



The Green Eagle Score

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Here's Parker—planning to steal the entire payroll of an Air Force base in upstate New York, with help from Marty Fusco, fresh out of the pen, and a smart aleck finance clerk named Devers. Holed up with family in a scrappy little town, the hoisters prepare for the risky job by trying to shorten the odds. But the ice is thinner than Parker likes to think—and Marty's ex-wife is much more complicated.

The Green Eagle Score Details

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From Reader Review The Green Eagle Score for online ebook

Kemper says

No money is safe when Parker is around. Not even if it belongs to the U.S. military.

Parker is lounging at a resort in Puerto Rico with his new gal pal, Claire, when he is approached by another professional thief named Marty Fusco who just got out of prison. Fusco wants to bring Parker in to plan a job stealing the cash payroll from an Air Force base. While Parker initially dismisses the idea of stealing the pay of 5000 armed men, he agrees to go to New York state and check out the set-up. The situation is odd with Fusco working with an inside man who is shacked up with his ex-wife, but the ever resourceful Parker sees an opportunity and starts working up a scheme to make off with the loot. As always, there's complications waiting to screw up Parker's well-laid plans.

It's getting hard to come up with anything new to say about these Parker novels. It's the same basic formula. Parker gets approached to plan a robbery. There are issues with the people involved and/or the set-up. Parker comes up with a plan. Parker recruits people and gathers equipment. Parker executes the robbery. Some twists occurs that screws up Parker's getaway. Parker has to improvise. Parker may or may not get away with the swag.

You'd think that this would get boring and repetitive, especially since Parker is just a relentless stealing machine without conscience or empathy. Even getting a steady girlfriend hasn't changed him so this is a series where the main character shows absolutely no growth from the first book to the last. Yet Stark's (a/k/a Westlake's) writing still sucks a reader in immediately with it's portrait of the blunt and relentless Parker steamrolling over anyone or anything between him and completing the job.

This edition also features an interesting introduction by another great mystery writer, Dennis Lehane, that examines why Parker is so unique and important to crime fiction.

David says

Following *The Rare Coin Score*, *The Green Eagle Score* is another no-frills Parker heist novel. There are minor variations to the formula--this time, for example, we aren't told the plan for the robbery until we see it enacted--but nothing remarkable that Stark hasn't shown us before. In terms of the larger series, *The Green Eagle Score* is perhaps most notable for the further development of Parker's character via his relationship with Claire, whom he met in *The Rare Coin Score*.

First reading: 2011 January 12

Second reading: 2012 April 11

Jeremy Hornik says

This one goes very, very badly. And the heist had such promise. Parker makes what he can out of it.

Toby says

Parker the Ultimate Stealing Machine is at it again, this time it's the fabled Monnequois Military Base heist that his pal Grofield walked away from at the start of the spin off novel Lemons Never Lie. A fun little connection that speaks volumes for how much fun Westlake must have had writing this character and world.

If you read more than a few Parker novels you pick up on the general theme of these things; Parker is a planner, cold, thorough, meticulous, he cares only for the professionalism of the job but somewhere along the line something will go wrong and he's only waiting for that to happen so he can fix that too. If you're not game for the formula then don't come out to play.

Amazingly Westlake's writing is so strong and his character is so fascinating to read about that for most of us this formula does not get old, it in fact becomes part of the fun, guessing not whodunnit but how will it go to hell this time and waiting for the inevitable fall out. This time out the planning is foregrounded, the fall out only coming right at the last, and it's an entertaining string that Parker has pulled together with an ending that will surely please fans of all aspects of the Parker series.

brian says

anyone out there like magic? well, i do and i'm gonna do a magic trick. watch how i turn david's examples of why stark is a bad writer (from his review of *the score*) into proof that stark is a very good writer. here's davey-boy:

Richard Stark—at least in The Score—is not really what I would call a very good writer. And Richard Stark's editor is not what I would call a very good editor. Witness this passage:

"The prow car was a Ford, two years old, painted light green and white, with Police written in large letters on the doors and hood and trunk. The dashboard lights were green, and there was a small red dot of light, like a ruby, on the radio."

