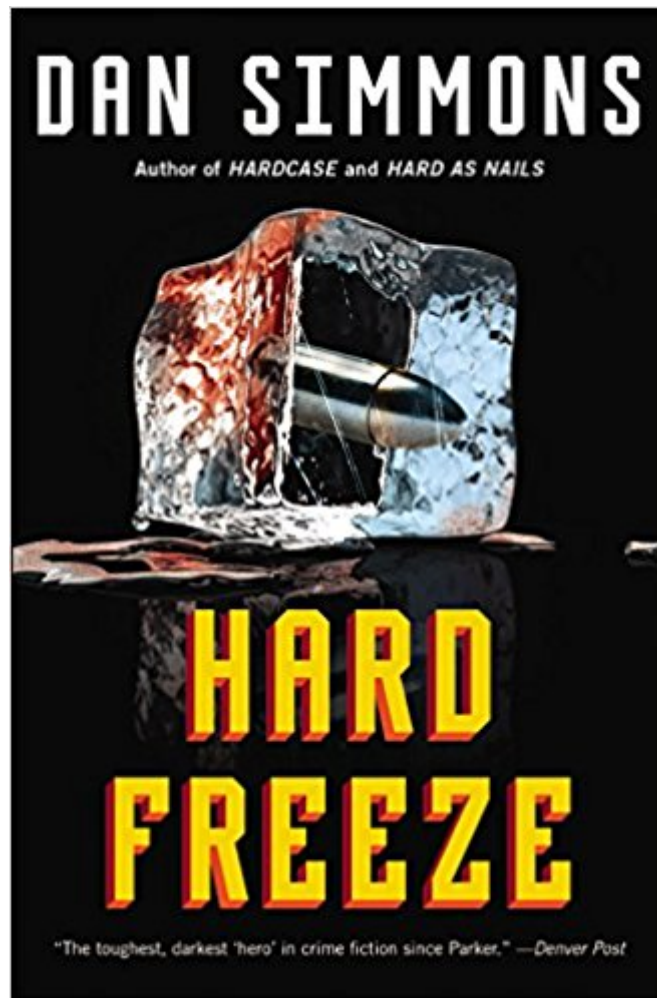




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Hard Freeze (Joe Kurtz Series, Book 2)



Synopsis

Joe Kurtz, former investigator and convicted felon, is on parole. Back on the streets of Buffalo, he's already marked by a local Mafia don. As if watching his back weren't enough work, Kurtz has also been hired by a gravely ill John Frears, whose daughter met a grisly fate at the hands of a murderer. Frears wants one thing before he dies: for Kurtz to find the fiend that the authorities couldn't. But the calculating killera master at changing identitieshas a little unfinished business of his own. Dodging a contract on his head and tracking a serial killer on the loose, Kurtz plunges headfirst into the icy waters of revenge as both victim and avenger.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having proven he can write hard-nosed noir with 2001's *Hardcase*, prolific genre-crossing author Dan Simmons reintroduces his gritty protagonist Joe Kurtz and promptly pitches him into the icy waters of *Hard Freeze*. Two pages into the book, the ex-private investigator is just minding his business on the frozen streets of Buffalo and already he's got a contract on his head. As Kurtz says, "It was shaping up to be an especially tough winter." When he finds out who the money behind the hit is, Joe's already outgunned and outmanned but never outsmarted. This wily warrior is always one step ahead of whoever is chasing him, be they crooked cops, calculating serial killers, corpulent mob bosses, or not-so-distressed damsels. Simmons has crafted a perfectly ruthless crime novel with a relentless pace that doesn't let up until the final page. The single-minded Joe Kurtz is a wonderfully flawed and deliciously soiled noir icon. He's smart, salty, literate, smushy in all the right

