



## Shell Game

*Sara Paretsky*

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## **Shell Game** Sara Paretsky

Sara Paretsky follows her instant New York Times bestseller *Fallout*—her most widely read novel in years—with an extraordinary adventure that pits her acclaimed detective, V.I. Warshawski, against some of today's most powerful figures.

Legendary sleuth V.I. Warshawski returns to the Windy City to save an old friend's nephew from a murder arrest. The case involves a stolen artifact that could implicate a shadowy network of international criminals. As V.I. investigates, the detective soon finds herself tangling with the Russian mob, ISIS backers, and a shady network of stock scams and stolen art that stretches from Chicago to the East Indies and the Middle East. In *Shell Game*, nothing and no one are what they seem, except for the detective herself, who loses sleep, money, and blood, but remains indomitable in her quest for justice.

## **Shell Game Details**

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Author : Sara Paretsky

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## From Reader Review Shell Game for online ebook

### Brina says

Earlier this year I found out that Sara Paretsky would be publishing a new V.I. Warshawski mystery later in the year. I was giddy. I have read every book in the series starting with *Indemnity Only*. V.I has been around for over thirty years. She is a Chicago institution and my go to detective series as I know the locales where V.I. fights for justice as well as the important landmarks. After a lackluster previous case that took V.I. to the Kansas heartland, I was jumping to read this new case that has V.I. prowling the streets of Chicago once again.

The nephew of V.I.'s friend and mentor Lotty Herschel has been falsely accused of murdering an archeological student over a stolen sculpture. Lotty turns to V.I. to clear his name. What unfolds is a case that takes V.I. to the underbelly of Chicago's white corporate crime where billionaires believe they are one step above the law. The Russian mob, housing moguls, and V.I.'s ex husband are front and center and all accuse Vic of meddling in their rich and famous lifestyle before she uncovers things that aren't meant for her eyes. Meanwhile, Vic's nieces turn up asking for her help as well, and the same group of billionaires look to be the culprits. Ensuing is a fast paced crime book through the streets of Chicago.

Paretsky includes her comical cast of characters including Lotty, Murray Ryerson, and Mr Contreras, and a new love interest of V.I.'s to boot. They have been in every mystery for the last thirty years and the movie and listening to their conversations with V.I. made me laugh hysterically. Vic and Ryerson's love hate relationship of reporter and detective has not changed in thirty years, and this book was like a throw back to some of Vic's earlier cases when Murray was front and center researching Vic's dirty work. Mr Contreras appears ninety five years young and ready to lay his life on the line as well. The one thing I did not appreciate was Paretsky's politics but I overlooked them because this mystery reminded why I have stuck with this series for so long.

In the end, V.I. brings the bad guys to justice, making the streets of Chicago safe again. Stolen goods have been returned and white collar crime has been uncovered. Because Paretsky takes her time researching every facet of her mysteries, I know that I should savor this one. V.I. isn't getting any younger and Paretsky has noted that in each of the last five or so cases. Each time, however, it seems like Paretsky has brought about a protégée for V.I., they only last one or two books at the most. This insures that V.I. will be back and when she is, I know that I will be ready to follow her through the streets of Chicago.

4 stars

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### Roman Clodia says

*"It is true that many worries remain, but they are easier to bear when a stranger steps forward out of nowhere and becomes a friend."*

Oh Vic, how we need you in today's world! With her usual tough-girl-with-a-big-heart way, Vic negotiates two cases involving a missing young woman, and a trade in looted Syrian artefacts. All the standard

characters of Lottie, Mr Carreras and the dogs are present and correct, and Vic never lets up till she reaches the end. With a courageous, wholly admirable yet never clichéd central character and a fluent just-one-more-chapter style, this is a winner.

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### **Sue Em says**

Another amazing thriller from Sara Paretsky who just keeps getting better. Immersed in today's critical social issues of immigration, social equality, offshore companies, a wealthy upper class that has lost its understanding the poor are flesh and blood people with rights and the looting of historical treasures, Paretsky manages to illuminate the issues while telling a crackling good and page-turning tale. Her friend Lotty's nephew and ex-husband's nieces are the fulcrum of the story and protecting them is tantamount. Well researched and full of adrenaline and humanity. Can't recommend highly enough!

