



A Cold Day For Murder

Dana Stabenow , Marguerite Gavin (Narrator)

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Kate Shugak returns to her roots in the far Alaskan north, after leaving the Anchorage D.A.'s office. Her deductive powers are definitely needed when a ranger disappears. Looking for clues among the Aleutian pipeliners, she begins to realize the fine line between lies and loyalties--between justice served and cold murder.

A Cold Day For Murder Details

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Author : Dana Stabenow , Marguerite Gavin (Narrator)

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From Reader Review A Cold Day For Murder for online ebook

Robert says

I admit I like free shit. I also admit I'm not entirely rational in my thought process. For example, I happily hand over my Bouchercon and Left Coast Crime Conference fees and feel like I've won the lottery when I receive a bag filled with books. Seriously, this ends up being one of the major highlights of these conferences. So in my continued pursuit of this high, minus the conference fees, I have decided to scour Amazon for the best free short stories and books available. With that being said, let's get to the review.

The beginning of A COLD DAY FOR MURDER reminded me of a tall sequoia, as I stood on the uppermost branches, staring out at a picturesque world, before I slipped and then smacked every branch on the way down. Even though I've never been to Alaska, I feel like I could paint a picture of its vast wilderness and attractive scenery and include a few interesting characters to boot, if I should so desire. Several of the chapters began with multiple pages of description, the text coming to life right before my eyes, springing forth like a cactus in the desert.

It wasn't until I was about 36% through this tale on my Kindle (this transfers to roughly 71 pages into the print edition) before the mystery really took hold and took off. Had it not been for some lovely description and Kate's straightforward, no-holds-barred mentality, I might have given up on this novel earlier. As it stands, though, I was rather glad I pushed through. Even though Kate isn't the most likeable character, I really enjoyed her toughness and even found her abrasiveness rather amusing most of the time. She's a character with some rough edges that I'm sure will get smoothed out in one of her later adventures.

As for the other characters, none are as fleshed out as Kate Shugak, but all showed signs of life and enough enthusiasm for further tales. The mystery proved interesting and engaging, but at times it felt like it took a backseat to the characters and the scenery. In the end, though, this was an enjoyable read from the first page to the last, it all fit together perfectly, and I look forward to catching up on more of Kate's exploits.

Cross-posted at Robert's Reads

Luffy says

I should have guessed who the criminal was. That's because in the first book of a long running series, it is always a near or dear who commits the crime.

Dana Stabenow has certainly captivated my attention. I've never read so much descriptiveness in a book under 300 pages. I'm sure I'll follow a few of the sequels and see if the quality really holds up.

I recommend this book. Its flashbacks, necessary an evil as they are, do not bog down the book, and this setting reminds me of the simple but classic quip: Juneau the capital of Alaska? I really want to know what the next book will be about, because it seems that a sequel is unsustainable as things stand in the first book.

Ingrid says

I enjoyed this book very much. Loved reading about Alaska and its people. I like Kate Shugak a lot so I look forward to reading more about her.

Cynthia says

Having won a copy of *Though Not Dead* through the Goodreads First Reads program (and loved it), I decided to go back to the beginning and allow myself to be introduced to Kate Shugak good and proper. What can I say? I am in love with Dana Stabenow and her creation, Kate Shugak.

Kate is an Alaskan native in every sense of the word. She can trace her Aleutian roots deep into the Alaskan soil and ice. She is living in a homestead cabin in the Park, away from civilization, with only her half-wolf/half-husky companion Mutt as company. She does not want to be bothered by anyone or anything, so she is not terribly pleased to hear the roar of the snow machine heading for her homestead. She is even less pleased to see who climbs off. After she is told that her help is needed to find not one but two missing people, a Park ranger and the man sent to find him, she is definitely unhappy. But she agrees to help because she knows that she is the only one who can find them.

One of the things that I love about Dana Stabenow's writing is this: she alludes to things past without feeling the need to explain anything. She gives small glimpses, little teases, tiny but sometimes horrific snapshots. The reader is then allowed and encouraged to put these bits together and figure out what happened. No lengthy backstory is required. The snippets provided are plenty enough to understand.

Another thing I love about Stabenow is the way she paints a portrait of the glorious Alaskan wilderness. She writes in such a way that I feel the deadly coldness through the pages. I can smell the crispness of the winter air. Stabenow opens little windows everywhere so you can peek into the souls of the characters, their lives, their cultures. And it's not always pretty. Or happy. Or fair. But it is what it is.