places, and not somebody to cross. In all, *Hard Freeze* is a fast-paced thriller that successfully interweaves amazingly disparate plot threads in an explosive--really explosive--climax. --Jeremy Pugh --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Hannibal Lecter meets the Godfather in multitalented Simmons's hard, brutal crime thriller, set in Buffalo, N.Y., and second in the series after *Hardcase* (2001). Ex-private eye Kurtz, recently released from prison after serving 11 years for killing the murderers of his beautiful partner, Samantha Fielding, finds himself stalked by the Attica Three Stooges Moe, Larry and Curly. After a bloody shootout that leaves one Stooge dead, Kurtz takes Curly for a ride in a speeding car and says: "You can take one in the head.... Then I dump you. You can take one in the belly, maybe we crash. Or you can take a chance and tuck and roll. Plus, there's some snow out there. Probably as soft as a goosedown pillow." Exit Curly. Kurtz soon learns that he's been marked for death by a local Mafia don and that the man actually responsible for Samantha's death is alive and well. And that's just for starters. Meanwhile, Kurtz is approached by John Wellington Frears, a world-famous violinist dying of colon cancer, to find his daughter's murderer a serial child-killer so adept at changing identities he could give lessons to Ferdinand Demara, the Great Impostor. Violent, fast-paced, with a high body count and plenty of sanguinary and pyrotechnic detail, this high-octane thriller should please both hard-boiled addicts and Simmons devotees. Whatever qualms one may have about Kurtz surely one of the darkest, most amoral protagonists of recent crime fiction it's Simmons at his hard-driving best. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

What's not to like about the Joe Kurtz series? He is the antithesis of what you expect a hero to be. He is cold, focused, and without mercy as he aligns the stars to make things good again. This series may be Simmons' "vacation" from the intricate and intense novels which have come before, and will doubtless come after. Yet even in what is usually a scripted PI novel, he breaks the rules and creates a protagonist who reminds one of the saying: "With Friends Like That, Who Needs Enemies." I eagerly await the next Simmons work.....no matter what the genre.

I love this series! I hope Mr. Simmons writes more in this line. Steady paced, good development, better than Jack Reacher. Devoured all 3 books.

For the past thirty-something years, Donald Westlake (writing under the name Richard Stark) has

written stories of a ruthless thief named Parker, who is tough, smart and coldly stoic in his approach to life. These stories have had an influence on many writers, including Dan Simmons, who with his Kurtz books, is trying his own version of the Parker series. While reasonably entertaining, Simmons's work in this field is definitely below Westlake/Stark in caliber. In *Hard Freeze* - the second Kurtz novel - the ex-con/private eye has once again run afoul of the Buffalo mob. Hit men are pursuing him as a bounty has been put on his life. Meanwhile, Kurtz is also helping a man find the serial killer who murdered his daughter. There are also subplots involving cops with a vendetta and the drunken stepfather of Kurtz's daughter. While Simmons is good enough to tie all these strings together, he is not good enough to make this a great novel. It is definitely good and easily merits a four star rating, but there are problems that prevent it from getting the full five stars. In particular, the serial killer is a weak character; as the main villain, he should be interesting, but he is so utterly routine that any habitual mystery reader will find absolutely nothing original about him. There are also coincidences and implausibilities (such as the killer's ability to become a police captain) that are a bit irksome. It is apparent that Simmons, a very good writer capable of writing quality novels, is writing these Kurtz novels as sort of a writing vacation. They seem as if they are written quickly and without the sophistication that most of his books have. The end result is a fun, quick read that most will enjoy, but for Simmons's most dedicated fans, this will seem a bit beneath his abilities.

He's eating hot dogs again and killing the three stooges before the first chapter is over. This is a freight train of a read. You can turn the pages, fast as you can read, because it's that compelling, or slow down and look in the box cars. This is like taking a class from the best professor you ever had, it's loaded with stuff, some subtle, some not. If I didn't slow down, I would have missed the cannoli. Movies, mobsters, serial killers, crooked cops, Russian novels, Robert Parker, cars, moral development and Harvard professors, are just some of the elements. At the finish, you congratulate yourself for seeing what you saw and wonder what you missed. This was fun. ...

Story-wise, this follows right on the heels of the outstanding *HARD CASE*. That book had a few typos, but *HARD FREEZE* is chock full of them, some I'm still trying to puzzle out. (BTW, 'AHH' = All, and 'die' = 'the' and you can probably guess what 'fiick' is.) It's not Dan Simmons' fault, but Macmillan has no business selling a sloppily edited edition at this or any price. Anyone heard of spell check? I'd rather have gotten a paper copy and spared myself the aggravation.

This is NOT a book for readers who like their detectives to be women with pet cats. ... Kurtz tears it up. But Kurtz is the ultimate problem solver, a Spenser without the poetry, and beneath his tough exterior, there rests a sense of justice. Direct, non-procedural, bloody -- but righteous. The book is fast paced and engrossing. The characters may not be likeable, but they are certainly not boring. I have read a lot of Simmons' work, finding it to be a bit uneven overall. But in the Joe Kurtz series, his writing has been consistently high caliber. I look forward to number 3.

A fun read. Sometimes quite brutal though.

Dan Simmons writes an educational and riveting novel every single time

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