



## Bitter Medicine

*Sara Paretsky*

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## **Bitter Medicine** Sara Paretsky

Chicago private eye V.I. Warshawski knows from the start that Consuelo Alvarado's baby is trouble. Consuelo is sixteen. Diabetic. And the daughter of a friend. When she goes into labor too early, even V.I.'s wild drive to get her to the hospital can't save either Consuelo or her child. Soon V.I. is investigating possible malpractice at the emergency room--and falling for a doctor who works there. Mixing business and love is always bad medicine, but V.I. finds herself listening to her heart, not her head. And when a brutal murder and the violent destruction of a women's clinic put her at the center of a very dirty conspiracy, justice may be the only remedy for a hurt that cuts deep...and chills right to the bone....

## **Bitter Medicine Details**

Date : Published 2011 by William Morrow (first published 1987)

ISBN :

Author : Sara Paretsky

Format : Kindle Edition 375 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime

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# From Reader Review *Bitter Medicine* for online ebook

## Bob says

V.I gets involved in a double death of teen and unborn the escalates to murders and hospital malfeasance plus confrontations with her x. Good detective yarns based in Chicago.

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## Freda Witt says

I read all of the alphabet books, but missed some of these. Not bad, not great.

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## Anna says

I am picking up Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski books again after a couple of years. Reading these earlier books is nostalgically fun, and comparing them to the later books, it's enjoyable to follow Paretsky's growth as a writer. V.I. also grows as a character, but some of that might be wishful thinking on my part.

*Bitter Medicine* tells the story of a very pregnant, very dead teenager and her baby-gangbanger fiance. Our heroine finds herself drawn unwillingly in when it seems like the hospital where the girl was to deliver her baby waited far too long to treat her. Shortly thereafter, a doctor is murdered and V.I. is up to her neck in bottom-line corporate medicine.

Some of the early books in the series feature a well-developed character in V.I. but caricatures of other characters, and a romance subplot in *Bitter Medicine* is predictable and feels awkward. V.I. interacts most naturally with her good friend Lotty Herschel, and when she is bantering with her reporter friend Murray Ryerson and baiting the cops, it feels natural, if not always likable (which I like). Again, reading these books now, they sometimes feel dated.

Paretsky is setting the stage for a future of supporting the underdog. V.I. may know better but she can never turn away from the needy. I wonder if this explains the South-Side raised V.I. being a Cubs fan.

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## Cheri says

I love this series. This early volume, written more than 30 years ago, still has a contemporary feel. Warshawski is a woman ahead of her time!

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## Rbucci says

I'd forgotten how much I like Sara Paretsky and the VI Warshawski books. Well worth the read.

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### **Phrynnne says**

Number 4 in the series and Sara Paretsky was really getting into her stride by this stage. The story moves fast and it is easy to just sit and read the whole thing straight through! I always find it fun to read a crime story written before the advent of mobile phones and the internet. Being a detective was way more fun back then! An entertaining read and a great way to happily while away a few pleasant hours.

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### **Peggy says**

I am disgusted with this book and have decided not to finish reading it. If there is one thing I cannot abide it's an author who pushes her political agenda by means of depicting anyone who holds an opposite view as stupid, mean-spirited, narrow-minded, and evil. Any character who prescribes to the author's view is virtuous, brave, and intelligent. Spare me - if the view is that a pro-life supporter cannot be compassionate and intelligent then I don't need to waste my time reading this.

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### **Kathy Davie says**

review coming

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### **Kate says**

I haven't stayed up late to finish a book in a long time, but I couldn't put VI Warshawski down, so carefully plotted and such artful foreshadowing so you feel like you know what will happen but must read to see how. I know I tried to read one of these a long time ago and didn't care for it, but clearly I was wrong or not old enough.

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### **Donna says**

A fast paced mystery of profit vs. ethics, and a for profit hospital that looks first to ability to pay, and the death of a young mother and baby from delayed emergency room treatment, that sets off a chain of violence, in an attempt to disguise the truth. The author skillfully blends several subplots to arrive at the final conclusions. I enjoyed the book.