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### **Paromjit says**

I was utterly thrilled to be reading the latest in Sara Paretsky's iconic V.I. Warshawski series set in a Chicago that, by now, I feel I know rather well. Paretsky writes more than crime fiction, she captures the current social and political waters of the US, as can be seen here where the horror of the repercussions of the Trump presidency is laid bare with its impact on the poor, the migrants and refugees, living in fear, and the draconian and hostile environment they face on a daily basis. This is in stark contrast to the world of the hyperwealthy, and their inherent perception that the law does not apply to them and the unabashed, shameful corporate debauchery that takes place, powerful men preying on young and vulnerable women, mirroring the contemporary#MeToo era. The indomitable Vic has come to the aid of Felix Herschel, grandson of Lotty's brother, Hugo. In the forests of Cap Sauers Holding, the beaten to death body of a man is found stuffed into a tree. The man has a torn scrap of paper with Felix's name and phone number on his person, and the local sheriff is hellbent on arresting and charging Felix with murder on this basis.

Vic's niece, Harmony Seale has arrived in Chicago looking for her sister, Reno, who has disappeared. The good looking Reno had obtained work for a payday loan company charging astronomical interest rates of the struggling poor, doing well, she was invited to a corporate shindig in the Caribbean which turned out to be a nightmare. Harmony and Reno had a troubled upbringing with their drug addict mother, Peggy, and placed with foster parents that were the making of them, but they both remain emotionally fragile and vulnerable. The overworked and exhausted Vic finds leads which reveal stolen artefacts from war torn Syria, connections to the Oriental Institute and a cleaning company, Force 5, employing migrant labour. Felix is being distinctly unhelpful and Vic's ex-husband, the ambitious Dick, shows just how few scruples he has and just how much of a nasty piece of work he is. Homeland Security and ICE agents are muscling in on other people's turf with no compunction. In the face of being assaulted, shot at, the menacing presence of the Russian Mob and with her clients in desperate danger, Vic finds surprising links with Reno's disappearance with that of the murder in the woods of Cap Sauer.

A host of characters reappear that will be familiar to fans of series, such as the over protective elderly Mr Contreras, the wintry yet helpful client Darraugh Graham, reporter Murray Ryerson, computer genius Niko Cruickshank, not to mention the heroic dogs, Peppy and Mitch. Paretsky's Vic is a phenomenon, fighting tirelessly for justice in a world where the odds are stacked against her, in a political climate that has become increasingly surreal and unbearably dangerous to those at the bottom of the ladder, powerless and living

precarious lives. We are given a picture of the US with its recent history of ill advised foreign ventures and their impact. Always a joy to reacquaint myself with the force of nature that is Vic and know that she continues to survive, holding on to her principles and values, loyal to those close to her, even when they not always appreciative of her help. Love this series with a passion, and this marvellous addition comes highly recommended. Many thanks to Hodder and Stoughton for an ARC.

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### **Jean says**

I have been doing a fairly good job of reading the current Paretsky books. I keep telling myself to read some of the older ones but somehow a new book is out before I can do it.

I enjoy the tough smart mouthed V. I Warshawski, attorney turned private investigator. Paretsky usually provides a great sight seeing trip around Chicago also. Each book is an action-packed story with lots of humor and a social issue that leads to a suspenseful story. In this story Paretsky adds current affairs as V. I. deals with Middle East immigrants. V. I. has several cases going at the same time so the story weaves back and forth between the cases. I thoroughly enjoyed the nail-biting story.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. The book is fifteen hours and 2 minutes. Susan Ericksen does an excellent job narrating the book. Ericksen is an actress and has won all the awards available for an audiobook narrator. Ericksen has narrated nine of the nineteen books in the series.

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### **Esil says**

Always good to catch up with V.I. Warshawski. Definitely one of my favourite series. This one had some good contemporary political themes running through the plot. Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

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### **Linda says**

The City with Broad Shoulders.....Chicago

And it takes one heck of a detective to lean hard on those ol' muscular shoulders throughout the years.