And that's why I will continue reading this series. Besides, Kate and Mutt are the greatest kick-ass team around. On to book two.

Emma says

2.5 stars

Most of the stars for this go to the setting, the brutal beauty of the Alaskan wilds. And for Kate Shugak's half wolf pet, Mutt. The author does well to set up the close knit community where everyone knows everyone else's business and feels like they have the right to get all up in it. It factors well into the plot, where personal interests clash enough for two people to end up dead. But the characters themselves were pretty light, with

the author trying to be too quirky in their creation or failing in their depiction. The whole thing made more difficult by the serious lack of veracity in the conversation or relationships, sometimes bad enough to make me tense.

The overarching premise is interesting enough and I like the feel of Kate if not the execution. In any case, I have her newest book to read so i'll know by the end whether to come back for more.

ARC via Netgalley

rabbitprincess says

This novel introduces Detective Kate Shugak, a petite, scrappy Aleut woman who lives in a fictional national park in Alaska. A park ranger goes missing, and so does the officer sent to find him. Kate, now working as a private investigator, takes the case, and delves into complicated political issues involving the use of park land for tourist purposes.

I was surprised to learn that this was not actually Stabenow's first novel, because it sure felt like one. The book was much too repetitive; as Kate went around interviewing people, she felt obliged to tell her story over and over again, verbatim. A simple "Quickly she filled X in on the situation" would have sufficed.

Also, I was able to predict the killer reasonably ahead of Kate et al., and it was glaringly obvious. I am not particularly skilled at figuring out whodunnit, so if I *am* able to "call it", I consider that a sign of inferior plotting. (Sometimes I make exceptions to this rule, but in this case the rule holds quite firmly.)

On the positive side, the book was easy to get through, and I did appreciate the originality of Stabenow's sleuth and her setting. However, this entry in the series did not convince me to seek out any more.

Sushi (??) says

Sinceramente non ne vale la pena. Troppe descrizioni inutili. Cioè le descrizioni vanno pure bene ma molte sembrano solo riempitive per allungare il libro. Per fortuna era in offerta e non l'ho pagato a prezzo pieno. Farò un pensiero sul secondo se sarà in offerta al momento altrimenti passo.

Dopo aver letto alcuni commenti su Anobii e averci pensato un po' posso dire che le due stelle sono anche colpa di chi ha pensato il titolo italiano. Probabilmente, e penso sia vero, io mi aspettavo altro con un titolo come CSI cioè Crime Scene Investigation. Il ritrovamento di un cadavere, le indagini e la soluzione del caso. Solo che invece di essere a LV, NY o Miami siamo in una terra ricoperta dal ghiaccio.

Non è la prima volta che il titolo fa la differenza. Ci fu un Urania che mi era piaciuto ma a molti no. Quello era colpa del titolo secondo me. Il titolo italiano diceva una cosa mentre il titolo inglese originale ne diceva un'altra. In questo caso avevo letto il titolo originale all'interno del paperback e potei apprezzare il volume ma

per il libro Alaskiano purtroppo, sebbene sia nella scheda di GR, non l'ho letto fino a poche ore fa per metterlo sul mio Livejournal.

Il due rimane, non mi è piaciuto, ma un titolo può fare la differenza. Non si traduce letterale, se non strettamente necessario, ma nemmeno l'opposto.

Lewis Weinstein says

This is the first of Dana Stabenow's novels that I've read, and I think the first she wrote. I almost stopped about half-way through but I'm glad I didn't. After a long period of introducing characters and the Alaska locale, with a plot going nowhere, the pace did pick up and the story became interesting. Not fantastic, but interesting. There is some good writing with relaxed and amusing observations, but there are also segments where the writing just "tries too hard," and other segments where it seems cliché-driven. The solution to the crime came much too fast and without the reader having much opportunity to share in the detecting. The action scenes didn't generate much tension. In summary, it's an OK read, but I cannot imagine why it won an Edgar Award.

