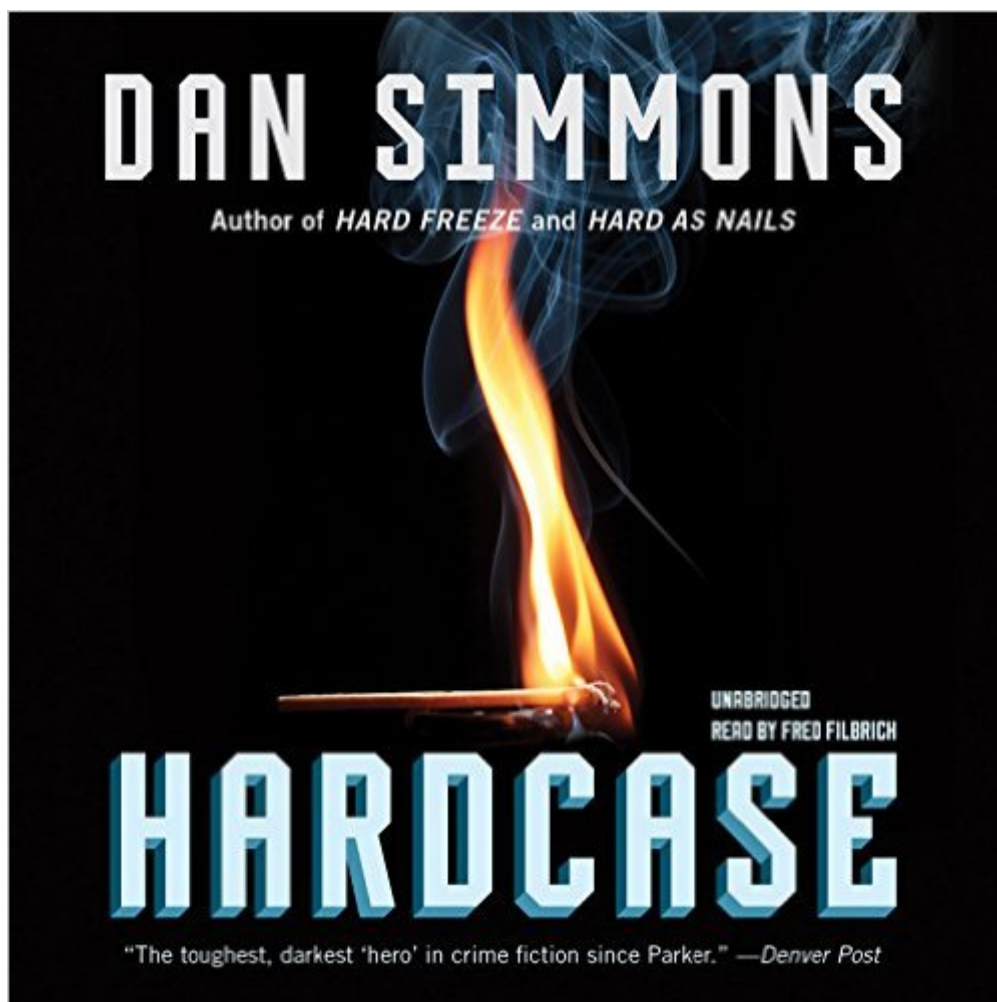


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## Hardcase (Joe Kurtz Series, Book 1)



## Synopsis

Award-winning author Dan Simmons takes the reader on a trip with Kurtz through the cold, windy streets of Buffalo where one wrong move could mean a belly full of lead. Once Joe Kurtz needed revenge - and revenge cost him eleven years in Attica prison. Now Kurtz needs a job, and the price is going to be higher. Out of prison, out of touch, Kurtz signs on with the Byron Farino, don of a mob family whose son Kurtz had been protecting on the inside. Farino enlists Kurtz's help to track down the family's missing accountant - a man with too much knowledge of family business to have on the loose. But someone doesn't want the accountant found - and with enemies inside the family vying for his throne, and turf warfare just around the corner, Farino needs an outsider like Kurtz to flush out who's really behind this latest affront. As the story twists and turns and the body count rises, Kurtz no longer knows who he can trust. Everyone seems to be after something, from the mob boss's sultry yet dangerous daughter, to a hit man named The Dane, an albino killer who is good with a knife, to a dwarf who is armed to the teeth and hell-bent on revenge. Kurtz has always been an ace investigator. Now he's about to discover that to get at the truth, sometimes you have to go after it - hard.