I don't know about you, but I am kind of disappointed that Stark didn't tell us whether the upholstery was contrast stitched or whether the heater vents were set to floor or bi-level. (Before you start second-guessing, none of the details Stark reports RE: the police car is relevant to anything in the book. For instance, the small red dot of light does not later blind a would-be assassin—or some other comparable hijinks. These used car ads are just written up by Stark, inserted into the text, and never referred to again.)

it's not uncommon for the author's voice to mirror the tone or worldview of its protagonist: consider philip roth's furious diatribes or coetzee's spare, sterile prose. same with stark: his lead character is a sociopath, a man only out for himself, a man with no patience for anything not directly related to 'the job', a man who cares more about any minute detail related to said job than anything 'normal' people would consider of significantly greater import.

one is immediately struck, when reading stark, at how lightly he treats murder. a character we've followed for 200 pgs is shot and it'll read something like this: "Two shots were fired at Smith. It was the last thing he ever saw." stark never describes death/murder in more than a single banal sentence, never any blood and guts, never any falling or flailing about the room, never any existential quandaries... nothing. zilch. yet, he does describe police cars and motel rooms and certain articles of clothing, as david illustrates, in excessive detail. why? because, as davey-boy would have us believe, he's a bad writer? because he has a bad editor? nope. the answer is simple: because only things which are directly related to the job matter to parker... and, by extension, to the narrator. offing a cop or a double-crosser is the dramatic and moral equivalent of choosing the right sack to stuff money in or picking out the right getaway car: and just as once that car's function has been fulfilled it is forgotten, once a man walks away and/or dies it's as if he's never existed. the police car, through the eyes of a criminal sociopath about to do a job, is a key object in his moral universe: certainly more than the passage from life to death of a being with less significance than a housefly.

and it's an effective strategy: adopting the protagonist's sociopathic temperament & obsessive-compulsive habits into a minimalist, OCD, sociopathic authorial voice and prose style creates an unsettling tension tantamount to linking audience POV with a 'bad guy' in a movie. in *psycho* hitchcock delighted in killing off marian crane (janet leigh) at the mid-point in that he knew the audience must latch on to the closest thing it had: norman bates. similarly, stark's gotta take a perverse pleasure in forcing us not only to watch stark in action, but to see the world through his eyes... which provides a nice transition to david's other complaint:

There is really no psychological depth in this book whatsoever. People merely do things and say things.

i agree. and it's incredibly effective. parker (and by extension, stark) ain't too interested in human psychology in the traditionally literary sense (that is, the picking up and dropping of 'important' clues and hints to signify this trait or that pathology or this action, etc.): both writer and his protagonist are keen observers, but see things solely through the lens of 'how does this affect the job.'

check it:

Psychology Today: Do you have any formal interest in psychology?

Werner Herzog: I loathe psychology as one of the major faults of our civilization nowadays. There's something not right about this amount of introspection. I can only give you a metaphor: When you move into an apartment, you cannot start to illuminate every last corner with neon light. If there are no dark corners or hidden niches, your house becomes uninhabitable. Human beings who are trying to self-reflect and explore their innermost being to the last corner become uninhabitable people.

herzog and stark employ similar tools for a common purpose: rather than attempt to create narrative works to dig deep at what exactly makes people tick, they prefer to show human behavior in extreme conditions and leave it to the reader/viewer to tease out what she may.

we dig this.

as does stark.

the parker series is peppered with characters (much like david) frustrated with parker's seeming lack of depth. from *the green eagle score*:

"Everyone has emotions. We all have them - you, me, everyone. Even this man Parker. Perhaps he has them bottled up more than most people, that's all."

She shook her head. "I can't imagine him ever feeling emotions. I can't imagine him crying. Or even laughing."

"Seems to me, you've turned this man into some sort of myth figure, something bigger than life."

ultimately, stark writes process novels much as bresson creates process films. they work toward different ends, of course, (bresson strives for a kind of spiritual transcendence through process while stark's goals are significantly more earthbound) but they're the same in many respects, foremost being that they both find a kind of powerfully sacred quality to 'process'. and it's like crack for certain readers.

when stark writes the following of parker:

"The part of him that took pleasure in professionalism, in craft, was already half involved in this project, anxious to find out the rest of the details."

he could just as easily be writing about his readers. all of us who've blasted through a good chunk of this series are as obsessed with the craft of thievery as is parker; we find it even more interesting than the money, the tough guys, the dames, the criminal argot, the double-crossings, etc...

aight.

so there, davey-boy.

ball's in your court.