Veronica says

I listened to the audiobook version which is narrated by the wonderful Marguerite Gavin. I think that helped me to like this more than if I had read it myself. The characters were mostly interesting and/or quirky and making the heroine an Aleut woman gave some insight into the culture of the native Alaskan People. The story itself felt a little long-winded and overly descriptive at times however and I found my mind wandering more than once. I don't really want a play-by-play account of how the heroine's grandmother makes cocoa and fried bread. The mystery and the subsequent investigation felt a little flat and there didn't seem to be any sense of urgency. I'm fine with leaving the series at one and done.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

A Cold Day for Murder is the first book in the Kate Shugak series and I've found myself a new series that I want to read. This book had everything I like about a mystery book, engaging characters, fabulous milieu, and an interesting mystery.

Kate Shugak almost died on a mission and after that did she quit her job, but when this case lands on her doorstep does she decide to try to find the ranger and the detective who gone missing. She had a personal relationship with the detective in questions so finding him is personal for her. But, they have both been gone for weeks and the weather is cold so the chances of finding one of them or both are slim.

The book isn't especially long, but I quite liked this little mystery. What I really loved about this book was the setting. The waste wilderness of Alaska, with small towns, where everyone knows each other. The mystery in itself was interesting as well and I have to admit that I did not see the ending coming until Kate herself started to see where it was all leading to. I quite liked learning more about Kate and her family and I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the books in the series to see what the future will bring for Kate.

I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!

Lightreads says

Kate Shugak is an Alaskan Aleut living in an arctic national park, a former investigator for the Alaska District Attorney, and now something of a freelancer. To paraphrase the nonfictional Kate who pointed me in the direction of these books, Kate Shugak is wounded and intense and competent, unimpressed with anyone's self-importance, hard to drag away from her cabin and her kitchen and her half-wolf half-deaf companion, Mutt. And she also solves crime.

Oh, lovely. These tiny novels evoke Alaska with broad but compelling strokes. The landscape, weather, wildlife, history, and politics sometimes feel like characters themselves, a few among the surprisingly large supporting cast of fishers and trappers and racers and natives and outsiders and addicts (and disabled people!). The mysteries are also creative -- A Fatal Thaw, which is ostensibly about Kate tracking the shooter of a local girl, plays with genre conventions in nifty ways that I won't spoil for you. Dead in the Water takes Kate onto a crabber up in the Aleutians, and A Cold-Blooded Business sends her much farther north to the slopes of the Prudhoe oil field to find the source of a massive drug problem.

And I think that's what I really like here -- A Cold-Blooded Business is about a native Alaskan's view of the oil drilling and, as most of the books are to some degree or other, also about the plague of substance abuse which is still raging through the state's communities, native and otherwise. And it's quite a funny book. I kid you not. There's a gritty sort of charm here, and a surprising sense of whimsy. There's also a stark but compassionate portrait of a native community looking uncertainly into the future and drinking itself to sleep every night, of its confused and angry children, of cruelty and evil. Somehow, making these things co-exist works, and works well.

Stabenow does stumble, as we all do, most notably with an over reliance on dated cultural references as character descriptors, and an occasional misjudgment of a detail that left me snorting rather than touched or impressed (your heroine really should not tack her letter of resignation to her boss's door with the bloody knife which had been used to cut her own throat. I mean, really). But these are great, compact, rich stories, and I'm simply delighted to have them sent my way.

Yodamom says

3.8 stars

Wonderful first book in a series, I am hooked. Alaskan setting, tough Alaskan woman with scars, fab dog/wolf sidekick, and snarky side characters all wrapped around a decent story ! Ding ding winner ! The cast in this story are offbeat, and maybe a touch crazy, which makes them even more enjoyable to get to know. I have a favorite snarky character Bobby, you have to meet this guy. I want him to be my neighbor, we could get in trouble. :D

If you are looking for a murder mystery series to get lost in give this one a try. I hear there are 19 more books already published just waiting to be picked up. Hot Tamales I like not waiting for the next book !

Mary says

Aleutian Kate Shugak and her dog/wolf companion, Mutt, live alone outside of town in the Park, an Alaskan reservation. Scarred physically and psychically after she killed her attacker while investigating a child abuser for the DA, she hasn't been to town for over a year. Now her past lover and ex-boss, Jack Morgan, wants her to find two men missing in the park - one of whom is another ex-lover.

The descriptive writing in this book is fabulous. Visiting Alaska after reading this book will result in *deja vu*, I'm sure. I'm booking a ticket to get there - seriously. Kate herself as a character works really well - tough, dryly amusing, very competent. There are a couple of other interesting characters who need more developing.

