



Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel)

By Robert Knott



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Itinerant lawmen Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch return in the gritty new installment of the *New York Times*–bestselling series.

Appaloosa, the hometown of Territorial Marshals Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch, continues to prosper, but with prosperity comes a slew of new trouble: carpetbaggers, gamblers, migrants, peddlers, drifters, thieves, and whores, all boiling in a cauldron of excess and greed. And there's a new menace in town: a wealthy, handsome easterner—and the owner of Appaloosa's new casino—Boston Bill Black.

Boston Bill is flashy and bigger than life. He's a prankster and a notorious womanizer, and with eight notches on the handle of his Colt, he's rumored quick on the draw. When he finds himself wanted for a series of murders, he quickly vanishes. Cole and Hitch locate and arrest him, but Boston Bill escapes once again. Another murder sets the duo on his trail, eventually taking them back to Appaloosa—where one woman in particular may, or may not, prove to be the apple of Boston Bill's eye.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Knott . . . adds a new wrinkle here with a damn fine mystery running parallel to the western story. . . . Fine reading for western fans." —*Booklist*

"This is the most satisfying of Knott's Cole-Hitch tales, with a shocking double-twist ending." —*The Sacramento Bee*

"Westerns need atmosphere as much as story, and Knott has a knack for six-gun verisimilitude, sketching the land and summer heat, the horses and the shopkeepers. Knott's especially good with the prototypical Old West marshal, Virgil Cole, 'perfectly present in the here and now,' every inch stoic lawman. . . . His tale gallops along without confusing readers new to the series . . . A darn good way to pass an afternoon." —*Kirkus Reviews*

PRAISE FOR ROBERT B. PARKER'S WESTERNS

"Knott's third shot at re-creating the Cole-Hitch partnership is by far the best. . . . There is also a very clever mystery mixed in, and the Seraphine subplot adds a *Twilight Zone* finish to an extraordinarily entertaining novel." —*Booklist*

"Fans of the late Robert B. Parker's best-selling novels about territorial marshals Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch will be delighted to discover a new adventure written by famed author Robert Knott, who also penned the earlier series entry *Ironhorse*. In *The Bridge*, the duo investigates a strange disappearance and gets some unlikely help from a fortune teller." —*Cowboys and Indians Magazine*

"Rapid-fire dialogue and quick-paced action. . . a must read." —*Historical Novels Review*

"For fans of the late Parker, this book is a refreshing reunion with these cowboy characters who choose their words and situations most carefully. . . much to enjoy." —*Deseret News*

"Knott has no trouble cooking up larger-than-life characters to populate the books." —*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

"A welcome second edition to the return of these delightful western characters." —*The Oklahoman*

"Clever detective work and considerable shooting. . . it reads lightning fast. . . suspenseful." —*Booklist*

About the Author

Robert B. Parker was the author of seventy books, including the legendary Spenser detective series, the novels featuring Police Chief Jesse Stone, and the acclaimed Virgil Cole and Everett Hitch westerns, as well as the Sunny Randall novels. Winner of the Mystery Writers of America Grand Master Award and long considered the undisputed dean of American crime fiction, he died in January 2010.

Robert Knott is an actor, writer, and producer, as well as the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Robert B. Parker's The Bridge*, *Robert B. Parker's Bull River*, and *Robert B. Parker's Ironhorse*. His extensive list of stage, television, and film credits include the feature film *Appaloosa*, based on the Robert B. Parker novel, which he adapted and produced with actor and producer Ed Harris.

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Ruth Ann was running now, moving as fast as she could through the dense forest. The Comanche moon hanging directly above dimly lit her way through thick timber of pine, blackjack, birch, and maple. There were no shoes on her bloody feet and what was left of her dress was ripped, soiled, and hanging off her bare shoulders. She was dirty, with leaves and sticks tangled in her auburn hair. She glanced back as she ran. She was terrified, her face tearstained, scratched, and bleeding, and her eyes were wide with fear and . . . then he awoke. It was not the first time Roger Wayne Messenger awoke from this vision, this nightmare of Ruth Ann running through the woods, and he was fairly certain it would not be his last.

Roger sat up a little and worked the ache from his back. His mouth was dry and his head was pounding. With the exception of the dampness he found in the corners of his eyes, the rye whiskey he consumed on the journey sucked his body of all its moisture. His mouth was so parched his lips were stuck together. He sat up and looked around at the dark landscape passing by. All of the other passengers were asleep. He wished he, too, was asleep, but sleep was something he had not been accustomed to for some time. He dug into his knapsack and found his canteen and drank and drank.

Roger was a big, lean, and strong man with thick, dark hair that was three inches long on the top and cropped tight to the sides of his head. He was normally clean-shaven around his sweeping thick mustache, but at the moment he was sporting three days of whiskers. He wore a brown herringbone suit that was usually pressed over a starched white shirt, but currently his attire was crumpled from days of neglect.

