



Shell Game

Benny Lawrence

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Life in a remote fishing village in the middle of a civil war is neither safe nor inspiring. So, when an opportunity comes along for village girl Lynn to be kidnapped and enslaved by a ruthless pirate queen, she takes full advantage of it. But Darren is neither as ruthless nor as piratical as she appears at first glance--and Lynn's not exactly what she seems to be, either. In between encounters with old girlfriends, a slow death involving marmalade, and bounty hunters with no sense of humour, Lynn and her new mistress attempt to work out exactly what they are to each other--and who's in charge.

Shell Game Details

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From Reader Review Shell Game for online ebook

Eslam Amkte says

[Because for more than half of the book you're forced to read about the protagonist being abused/degraded/Humiliated.

Here let me share one of the many scenes.

"Melitta caught me by the back of the neck and tossed me down on the floor. The poker glinted in the firelight as she raised it over her he

Scout says

Shell game is such a wonderful action-packed read. Love the author's particular brand of humor and banter. The characters are unique, interesting and multifaceted. The storyline is engaging. Definitely worth reading over again. Highly recommended!

Megzz says

I was tempted to give it 4 stars only but then I thought "Meg, what the hell? This was one amazing story!". Even with its imperfections... which I won't even list because I probably have forgotten them all already, anyway.

Amazing. Yes, it was. It's like nothing I have ever read before. Yep, some writers just can do that. Not many in this genre either... so WELL DONE and thank you, Benny Lawrence!

This is one romantic, hilarious, surprising, touching tale of two amazing women falling in love while escaping their lives. I was completely immersed in the world Lawrence created... I almost got sea sick once :)

Unbelievable characterisation, GREAT plot, Shell Game is that sort of book that is incredibly well thought out and that makes the readers want to keep reading and analyse every bit of info.

I also found it poetic. Really, Lawrence is one hell of a writer. Lynn is officially my all time favorite book character. I have to say Darren is not much far behind... she's so sweet in that clumsy hero way. Both women are quite irresistible.

This was so entertaining, and I'm on a ROLL! this is my 3rd book in 4 days, I can't seem to stop. What can I say? I love lesbian romance. And Shell Game did not disappoint. Now I just need to catch up on sleep...

Tori says

FAN-FUCKING-TASTIC!!!!!!

I can't believe that a book about lesbian pirates managed to be nothing like what I was expecting and also to be IMMEASURABLY BETTER THAN I HAD EVER HOPED!!! It's funny without being goofy, Darren and Lynn are both so quick witted and sarcastic and hilarious. The romance is perfect without being soppy, no two people could be more perfect together than these two, honestly. The plot is so addictive and enthralling, I literally didn't put it down from start to finish. Nothing at all was as it initially seemed (which is good because for a second there at the beginning I was worried). Both of the main characters are so well developed and have such distinctive, amazing voices. The alternating first person perspective wouldn't have sounded appealing to me before reading it, but after the fact I can see there really was no better way to tell this story, and at no point while I was reading did it pull me out of the story or bother me in any way. sorry I'm rambling but damn this book is such a wonderful time!!!!

If you're going to read this, please be warned of violence/abuse/child abuse. I'm always happy to give more details about content warnings if anyone needs them.

S.M. Lee says

So, I'm not entirely sure what I was expecting when I started this book, but it certainly wasn't what I got. There were several times where I would stop, chuckle and then say, "what the hell am I reading?"

In the beginning I found it strange, Lynn's banter mostly. But I kept with it and I'm glad I did.

There were a few typos here and there, and oftentimes things were so off the wall that it almost turned me off. But the typos were easily ignored and after a while you just learn to go with the weirdness. Kind of like Darren does.

The story was cute, though I kind of wish the romance had been a little more in depth. But that's neither here nor there cuz over all I really enjoyed this book.

Bellamy says

Shell Game was a really, really fun read from its overt tone and humor to the underlying dark plot.