David Schaafsma says

In this, the tenth book, Parker plans a heist with several seemingly stupid challenges: The plan is to take off with the payroll of an upstate New York Air Force base, with one soldier—a bright, but very young man, a future professional thief like Parker, perhaps--on the inside. Maybe that is stupid enough to think better of it, pour another Scotch neat, and head back to the pool with Claire.

Another (significant) challenge is that he elects to work with two men, Marty Fusco and Devers, who are connected to an emotionally jumpy woman, Ellen, one her ex and one her current boy friend. Ellen is three times a week seeing a therapist. The good doctor encourages Ellen to talk of the plan her ex and boyfriend and Parker have planned out.

I know: What could go wrong, right?!

One delight of this one is the dripping disdain that Stark has for psychology, mirroring what Parker surely would say about it. Much of the tale is told from Parker's perspective, but some of it is from Ellen's perspective, much of that during the sessions with the doctor, so we can see the doc's interest in the plans for the heist as much as Ellen's mental health. For decades noir fiction seemed to be obsessed with psychopaths and sociopaths, following the burgeoning interest in psychology in the mid-twentieth century. Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* is a good example, a tale of a serial killer. Parker is more an existential construct than a psychological one, and Stark is not interested in getting "deeper" into his "psyche;" he doesn't care whether his mother nursed him or his father worked long hours. Stark wants to show you what

Parker does, not why.

There is one memorable scene with craziness in it, where one of the doctor's patients is seen throwing money out of his upstairs window, and shooting at people who are grabbing for it. That was a bit about psychology, too, I guess. Otherwise, this was just a solid entry in the series.

Dan Schwent says

Marty Fusco convinces Parker to plan a job robbing an air force base of its payroll. Fusco's ex-wife's current beau is the inside man. Things seem to go smoothly, until the ex-wife starts telling the details of the plan to her psychiatrist...

The Green Eagle Score, no idea why it's called that, is another entry in the highly enjoyable Parker series. This one strays from the usual Parker mold and takes the route of The Seventh. The job goes smoothly but the split doesn't go right. It makes for an engaging story. The best parts of the Parker stories are watching him handle things when the situation takes an unexpected turn, which they always do. Parker's a shark and never gives up.

Not many gripes about this one. The job was plausible, as usual. I'm surprised Parker went for it with all the inherent complications though. On a side note, there were a few punctuation mistakes in this one.

Another great Parker story. That's all I have to say about that.

James Thane says

This is another of the early books in Richard Stark's Parker series. Parker decides to take a break from a vacation in Puerto Rico to join a gang that intends to rob the payroll of an Air Force base in upstate New York. (The book was written in 1967. There's no such thing as direct deposit, so the Air Force trucks in \$400,000 twice a month and pays everyone in cash.)

Parker designs a clever plan to steal the money, but the weak link (and in these books there is almost always a weak link) is the mistress of one of the gang members who knows the plot and confides it to her analyst. The shady analyst develops a plan of his own to let Parker's gang do the heavy lifting and then steal the money from them. Parker would not like such a development and will deal with it in his own inimitable way.

Jim says

Another good Parker book. Not much more I can say without spoilers, but it's nice to see the quality staying high & the plot as twisty. I FINALLY got the 1st one from the library. I'll be listening to it next.

Greg says

In this Parker novel he joins up with some other crooks to rob an Upstate New York Air Force base of it's payroll cash. I'd never heard of the AFB before, and I don't think there is another one besides Plattsburgh anywhere near the real towns mentioned in the book, so I'm going to believe that the book takes place in the shitty town where I went to college! Near the end of the book Parker drives into downtown Saratoga Springs and ditches a car there in front of a parking meter. I don't think Saratoga Springs ever had parking meters, but who cares. This is two places where I've had to spend years of my life mentioned in one Parker novel!! Isn't that exciting? Yes, I knew you would all think so.

