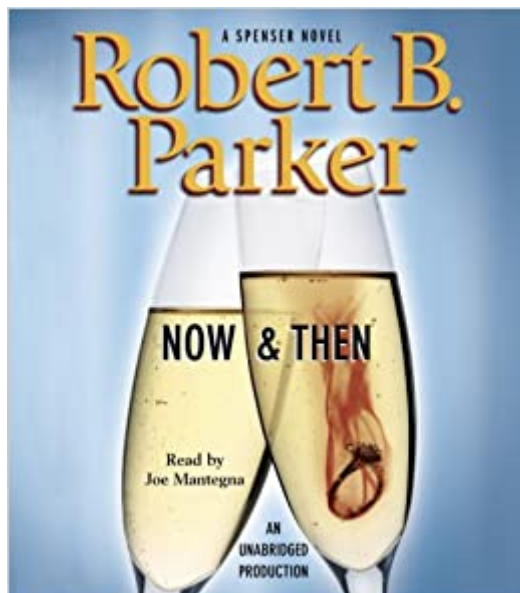


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# Now & Then (Spenser Mysteries)



## Synopsis

Spenser knows something's amiss the moment Dennis Doherty walks into his office. The guy's aggressive yet wary, in the way men frightened for their marriages always are. So when Doherty asks Spenser to investigate his wife Jordan's abnormal behavior, Spenser agrees. A job's a job, after all. Not surprisingly, Spenser catches Jordan with another man, tells Dennis what he's found out, and considers the case closed. But a couple of days later, all hell breaks loose, and three people are dead. This isn't just a marital affair gone bad. Spenser is in the middle of hornet's nest of trouble, and he has to get out of it without getting stung. With Hawk watching his back and gun-for-hire Vinnie Morris providing extra cover, Spenser delves into a complicated and far-reaching operation: Jordan's former lover Perry Alderson is the leader of a group that helps sponsor terrorists. The Boston P.I. will use all his connections both above and below the law to uncover the truth behind Alderson's antigovernment organization. Alderson doesn't like Spenser poking around his business, so he decides to get to him through Susan. But what Alderson doesn't realize is that Spenser will do anything to keep Susan out of harm's way; nothing will keep him from the woman he loves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If ever there was an argument for selective abridgment, this audio version of Parker's latest Spenser outing is the poster child for it. Spenser, Susan and everyone else uses "I said" or "she said" so

often that it soon becomes laughable. It's also unnecessary, considering Mantegna's vocal talents easily let listeners know exactly who is talking. His Susan and Hawk sound different enough to let us in on the secret, and his Spenser has the humorous crackle we've come to expect. With villains that are equally differentiated, Mantegna keeps the book moving and excels at Parker's smart dialogue. But even the most loyal Spenser addicts might have to swallow a chuckle because of the attribution repetition. Simultaneous release with the Putnam hardcover (Reviews, Aug. 20). Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** In his Spenser novels, when he's writing at the top of his game (which he is here), Parker is like a brilliant musician. From the opening chords, which, in just about every Spenser novel, comprise the staging of the first meeting between private-eye Spenser and a troubled client, you know you're listening to someone who has absolute command of his work. And it just gets better, as Parker builds his theme, with variations both comic and thrilling. This time out, in the thirty-fifth addition to the series, the troubled client is a husband who feels his wife has been behaving bizarrely. Spenser thinks she's probably having an affair, and through the magic of a planted listening device, he presents the worried husband with the damning evidence. The device has also picked up that the wife's lover is involved in a group called Last Hope, which turns out to be a kind of brokerage outlet for terrorists looking for equipment and other terrorists. The case has moved from the kind of private-eye work that Spenser finds sleazy to one with horrific ramifications. The story itself makes compelling reading on its own, but Parker, as usual, spikes it with caustic wit and the interplay between Spenser and his longtime love, Susan. And here he ups the ante by calling on Spenser to use all his brain and brawn to protect Susan. Terrific. Fletcher, Connie --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Though not difficult to get a feel for the characters in this book, since I am not a regular Spenser fan it felt like I landed in the middle of an episode of a popular show everyone has been watching but me. It wasn't uncomfortable or confusing, just a trifle unusual for a series novel not to have any back story on any of the characters. Spenser takes a case from a distressed husband who wants his wife followed. Spenser gets evidence of her affair on tape, but he gets more than he bargained for when he overhears some very interesting pillow talk. The FBI also finds it interesting, especially when both Spenser's client and his cheating wife are murdered. That Professor Perry Alderson, the woman's lover, seems to have no past is of interest to Spenser, and he is determined he will find out who the man really is and bring him to justice. Wisecracking Spenser is joined by his vibrant and