I really enjoyed both of the main characters' voices - they're distinct, clever, and although they're a little heavy-handed or cartoonish at times, it all reads as appropriately in with the tone of the book and both of them are creative and funny as hell. I also appreciated that despite the prevalent humorous tone of the novel, it handled some seriously dark subjects, from war to child abuse, not just in discussion but as a direct part of the plot. I wouldn't recommend this book to anybody who is uncomfortable reading about abuse (though there is NO sexual violence). I also think that while the abuse depicted in the book was handled with the appropriate gravity, the resolution and recovery following could have been expanded on more.

Despite that, though, the nature of the genre this book fits into never left me worried that there wouldn't be a

happy resolution at the end of everything, which made staying along for the ride of it even more fun rather than stressful. In fact, that's the only thing I have to criticize - the ride itself. The characters and the tone of the writing both managed to carry me through about 30% of the book on their charisma alone, but that's about when I realized that the book didn't actually have a plot, and continued to not have a plot until a little bit more than halfway through the entire novel. It was a fantastic read and I absolutely loved the writing style and the characters' personalities, and I was completely hooked on the plot when it DID kick in, so I think some adjustment to the pacing of it would have bumped this from a 4 star review to a 5 star.

Overall: Fantastic, entertaining, cathartically dark novel with some pacing issues and delightful POV characters.

Julia says

I had to stop reading at 30% because the weirdness got too weird, and not in a good way.

I was really enjoying it. The whole slave thing was weird from the beginning but not necessarily in a bad way, and I was waiting to figure out why Lynn was doing it, but then it crossed over to the disturbing side. The sexual part of it was... Definitely not my thing. The farthest thing ever from "my thing".

It was a shame because the writing was great and the story was so much fun to read, but I heard the plot apparently gets even more disturbing in other parts and I'd rather... not. Thanks but no thanks.

Penny says

I'll try not to say much about the plot because trust me, is so much better to gradually peel layer by layer of this story.

Darren is a pirate AND a noble (I mean.. right?). Except she doesn't act exactly like either of those. She has her reasons (family duty, blood line, ex-girlfriend, etc) and they make it hard not to sympathize with her.

Lynn is a fierce village girl who ends up wrapped around the mast of Darren's ship (oh and is so entertaining to see how that works out). Lynn is by far the most interesting character and as the story progresses you realize that she's not exactly a common village girl.

The secondary characters are equally amazing, the context is a civil war between the lords, the pace is good, the dialogue is formidable. In fact, I'd say that the dialogue is what hooked me in. Benny Lawrence can write conversations with that kind of cleverness and irony that doesn't cross the line to become tiring. It's hard to make a character that is both ironic and deeply sincere.

There's flaws and I could point them but I won't. Mainly because Shell Game is that kind of book that you feel like you have to slow down the reading so it doesn't end so fast. I really liked it (:

Jennifer says

This book was SO FUNNY in places and SO DARK in places and SO HOT in places that reading it made me delighted to be WRONG (finally). If that makes sense. I was so happy to be unbalanced and erroneous as hell in my expectations. It was unbelievably refreshing to Disney-villain cackle on transit. Thank you, Benny, I found your book at the perfect time!

I was expecting that odd, othering experience I've had quite a bit while reading lesbian fiction in recent days.

You know, lady-loving-ladies, that bitter feeling where you already know what's going to happen because you've been reading too much lesbian fiction you suspect was either written by a) men or b) women with few lesbian experiences (or who are perhaps just not great at writing either romance or sex between women)? Nothing pulls me out of a lesbian romance faster than feeling like I am reading a tour guide to my country written by someone from another country who has never actually visited my country and is doing their research using Google. Lolol.

Those times where you open a new book and you swear to god that if this is gonna be another pseudo-queer-gal-pals-heterosexual-gaze story you are going to have to settle in and wait for Radclyffe and Megan O'Brien to get done writing more books, because at least you trust those two to have been winners of the lesbo rodeo and won toaster ovens and the right to wear socks with sandals? Because you trust them to have been frequent enough flyers to have earned their red wings? Perhaps you are even relieved when they don't unironically make butch characters wear "panties"? Or are happy that they include female masculinity AT ALL in some of their characters because that feels so much more true to the gender spectrum in the community than 80% of what you've been reading, and a FULL 100 % of what you've seen on tv? Le sigh. I digress...