When Roger stepped off the morning train in Appaloosa, he snugged his brown wide-brim with rolled edges over his square forehead and walked into town. He stopped at S.Q. Johnson's Grocery and bought a can of beans. He sat under the shade of the store's overhang, opened the can with his army knife, and ate the beans using the blade. When he finished he went about the task he'd come to Appaloosa to accomplish.

He poked his head in the door of Cheever's Saddle shop and asked the old timer tanning a large hide for directions to his destination. Then he walked seven blocks, turned south on Main Street, and went two more blocks to the construction site.

It was an impressive building. Three stories tall and at least seventy-five feet wide, with a second-story covered porch that had five sets of glassed double doors across the balcony. To Roger's untrained eye the structure appeared to be nearly complete, but the building was busy with construction workers.

Roger thought about just walking into the place, but decided he would watch for a while, watch and wait. He was good at watching and waiting; it was part of his job, and now that he was here, he was not in any hurry. Better to be patient. Better to wait.

He stood across the street, watching all the laborers going about their business. There were painters on scaffoldings painting a second coat of white and carpenters on the boardwalk, assembling wood pieces and going about other various tasks of measuring and sawing, remeasuring and resawing.

A team of mules pulling a flatbed stopped in front of the stairs leading up to the entrance with a load of hardwood. Roger rolled and lit a cigarette as he watched a few of the teamsters unload the flatbed and stack the shiny planks neatly on the boardwalk under a wide leaded-glass window.

He thought about the amount of money it must take for an impressive undertaking such as this. He had no idea, but then again, this line of business was something that Roger was just not all that familiar with.

Roger watched and waited. He moved off the boardwalk and found a comfortable spot in the narrow alley between an upholstery shop and a dry goods store, where he had a good view of the goings-on across the street. His head was still throbbing and he felt a little dozy, but he remained alert by nipping on the second bottle of rye he had in his knapsack and rolling and smoking cigarettes. He had plenty of both.

At nearly ten-thirty a slender sorrel pulling a two-seater buggy with a covered backseat rounded the corner

and stopped in front of the building. An older, portly man with bushy white muttonchops and wearing a flattopbrushed beaver hat sat in the backseat. Next to him was an attractive youngwoman wearing a plum-colored dress with a high collar.

They remained under the shaded cover, looking at the building for a longwhile. Then the man worked his way butt first out of the buggy's backseat.

Roger smiled to himself as he watched the round man struggle to get hischubby frame out of the backseat. When he was out of the buggy and standing,supporting his stance with the aid of a polished black cane, he removed his hatand wiped sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief. The young womanremained in the buggy. She leaned out and her eyes caught a little sunlightbefore she sat back in the shade of the buggy.

"Come back, pick me up by noon," he said to the driver, "Noon sharp."

"Sir," the driver said with a tip of his brim, and then clucked the sorreland moved off down the street, with the young woman still aboard and leavingthe portly man looking up to the building. He turned, walked a few stepstoward the middle of the wide street, stopped, then turned and looked back upat the building.

It was obvious to Roger the man wanted to have a full view of the building,wanted to take in all its grandness. The way the man moved and heldhis chin high reminded Roger of his own grandfather's survey after a day ofstacking hay in the barn. But this man was no farmer. Roger thought by theway he stood with his fists on his hips holding back the sides of his coat,watching the workers with an appraising eye, that he must be the man withthe money, the man in charge or the banker that loaned the business the money.

Then Roger saw him, the man that he had traveled two days on the trainto locate. The man known in gambling parlors from New Orleans to SanFrancisco as Boston Bill Black.

Boston Bill came walking out of the building flanked by two smaller men. It's not that the men by his side were in any way short or even belowaverage in size, it was simply that Boston Bill was unusually tall. Not unlikeRoger—Roger was tall, too—but he was a good hand shorter than BostonBill. His head barely cleared the top of the door as he walked out. He waswearing a fancy suit with a green vest that was adorned with a draping goldwatch fob.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ethel Davidson:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for people. The book Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel) was making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The e-book Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel) is not only giving you far more new information but also to become your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship while using book Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel). You never feel lose out for everything in the event you read some books.

Christine Pena:

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actually. The inside or content is fantastic as the outside or maybe cover. Your reading sixth sense will directly show you to pick up this book.

Bernard Walker:

The book untitled Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel) contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains her idea with easy technique. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read it. The book was published by famous author. The author brings you in the new time of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can start their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice go through.

Shawn Howe:

Is it an individual who having spare time in that case spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just telling lies on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This Robert B. Parker's Blackjack (A Cole and Hitch Novel) can be the answer, oh how comes? A book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

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