagine the fun that ensues when the bad guys underestimate both Parker's resolve and talents. One twist in this book that I found interesting was the inclusion toward the latter part of the story, of a small "army" of Parker's associates, gathered from previous novels; all hard men, all willing to work with Parker not only for the good return on investment of their time, but out of sheer respect for Parker and the way he conducts his business. Professional courtesy of sorts.

As with any Parker book, there's humor, and I enjoy the author's subtle use of it, but frankly found this story, on the whole, rather darker and more depressing than most of these novels.

Be that as it may, it's still well worth the reading, especially for fans of Parker, or of any of Richard Stark's (actually, Don Westlake) work.

Dan Schwent says

Short on cash, Parker and Grofield return to Tyler to get some money Parker stashed in an amusement park. But the money isn't there and signs point to the local mob, which is in the midst of a power struggle.

Whichever party comes out on top had better remember that **when Parker is owed money, he always collects, one way or another...**

I'd been waiting for over six months for Butcher's Moon to be reprinted by University of Chicago Press. Was it worth the wait? Hell yes!

Butcher's Moon was the last Parker book of the original run and there's a feel of finality to it. Parker and Grofield go to work getting back the money Parker had to leave behind in Slayground and run afoul of the local syndicate. When Grofield gets shot and taken captive and Parker gets one of his fingers in the mail, Parker takes it personally and calls in a slew of favors.

Practically all of Parker's partners from the previous books who weren't double-crossed and/or killed in the previous volumes show up to lend a hand and share in the score, even Handy McKay. Parker is as relentless and ruthless as ever. The power struggle within the Tyler mob was well done, as was Parker's masterful way of taking them out.

As usual, Stark's clipped style moves the story along with the pace of an out of control freight train. Butcher's Moon is twice the length of most Parker tales and has three or four times as much action. The final shootout at the end is well-worth the price of admission (at the U of C price, not the hundreds the earlier printings fetch.)

"But I'm only the messenger!"

"Now you're the message," Parker said and shot him.

Classic Parker.

Any complaints? Not really, although I was expecting a higher bodycount among Parker's crew. I was half-hoping Parker would leave with the entire take from the score and leave his crew in the lurch. The ending would have been a fitting ending to the entire Parker series but I'm glad Stark wrote eight more, even if it did take him 25 years.

If you're a Parker fan, Butcher's Moon is not to be missed, especially at the Amazon price for this University of Chicago reprint.