beautiful lover, Susan Silverman, a psychiatrist who becomes intimately involved in the case, a very lenient FBI agent friend, and a racial mishmash of thug friends who shoot to kill on reflex: Vinnie, Hawk, and Chollo. They cruise through the story trading witty banter and being too cool for their bad selves in a way that is downright smarmy. Spenser is Mr. Slick, directing both the FBI and the local cops to do his bidding, and don't worry your pretty little head over the number of bodies that pile up. They all had it coming, after all. This is the lightest mystery I have ever read. Nancy Drew's adventures are total nail biters compared to this. Neither Spenser nor his leading lady were ever in the least amount of danger, and Spenser didn't so much as catch a stray piece of lint on his suit, much less suffer anything as traumatizing as a broken nail. I have a feeling all of this could be forgiven by Spenser fans, who might lose themselves in the flurry of clever banter among the characters, but to me it was nothing but a bit of fluff. I also tired of Spenser and Susan's incessant blase conversations about an infidelity that came off like they were discussing nothing more emotionally fraught than golf scores. The most annoying problem, however, is the fact that the author has not bothered to find another verb to use in place of SAID, and every quotation ends in he said or she said or someone said, which was more than a trifle annoying. Though I didn't think it was horrible, a book needs to have a lot more depth, a little danger, and some thrills to be worth reading. This one failed on all counts.

I have a friend who no longer likes to read Spenser novels because he says they dwell too much on Spenser's relationship with Susan. Up until now, I've disagreed with him. I've pointed out that the relationship has been a sidebar to the main storyline in all the novels. Unfortunately, I'm coming around to his point of view after reading this most recent Spenser book. Parker has created an icon of modern detective fiction with the Spenser character and it would be extremely sad if this series declined into a psychobabble quagmire of interpersonal relationship. Previous books have dealt with Spenser and Susan within the structure of the story. In this book, the self-analysis is intrusive and drags down an already significantly lightweight plot. And the plot is indeed light. The terrorist organization portrayed is made up of mindless android-like followers of a 1960s-style pseudo-charismatic anti-government radical. This portrayal is so convoluted the reader can't distinguish whether the bad guys are right-wing or left-wing. This is evocative of a politically correct screenplay of a made-for-TV movie that doesn't want to offend any group so it creates a stereotypical villain that is 40 years out-of-date. It's as if Parker wrote the story as filler for the Spenser/Susan sidebar. And what is really disappointing about this book is that Parker is capable of better. The reader deserves better.

The Spenser books have always relied on formula: the "witty" dialogue, the tough-as-nails protagonist, the quirky sidekicks (Hawk, Vinnie, Chollo), and the always-unpleasant Susan. It's a formula that works; why else would people be reading the 35th Spenser novel? Now and Then may not be as dramatic and colorful as some of the earlier Spensers, but it holds its own. Yes, some of the formulaic elements are getting old, but there's enough action to keep us interested anyway. In this one, along with his usual tenacious pursuit of the bad guy, Spenser discusses the possibility of marriage with Susan. Who cares? Nobody. The woman is little more than an arm ornament, and a disagreeable one at that. The important thing is, Spenser does the requisite antagonist butt kicking, which is why we keep reading.

The Spenser Series is an easy read..I started with #1 and just finished with the last book in the series. Love all of the characters that continue throughout the series. Spenser is such a great character with a semi sarcastic personality who has a hard time of taking serious people seriously. His girlfriend, who is a psychiatrist, helps him work things out mentally during cases he is handling and Hawk and various other strong male characters, help him with other cases. You will never be bored reading the Spenser Series.

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