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### **James says**

#### **Book Review**

4 of 5 stars to Bitter Medicine, the 4th book in the VI Warshawski mystery thriller series by Sara Paretsky. I

really enjoyed this book, more than many of the others. In this installment, VI is trying to help out a friend, but things don't go well and both the young girl and her newly born baby die. VI's convinced a malpractice suit against the hospital is the right thing, but she's unsure what's lurking beneath the surface. The best part of this series is the character of Lotty. Lotty's like a mother figure to VI. She is the only person to put VI in her place when she is acting a bit out of control. And when Lotty is in danger, VI is a force to be reckoned with. In this novel, Paretsky takes on health care, clinics, the hospital, insurance, fraud, surgery and policy and procedure. It's a great story, full of deep characters and lots of information about the inner circle of how things really work. A bit dated, given it's nearly 20+ years old, it perhaps still rings a little true these days.

### **About Me**

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by. *Note:* All written content is my original creation and copyrighted to me, but the graphics and images were linked from other sites and belong to them. Many thanks to their original creators.

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## **aPriL does feral sometimes says**

Poor Consuelo. Sixteen, pregnant, completely ignoring that her husband hates her (shotgun wedding, Catholics), her diabetes and her family's disgust, she wants this baby. Her hopeful support in helping her gangbanger husband, Fabiano, get a job is almost delusional, but her perseverance draws private investigator V.I. Warshawski into helping her as an escort to a job interview. It is hot and sweaty weather, and after a long debilitating drive, all three are cranky and tired. While Fabiano, whose thick-headed criminality is not in question by anyone else except by his besotted teen wife, goes inside an industrial park building for his job interview, Consuela goes into early labor. Thankfully, Warshawski locates a nearby for-profit hospital, Friendship Five. Driving there quickly, she gets Consuela safely in doctor's hands. Except.....wait for it....she dies. Plus Warshawski could tell that the high level of urgency which at first was intense, slid completely away when they learned their patient was an impoverished Latino girl. There is a state law that the hospital **MUST** care for the pregnancy - but it appears the hospital may have not wanted to do more than park her in a hallway until she could be transported to a public hospital. Warshawski gets mad and throws her weight around, but it's too late to save Consuelo. But does Warshawski have a case? There is no proof, despite the arrival of Consuela's regular doctor, an excellent in-training sweet man, who takes over from the Friendship's staff.

But then! Suddenly, horrible things start happening to all of the people involved in Consuela's care previous to her death. Are they linked? And then an awful shocking murder, a riot and Warshawski's apartment is trashed. NOW, they, whoever they are, have V. I.'s complete attention. Along the way, she finds one of the detectives, Rawlings, to be similar in spirit to herself. Hmmmmmm. But her head is being turned by a handsome doctor from Friendship, Burgoyne, and she ends up turning down her bed covers for him. Mistake?

Only by reading almost to the end of the book will all be solved. There will be broken souls.

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## **Milica says**

The most engaging plot so far, with I think the highest body count which probably contributed, alongside not having to do with trading or finance or what have you. The most political one as well, Paretsky gets a little preachy about being pro-choice, but I'll allow it since I agree with her politics, as I am assuming her readership generally does. The topic of abortion is perhaps what made this feel particularly contemporary and additionally juicy even though it's set in the 80s. Which is somewhat depressing when you think about it. The only thing beside the preachiness that I minded was VI's neighbour, Mr. Contreras, who was perfectly lovely at first, but by the end of the book I got real tired of his ways.

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## **Obsidian says**

Sorry, this book started off really well and then floundered in the middle and fell flat at the end.

in this fourth installment in the V.I. Warshawski series, we have V.I. settled in her new co-op and not doing any life or death cases. She gets involved with Lotty's friend's family woes. Teen Counselo is expecting her first child. She has some medical issues (diabetes and other things which is affecting her health due to her pregnancy) and a husband who is pretty worthless and doesn't want to work. When Counselo dies in the hospital after her newborn child also dies, Warshawski at first doesn't think a thing is amiss until a doctor working alongside Lotty turns up beaten and murdered too.

I have to think to myself that this book when it was written (1987) was definitely pushing the envelope. Paretsky, through V.I. talks about abortion and the pro-life movement which I did shake my head at, doesn't seem much changed. Everyone seems pro-life until the baby is born and then it's well you just need to strap on your boots and deal with things. Vic is pretty upfront about being a "radical" and a feminist. But I think that this book also shows how out of touch Vic is with the world and also how her actions (though she thinks that they are benign) affect other people.