Yep, V.I. Warshawski is back in this big city mix with another adventure that's sure to please in the hands of the extremely talented Sara Paretsky. Paretsky takes the wheel and we're toolin' down the Dan Ryan toward the shirt tails of Chicago.

It's the middle of the night and Vic (V.I.) has received a desperate call from her long-time friend, Lotty. Her brother Hugo's grandson looks to be somehow connected to a bludgeoned corpse found stuffed in a tree in the forest preserves. How so? A torn scrap of paper has been pulled from the dead man's pocket with Felix's name and phone number on it. Dead men tell no lies and they can't quite make phone calls after the fact.

Felix denies ever having met the unfortunate corpse as he and Vic make their way through the crime scene on this frigid night. Vic still maintains her law credentials, but this one is gonna take some high leverage.

Her connections with the police force have been pushed to the fringes over the years. All she has to go on is Felix's word and Lotty's wringing hands.

Vic heads back to her apartment and to her two beloved dogs that she shares with Mr. Contreras, her long-time neighbor. Contreras has hovered over Vic for years and he gladly steps in when needed even though old age is creeping in.

Sleep is a blessing not doled out too often in regard to Vic. She's awakened by Harmony Seale her niece through marriage. Harmony has flown in from Portland frantic because she can't get ahold of her sister, Reno, who is now living in Chicago. Vic hasn't seen the girls in years as she and her ex-husband, Richard, have never seen eye-to-eye on much of anything. The girls, now young adults, had suffered at the hands of their flagrant mother since they were born. Vic promises to check out Reno's apartment for answers. And this will be one bottomless rabbit hole for Vic.

Paretsky serves up a giant sliced beef sandwich with plenty of spicy gravy on the side.....Chicago style. Shell Game is gonna live up to its name as clues and identities will be well-hidden and moved constantly around the game board. With not much to go on in regard to both cases, Vic will be forced to turn over deadly rocks with a long stick.

Shell Game turns out to be a multi-tiered, mind-blowing trek through the dark alleys of payday loan businesses, the Russian mob, corporate voodoo, trails to the Middle East, and questionable artifacts from archeological digs. Whew! Paretsky takes on fire-breathing topics of social justice and heated political arenas.

Believe me, bring plenty of extra napkins for that juicy sandwich.....gonna get messy real fast.

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### **Dorothy says**

Sara Paretsky is one of my long-time literary crushes. I've been reading her V.I. Warshawski novels since almost their beginning back in the 1980s. She has never let me down. Oh, sure, I have enjoyed some of the books more than others, but there is not a stinker among them.

One of the things that I enjoy about V.I. is that she has been allowed to age, more or less in real time. By now (and the present book takes place in the present time - the Trump era) she's getting a bit long in the tooth, not unlike many of us, but her passion for justice and for serving her clients with honor remains undimmed.

Her latest case involves a heady mix of stock scams and painstakingly detailed insurance fraud by high rollers, the scapegoating and demonizing of immigrants (particularly Middle Eastern immigrants), an out-of-control ICE, theft of archaeological treasures, Russian mobsters, kidnapping and sexual abuse of young girls, and, of course, murder.

It's the murder that initially gets V.I. involved in all the rest of this muck. The body of a murdered man with no identification on him has been found in a nature preserve area outside of Chicago. The Cook County Sheriff's Office has jurisdiction over the investigation. The only clue they find on the body is a scrap of paper bearing the name and phone number of Felix Herschel. Felix is the grand-nephew of Lotty Herschel, V.I.'s friend, doctor, and mother-figure. Sheriff's deputies take Felix to look at the body to see if he can identify it

and Lotty contacts V.I. to go along.

Felix denies knowing the dead person, but he seems to be hiding something and V.I. follows him and sees him meet a young woman of Middle Eastern appearance. She turns out to be Syrian, a recent refugee from the civil war there and she is the daughter of an honored poet who is in the country illegally. Felix seems to be trying to protect them.