This writer is good at creating sexual tension with very minimal effort. Like when you are interested in someone and you notice her unconsciously low-key responding to things you do in a sexual way.

I was pleasantly surprised at the hotness because I thought this book was going to just be funny and I was even ok with that, for once. But then BAM! Hot. Small suggestions really amped up the heat.

I was also not expecting this story be FUCKING DARK, because it IS so funny in places. And I don't mean this is a black comedy; it's funny but also quite painful as parts of the plot develop. I ACTUALLY cried. Not dark like "ha ha lets be cynical about life's absurdity," is what I am saying, it's more like, "whoa...I am not sure I am ready for this twist.." dark. Like, I go all-in on the regular for some sad and tragic tales, and I was unsettled. Be ready, lesbian soldiers/ pirates (in this case).

But seriously, reading the two female leads interacting makes it worth it. It was cinematic. I could see the bleeding-heart-noble Peter Pan/ Robin Hood pirate-type character being completely bowled-over and baffled by her "prisoner." The prisoner reminds me of Tinker Bell, despite being human. She has a magically refreshing perspective. Almost the hilarious logic of a child, but far too cunning. She says things and makes demands that are often as insufferable and outlandish they are endearing. You feel just as confused as the pirate while reading the first half. But trust me, you're happy to be confused because she is forcing your perspective to broaden.

I found this book to be subversive and a lot of fun. It's a good cure for lesfic fatigue, or any kind of fatigue. It's actually pretty beautiful in many ways.

Linh Nguyen says

4.5 stars

Wow...this is one hell of a book. There are a shit load of life quotes in here that made me rethinking my existence lol :)). Most of the book is about scheming, adventures (pirates!) and a weird assed fake slave-master romance. Except one very sad, disturbing part which tempted me not to give this gem 5 stars (I don't deal well with hard stuffs so excuse me). To sum up, and to those like me who have no idea what a shell game is

You have choices in a shell game, but all of them are wrong. The thing you're trying to find is up the huckster's sleeve. So you can't choose the right shell—it's impossible.

To win. That's the point. The rules of the shell game say that you have to lose. If you want to stand a chance at winning, you have to change the rules. You have to reject the choices that you're given, and come up with some of your own.

Netty says

Omg utter rubbish,,,
Don't know why it's got good reviews

Marine says

Amazing fun. I could not put it down once it took momentum. I cracked up laughing at the witty narration and felt my heart race during the building suspense. A very unique and unforgettable adventure. Highly recommend if you enjoyed Pyramid Waltz.

Stephanie says

Really enjoyed this. It was funny with likable, well developed characters. I'm a sucker for a good pirate story!

Frank Van Meer says

It's rare for me these days to give such high ratings, even more so if the narrative is in first person. I sighed when I opened the book and saw it followed the pattern of dividing it up in three parts, one for each lead and then one for the both of them. I'm firmly in the camp of people who hate that way of telling a narrative.

But I gamely pressed on, and I'm glad I did.

The story starts when would-be pirate queen who actually doesn't have a clue what the fuck she's doing rescues a girl from a much raided fishing village, only to find said rescued girl demands she be treated as a prisoner and then proceeds to boss the crew around in making that happen. You have to read the rest of the story to see how that works out.

The first two parts are hilarious, with many a laugh out loud moment. We're talking about pirates who brave the high seas and the occasional ocelot and have much swashbuckling going on with ivory figurines of elephants thrown in for good measure.

The third part is much darker, and from what I gather a bit controversial. I can see why, some parts aren't what you expect to find in a comedy. It is disturbing to read, but at the same time portrays the strength of one of the leads at the same time.

It ends with an epilogue, and I'll be frank here (no pun intended), I hate epilogues. It always seems like a cop-out or something. The main story itself is brilliant, though, so I'll give it rating it deserves. (Which, apparently makes me a fangirl and a lackey, if a certain review is to be believed. Well, I'm neither a girl nor do I answer to anyone).

Cee Jelly says

[rescue mission (hide spoiler)]