Case in point, Vic thinks that since she got a high profile drug dealer less time in prison, he would be willing to talk to her and possibly dime out Counselo's husband about possibly being behind the doctor's death that worked with Lotty. The incident doesn't go off the way that Vic thinks, but the man brings up that he could read contempt on Vic's face the whole time. The whole thing shakes her and it's brought up throughout the book. Honestly, I have to wonder how Vic even kept investigated after a while. She is getting pushed by Lotty, and the dead man's girlfriend to get to the bottom of things.

The case takes a turn and once again we have one of Vic's love interests cautioning her to be careful and not being really appreciative of her job. Also, can I say right now, I am a little over Vic dating people that are tied into her case. Maybe wait to make sure that they are on the up and up. Gah.

We have references to Bobby (thank goodness he is not in here) and we have some new characters, a Black Chicago detective whose name is eluding me right now, and a downstairs neighbor of Vic's that is retired and nosy.

I honestly thought the whole case was a bit confusing and we get data dumped as I like to say via a character we have never met before who I detested (his name is Max and he is dating Lotty). We literally have a gross whose on first thing happening with Max, Murray, and Vic, as those three get increasingly drunk (or at least it read that way) as they explained things to Lotty who was upset about how glib they were all being.

To make matters worse, they set things up to catch the "bad" guys (for no reason I could tell) and then there's a couple of scenes involving a dog that was just devastating and terrible. At least the dog thing gets redeemed by the end of the book though. Up until then I was thinking I was going to just be done with this series.

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## **Larry Bassett says**

This is book #4 of the V.I. Warshawski series and was published back in the days when Paretsky books were smaller and shorter. This one is 222 pages in the original hardback version published in 1987, an amazing twenty-five years ago. What were you reading in 1987? I will be interested to see how her "bigger" books compare to these early ones.

Reading this series is a part of my search for women authors who have mystery or crime stories with strong and, am I asking too much, feminist protagonists. So far this series is still in the running for best of breed.

In my book, one of the best things about V.I. is that she has the right politics.

Americans have never been very understanding of poverty, but since Reagan was elected it's become a crime almost as bad as child-molesting.

But sometimes Paretsky can get carried away with her causes. For example, she evidently supports the pro-choice abortion position, a position common among feminists.

{Dieter Monkfish, head of Ick-Piff – the Illinois Committee to Protect the Fetus} supporters included a number of college-age young men, all fervently committed to carrying their own pregnancies to term, and a variety of middle-aged women, whose faces seemed to say: My life was made miserable by maternity, and so should everyone else's be.

A pro-life demonstration at a low income health clinic that does first-trimester abortions is covered for nearly ten pages(5% of the book) including the ultimate invasion and trashing of the clinic. The incident does serve a purpose in the overall mystery but devoting that much space to it seems like Paretsky might be overdoing it even within the context of the book. On the other hand, in 1986, the year this book was being written, there were seven arsons and three bombings of abortion clinics in the U.S. so the issue was in full bloom and the tactic of pro-life violence was in the news. (Source: [http://www.prochoice.org/about\\_aborti...](http://www.prochoice.org/about_aborti...))

The vast majority of pro-life attacks on abortion clinics in the 1980s were directly against property when clinics were closed. More recently actions against abortion clinics have focused more on demonstrations to impede and discourage women coming to the clinics as well as legal actions. *Bitter Medicine* in using the medical clinic as a vehicle for advancing the story was topical for its day.

In the mid 80s, Warshawski was cutting edge. She is one of those good guys who are a little bit bad. She is a serial lawbreaker: she can pick a lock, one way she gathers information is the time honored B&E and she is

good in a hand to hand fight. She has stealth and cunning, important skills for a cat burglar or a private eye. While she doesn't smoke, she does like some Black Label whiskey occasionally.

Warshawski gets some extra credit for being a "child of the sixties" since I am one as well. Her progressive political and social views are winners. And for us animal lovers, the dog at the end was nice. I guess we will see Peppy in the next book in the series. I have #5 on my new book shelves awaiting its turn in the spotlight. A few other books are in line before it but it will get its turn.

I give *Bitter Medicine* four stars. It doesn't quite measure up to the high bar of the Millennium series to get five stars. But it does pack a lot into its 222 pages. It even has a car chase!

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