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ENTERTAINMENT

'Warshawski' looked good on paper, but...

★★
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A "don't bother, it's 'wait to wait,"
... "worth the time, it's a must see"



Read any novel about a detective who is no-nonsense, hard-boiled, self-reliant and tough-as-nails and you'll probably be reading a book about a man. That is, unless you're reading a Sara Paretsky novel starring her most famous creation, V.I. Warshawski.

Kathleen Turner stars as the

Chicago private eye who has a confused love life, a refrigerator full of moldy food and a talent for being tougher than most of the men she comes in contact with. The character, as Turner plays it, comes off quite close to the material that it came from. But the movie plot is right out of a TV show.

The books have a lot in common with another series about a private eye, the Spenser novels by Robert B. Parker. There's the atmospheric locale: Chicago instead of Boston. There are the deliberately racially mixed group of friends that both characters have great loyalty for. Both detectives are single with continuing love interests and both are outside of societal norms when it comes to matters of the kitchen. Spenser can make a gourmet meal out of leftovers while V.I. couldn't make a piece of toast.

Turner is the standout in the film. She is a lot of Lauren Bacall with a bit of Veronica Lake thrown in. She is street-savvy, strong-willed and the white-hot sensuality that usually pervades every role she plays is delightfully understated and subtle.

Unfortunately, the plot for *V.I. Warshawski* is about as complex and involving as a typical episode of *Spenser: For Hire*. That may be good television, but it's mediocre filmmaking — a strictly pedestrian plot.

V.I. (Victoria to her friends) is hired by the thirteen-year-old daughter of a former hockey player who was almost V.I.'s boyfriend, until he was killed.

Hoodlums all over town seem to be involved. But most of them are extraneous bad guys thrown in just to kill time. They have no more personality

than the cardboard they were cut out of. If you've seen five episodes of any TV detective show, you'll have this one figured out about halfway through.

What works best in this film is the comedy. But this is supposed to be an action-thriller and that's what fails. Angela Goethals plays Kat Grafalk, the street-smart thirteen-year-old who hires V.I. to find her dad's killer. They have some great scenes together.

Although the movie was only mediocre, I am still looking forward to a sequel, which Kathleen Turner apparently wants to do. The character is well defined and interesting. There's a lot of potential if a competent script is written.

Lucas Gutman
Emerald Contributor

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