## Book Information

Series: Joe Kurtz

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## Customer Reviews

Dan Simmons was originally planning to publish *HARDCASE* under a pseudonym. Why? I'm not sure, other than the fact that he pays homage to the "Parker" novels, which were written by Richard Stark (a.k.a. Donald Westlake), at the beginning of his book and that maybe he wanted to, at first,

emulate the path Westlake took as a writer. Whatever the reason, I'm extremely happy that Mr. Simmons decided to go ahead and have this exceptional entry into the "mystery" genre published under his own name. Otherwise, I probably would've missed it. *HARDCASE* is a story that deals with ex-P.I. Joe Kurtz, a man who's hard as nails and can kill when the need arises, yet still has his own code of honor. When Kurtz's female partner is raped and murdered by Sammy Levine and Eddie Falco, he quickly extracts revenge on the two men and spends eleven years in Attica for it. While in jail, Kurtz helps out and protects Steve Farino, the son of Buffalo, New York's mob boss, Don Byron Farino. This leads to a job with the Farino Family when Kurtz is finally paroled. Kurtz offers his help to the Don in finding out who's trying to secretly take over the Family business of drugs trafficking and truck hijackings. There are a number of people, however, who'd rather not have Kurtz sticking his nose in places it doesn't belong. Killers (Malcolm Kibunte and Cutter, DooRag and his posse of gangbangers, the Alabama Beagle Boys, and an assassin known only as the Dane) are hired to take out Kurtz before anything incriminating can be uncovered. If that wasn't enough, there's also Manny Levine (a dwarf who carries a .44 Magnum revolver and looks like a mean version of Danny DeVito), who's seeking revenge for the death of his brother, Sammy.

After reading the reviews from many of Dan Simmons' ardent fans, I'm convinced that I stumbled in the right direction when *HARDCASE* became my first Simmons read. That's not to say that I won't peruse his offerings in the other genres however, it seems that *HARDCASE* is a really nice intro for an author new to me. As a precursor to the book, Simmons' dedication reads: "This is for Richard Stark, who sometimes writes under the wussy pseudonym of Donald Westlake." Well, that'll nab one's interest. Simmons takes a lash at Westlake (who conversely writes under the pseudonym of Stark) right off the bat. However, it is obvious that Simmons' statement is tongue-in-cheek. Regardless, the dedication defines the book's impending aura of "in your face" entertainment. As the book opens, we meet Joe Kurtz, a hardboiled Mike Hammer-type private investigator. Kurtz is tracking the second of two men who killed his partner...well, not tracking, stalking is a better word. By the end of the intro chapter, Kurtz has all but mangled Eddie Falco when he decides the coup de gras is to throw Falco out of his sixth-story apartment window. Without much ado, Kurtz heads to Attica for an extended stay at the state-run luxury resort. While in Attica, Kurtz meets Steven "Little Skag" Farino, the son of aging Buffalo, New York, mob boss Don Byron Farino. As a "reward" for protecting Little Skag's manly pride from unwanted jailhouse affection, Kurtz gets an audience with Don Farino upon his release from prison. Don Farino, now crippled from a would-be assassin's bullet, is still clinging to a denigrated level of authority and power he used to hold as the feared boss

of one of New York's elite organized crime families. Kurtz makes a deal with the Don to locate the Family's missing accountant.

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