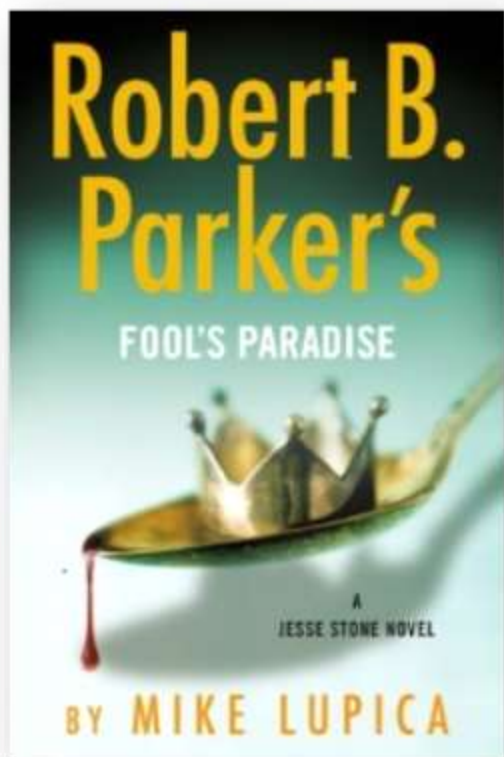


Allison's Book Corner December 2020

Robert B. Parker's Fool's Paradise by Mike Lupica
(G.P. Putnam's Sons 2020)

Let's talk about comfort food. You know what you are going to get when you dip in your spoon or fork. Putting the utensil in your mouth, you smile a big smile as your favorite food or dessert slides down your throat. And in that special moment you are truly happy and feel a great warmth spread throughout your body. What happens next? You keep diving in with that fork or spoon. You want that feeling to continue, calories be damned!



Now you know exactly what it feels like to read a Robert B. Parker novel. I discovered this mystery/detective writer more than 20 years ago when I was pregnant and on doctor-mandated bedrest. A television show called "Spenser for Hire" was the only thing worthwhile watching in the afternoon. We will get back to how this affected my life.

Robert B. Parker wrote more than 60 novels. Since his death in 2010, his estate has allowed several of his series focusing on certain characters to continue. Parker-approved writers write them, one of them being well-known sports writer Mike Lupica. And Lupica has outdone himself with this new installment in the Jesse Stone series.

Perhaps many of you are familiar with the Paradise, MA, Police Chief Jesse Stone. If you have not already read any books in the series, you probably have watched him on television, portrayed by actor Tom Selleck. A quick refresher: Jesse Stone is an alcoholic, fired by the LAPD for excessive drinking. Even with the drinking, he is a great cop. All the women love him, and all the men want to *be* him. He rolls into Paradise one day and secures the job of Police Chief. Apparently, this is the only place that will hire a washed-up alcoholic police officer who attends AA. And, most important to me and Mike Lupica, Jesse is a former

minor league baseball player. He often relieves stress at the police station by pounding a baseball into an old mitt that he keeps at his desk.

Shockingly, that baseball mitt gets a good workout: Paradise has a lot of crime and many secrets. The Jesse Stone series was the first series written by Parker in the third person. Lupica captures Jesse's voice perfectly in *Fool's Paradise*. The cool and easy banter between the characters, and the love and respect that Jesse's small town police force has for him -- it is all here in spades. The regular Jesse Stone reader forgets that Parker has not written this book himself. As a woman, I love getting the behind the scenes on how men really talk to each other. (Gee, big surprise: sports and women get a lot of attention.) However, these novels never seem shallow. There is a murder to solve in this book. And the murderer now seems to be coming after the Paradise police force. He or she has the nerve to target Police Chief Stone at his home. Luckily, Jesse Stone survives to see another day.

Suddenly, there are three murders. Bodies are in the water and someone shot in the head. Chief Stone has his hands full. Jesse Stone fans will love this installment and new readers will hunger for more when it is all over.

In 1996, daytime television was limited. My choices were soap operas, CNN, or Spenser for Hire. I chose the last and the rest is history. I have read all 40 of the Spenser detective novels and named my son Spenser. (I had to wait a few years, as my first baby was a girl.) I loved my Robert B. Parker journey, and was devastated at his passing. We are so fortunate that some of our beloved characters live on.

Allow yourself some comfort food this holiday season and dive into *Fool's Paradise*.