The dead man is eventually identified as Leroy (or Lawrence) Fausson, an archaeology student who had worked at digs in the Middle East and was captivated by the culture of that area. He often dressed as an Arab and wanted to be called Lawrence, or Elorenze, as in Lawrence of Arabia. It develops that he had probably stolen a priceless antiquity.

Meantime, in a parallel plot, V.I. is contacted by Harmony Seale, whose late mother was the sister of Warshawski's long-ago husband, Richard Yarborough. V.I. had not seen the girl since she was 5 or 6 years old, but now she is grown up and needs help. Her older sister, Reno, had recently moved to Chicago from Portland and found a job, but now she has disappeared. Harmony refuses to go to the police because she doesn't trust them. She wants V.I. to find her.

V.I. looks for clues and tries to work both the cases and at some point they begin to grow together in an intricately woven pattern. She has a problem following or developing the clues that she finds because she keeps getting attacked by two monstrously large and implacable Slavic thugs.

Of course, V.I. is pretty implacable herself and we know she's not going to give up.

It's fairly obvious pretty early on who the prime villain is here, but that knowledge does not in any way detract from the pleasure of reading this story. The plot is meticulously worked out in the most minute detail including a lot of information about insurance and stocks that frankly goes over my head, but I'm able to follow along and get the gist and, as usual, it is the characters and their relationships that keep me turning the pages. Particularly the new and intriguing relationship between V.I. and a certain archaeologist from the Oriental Institute.

What can I say? V.I. just gets better and better. This one was definitely one of my favorites in the series.

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### **Jerry B says**

We've read Paretsky's entire V.I. Warshawski bibliography, of which "Shell" is the 19th. While we enjoyed the first dozen or so for the adventures of this strong and able female protagonist, a Chicago-based PI, we have soured on the last few novels as especially detailed in our review of #18, "Fallout". Those items of which we complained were again all too prevalent in this latest tale.

Particularly incredulous were the many times herein V.I. survived a hail of bullets and muggings – but the final scenes surviving adrift in an icy river were just too absurd to even imagine.

We suspect part of the author's following reflects the relative lack of such great female stars as Kinsey Millhone or Sheriff Joanna Brady. While we're open to suggestion, we said last time we might be done with V.I. – now we mean it.

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### **Linda Strong says**

V. I. Warshawski is back for her 19th adventure. A Private Investigator with a license to practice law, she's been asked by her best friend and mentor to help keep her nephew out of jail. A man found murdered had the nephew's name and address on his person. But Felix swears he has never seen the man, and the police don't quite believe his story.

While trying to help Felix, and knowing that he's keeping something secret, V.I. also gets involved in a missing person case .. a young woman who just happens to be her ex-husband's niece.

As V. I. gets entangled in these cases, she has to deal with possible terrorist groups, the Russian mob, stock scams and stolen works of art.

It seems like everyone is keeping secrets .. some of which could be the end of V.I..

This is easily read as a stand alone. There's lots of suspense, plenty of suspects to keep the reader engaged, and a volatile ending.

Many thanks to the author / HarperCollins - William Morrow / Edelweiss for the advanced digital copy of this crime fiction. Opinions expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

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### **Sue says**

This was another great outing with Sara Paretsky and her almost, but too human to be, wonder woman, V.I. Warshawski. Set in her familiar surroundings of Chicago, it is very current, featuring the more recent predations of ICE on even legal immigrants, the ways the lives of the extremely wealthy can intersect with people much lower on the socioeconomic ladder and how V.I. manages to interact with both while doing favors for "almost" family members who she cares about deeply.

The action level is high. Occasional coincidences are well explained through the plot. V.I. both takes and gives lumps while also meeting some interesting new people. All in all, another book that any follower of the series definitely should read. Anyone not reading this series really should seriously consider it. The plots are well constructed, the characters well developed and the writing is excellent. The stories frequently tie in a contemporaneous event or social or political issue which broadens their scope. This may be local to Chicago or national or possibly more far-reaching.