Krycek says

Marty Fusco just got out of the clink and here he is cooking up another heist. Well, birds gotta fly, fish gotta swim, and Fusco's thinking this deal is pretty sweet. His neurotic ex-wife has gotten cozy with a young airman named Devers who works in the finance office of the USAF base where he's posted. Fusco and Devers think they can lift the entire base's payroll for the month, at least four hundred thousand dollars. But they need a guy that can work out all the angles and run things. This is where Parker comes in. He's getting tired of working on his tan and chilling with his girl Claire in Puerto Rico and is again feeling the itch to work, so he packs a bag and joins Fusco and Devers in upstate New York. The thing is, Fusco's aforementioned neurotic ex-wife, Ellen, is about to turn this cool caper into a hot mess.

The Green Eagle Score is yet another example of "Stark's"/Westlake's mastery of his craft. Coming in at a lean, mean 173 pages, Westlake doesn't fool around. It's almost as if Westlake's laconic criminal Parker was the one who wrote this. Like the other Parker novels (the ones I have read), *The Green Eagle Score* follows a four-act format and is ideal study material for budding novelists learning how to structure and pace a novel. Hell, it's ideal study material for *any* novelist on how to structure and pace a novel. I'd say a lot of modern-day "bestsellers" could learn a thing or two.

Though it would seem otherwise, Parker as a character never gets boring. He doesn't smile, doesn't joke, has no real hobbies or interests...he's basically a larcenous golem. The only time I recall seeing any sort of strong emotion from Parker was way back in the first novel, *The Hunter*, and that was white-hot rage. But don't think for a second that Westlake is skimping with two-dimensional characterization. No, Westlake's characterization of Parker is subtle. In the hands of lesser authors Parker would seem to be a cardboard cutout, a genre cliché. In Westlake's hands, Parker's a force of nature (I love how he "checks" a guy to see if he's alive or dead. Spoiler: (view spoiler)). But, as in other Parker novels, the lively supporting cast contributes a lot to feel of the book and makes for a fun contrast to Parker's stoicism.

What else can I say? *The Green Eagle Score* is another great Parker novel. If you haven't read a Parker yet, you're in for a treat. If you have, you know what you're getting and won't be disappointed.

(For Westlake fans and people more knowledgeable about him than I am, I have a question. I noticed several British spellings ("defence," "licence," "neighborhood"), but as I understand it, Westlake was American. Was

this just a stylistic choice? Did he use it exclusively for his pseudonym "Richard Stark?" Just something I was wondering about.)

Skip says

Parker is chilling in Puerto Rico with Claire, when Marty Fusco shows up, seeking Parker's help to steal the payroll of an Air Force base in upstate NY. His inside man (Devers) is the new beau of Marty's ex-wife, Ellen, and the mother of their young daughter. Parker agrees to check it out, only to find that Devers has been skimming already; but, he decides that the job is doable, and they devise a great way onto and off of the base. Everything goes well until ... it doesn't. Turns out that Ellen has been seeing a shrink, trusts him completely with all her and their secrets.

James Love says

Parker gets involved in a payroll heist on an Air Force Base in New York. Some interesting twists involving a psychiatrist and three of his patients. Claire becomes a permanent supporting character of the Parker novels.

Andre says

The Green Eagle Score, is the 10th novel in the Parker series. Stealing a large payroll from the Department of Defence? Stealing it from within the compound? Sure, why not, eh?

At one point Parker tells Claire that his work is like walking on ice, but that he knows where to step. Understanding the ice is one thing, but what about the things that are lurking beneath it in the deep dark waters? There is always a slight chance that there is something there that you didn't expect. Something that makes the ice far thinner than you think it will be.

Parker starts making confident steps towards the loot... watch your step mate.

This is another classic Parker novel by the late Donald E. Westlake (aka Richard Stark). Time and again, the author manages to write a great little crime novel using a simple narrative. It's an easy read, but oh so entertaining.

Enjoy!

Lynn says

An excellent Parker story. The reader is shown some preparation for a robbery of an Air Force base payroll, but not the details of the scheme until they are taking place. Things are looking great, and then.....major disaster. During the planning phase of this crime, Stark makes you suspect that something would go wrong.

(Well that's to be expected or Parker would never have a chance to shine, since he somehow always manages the disasters.) I love the series and this one was particularly thrilling and chilling.