Highly recommended. 4.5\* rounded to 5

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### **L.A. Starks says**

I like everything about this book that I like about Paretsky's previous books: the main character's fearlessness, drive, and -yes, attention to running her business--her willingness to challenge anyone and

everyone in seeking answers. The plotting is terrific and the settings in Chicago, including UChicago's Oriental Institute are spot-on.

However, Paretsky has a political point to make about immigration/open borders/ICE, and some readers may feel, as I did, hit over the head as hard as by one of the book's Russian thugs, without any chance to respond.

Honestly, I would challenge Paretsky to spend a year in Laredo or McAllen or Tucson where, for instance, journalists who report the truth about the drug trade are routinely murdered or, like Alfredo Corchado "merely" live in fear of being murdered. After such an experience Paretsky would ideally revisit the issue of illegal immigration from a southern border perspective.

I can unfortunately only recommend this book in Paretsky's mystery series to those who are already fully on board with her immigration politics because everything else is secondary to the point she wishes to make. This is a shame since the writing, plot, and characterization are great.

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### **Sid Nuncius says**

I thought *Shell Game* was very good. I enjoyed Sara Paretsky's early books but I haven't read one for many years. I'm pleased to say that she's still as good as ever.

Here, Vic is drawn into two apparently separate investigations involving friends and family as a young great-nephew of a close friend is suspected of murder while a niece (sort of – it's complicated) comes to her because her sister has vanished. A complex plot develops involving stolen Middle Eastern artefacts, corporate malfeasance, Russian mobsters, Vic getting knocked about...well, it's classic Paretsky. There is a monumental coincidence at its heart, but it hangs together well and makes an exciting and involving read.

Paretsky uses her very well-drawn characters to cast light on the present-day USA, with a convincing picture of the increasing, mindless conflation of "muslim" and even "immigrant" with "terrorist," and some sharp stabs at the current political situation in general. Some are a little crude, but for the most part she gives an intelligent critique and creates a very convincing atmosphere.

*Shell Game* shows that Sara Paretsky deserves her place in the pantheon of great contemporary crime writers and that she is writing as well as ever. I enjoyed it very much and I can recommend it warmly.

(My thanks to Hodder & Stoughton for an ARC via NetGalley.)

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### **Tucker says**

3.5 stars.

Sara Paretsky has long been one of my "must read" authors and "*Shell Game*" is a fine follow up to her previous novel, the brilliant "*Fallout*." All of the books in this nineteen book series are well worth reading. They don't have to be read in order, but I would encourage readers to do so, beginning with book #1 "*Indemnity Only*."

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

I would like to thank Netgalley and Hodder and Stoughton for an advance copy of *Shell Game*, the nineteenth novel to feature Chicago based PI V.I. Warshawski.

Vic's friend, Lottie Herschel, asks her to accompany her great nephew, Felix, to identify a dead body whom the police are certain he will know. Felix doesn't recognise the body but is so secretive the police line him up as the prime suspect. Preoccupied as she is with Felix and his problems she can't help but say yes when Harmony, her niece by marriage asks for help in finding her sister, Reno, who has disappeared. Both cases eventually end up intertwined.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Shell Game*. It is a while since I spent time with Vic (after so many novels she's like a friend and that's what friends call her) but she seems undimmed. With a straightforward first person narrative it is easy to get to know her as she is free with her thoughts, deductions and emotions. She's not always likeable, being self righteous at times and very sure of herself, but she's honest, principled and unafraid to put herself in danger if the cause is just. Would that we could all measure up to her standards. Nevertheless she is a hero for our times.

The plot is excellent and I couldn't read fast enough to see what was coming next. It is quite complicated in parts and I freely admit that some of the financial fraud detail went right over my head, but the gist is clear and while it's shocking to see it laid bare it's actually unsurprising as it seems a way of life in some circles. Ms Paretsky is never one to shy away from current social problems so immigration, financial fraud, payday loans and artefact smuggling all get a reference. Again, her bald delivery makes it shocking but unsurprising reading. While these issues are at the root of the novel they are not the be all and end all as there is a great story in there as well. There is action, danger, thrills, betrayal, lies and tension as Vic navigates her way towards the truth.

*Shell Game* is a great read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

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