While this is Ms Stabenow's first novel in the series, surely it is not her first novel? If so it is a very impressive start. I recommend this book. I enjoyed it and moved straight on to the next book in the series.

Richard says

Not an easy read as there is so much to process being introduced into the world of Kate Shugak and life in one of Alaska's National Parks.

However, the writing is crisp and beautifully captures the surrounding environment; furthermore the characters are well drawn and speak with all the power of real people.

It is a simple missing person mystery that Kate is called to solve. For one she knows every inch of the park, secondly is related to most of the key people to contact to review the case and lastly the original investigator sent to trace the park ranger no-one had seen for weeks had also disappeared without trace, and Kate called him a 'friend'.

Plenty of help is forthcoming, evidence is confusing and the advice misleading at times but Kate slowly builds up a solution perhaps no-one else would be able to reach.

Full of clever dialogue and humour. This is life on the edge with a "wildwest" feel. It is a sympathetic treatment of the indigenous peoples and is a story that will stay with you long after you reach its climax. Happily for everyone Dana Stabenow struck gold in them hills with this novel and a cannon of work exists where Kate Shugak is the investigator, a series of books to discover like the wide expanses of Alaska itself.

The Pirate Ghost (Formerly known as the Curmudgeon) says

1. Plot – Kate Shugak left the DA's office over a year ago after a bust went bad. She'd gone to the home of a child abuser and come out with her throat slashed, leaving the man's body gutted on the floor behind her. She'd resigned from the D.A.'s stable of investigators by pinning her letter to the door with the knife she'd used to take out the bad man.

For fourteen months she stays away from town, living in the rugged Alaska wilderness. She makes do by leading tours every now and then and picking up other odd jobs. Her once beautiful singing voice cut down to a raspy growl and a jagged white scar across her neck from ear to ear where the bad man had cut her before she turned the tables on him.

A member of the Aleut tribe, Kate was raised on tribal lands and knows the area, it's residents and the dangers better than anybody. So when a congressman's son winds up missing in the state park and a DA's investigator goes missing two weeks later, who do you think the FBI is going to come calling on?

It doesn't help matters that most of her contacts and family are poaching moose and caribou and some are in jail themselves. The locals, especially her people prefer not to speak to anyone they don't know. Since Kate is one of them, maybe they'll talk to her? Maybe they'll shoot at her. Maybe they'll do both. At least she's got her half wolf, half husky dog to back her up, Mutt, because otherwise if she sees her ex-partner Jack, she'll probably shoot him.

2.Characters-

Kate Shugak – tough as nails, beautiful, native American Indian with a touch of Russian heritage and more than a few scars, but only one you can see.

There really isn't another character on the same tier as Kate. All others, though important, are supporting cast. The most interesting ones are her grandmother, Jack-her ex partner and Able, her second cousin and adopted father.

I should also mention that the tribe themselves works as a character in a collective way. Stanbow does a wonderful job of describing the plight of the once proud Aleuts in the modern world. While struggling between traditional old world values and modern needs the tribe is infused with character all their own and all the eccentricities of those who inhabit the great white north.

3.Action: As an Action tale, this book let me down. Kate Shugak is a wonderful action heroine in the making but Stanbow and her publishers keep her out of any real action. The girl who, after having her own throat slit by a wicked abusive man, fights her way through gutting him with the knife he used to cut her is kept out of a combat situation? Why?

In the story, Kate's only shot at once, falls down a mine shaft once and rides a snow mobile to town. She slaps Jack a couple of times and kicks him once but that's the closest she gets to real danger and it's over as fast as it comes on. Here's a girl who runs lives alone on a mountain, leads rafting tours and works as a guide to hunting parties, hunts and traps her own food in the wild and they don't see fit to let her have any action? Come on man!

It's more than all that. Kate also comes across as rugged and tough. She tenses up ready to fight as if she's used to it. She doesn't back down from larger threatening men and that low raspy voice, though it had a tragic origin, is sexy as hell, even if it's only written. Action was a let down here. Kate could have handled so much more.

4.Did it feel authentic? Perhaps the best part of the entire story was how authentic the Indians and the rough people who live in the North Country came across. I had the feeling that Stanbow wanted everyone to see what poverty, alcohol and addiction had done to the Aleut people and likely the other residents of the park. Even the Alaskan fall and early winter seemed authentic and cold. These weren't Sarah Palin people (though likely they would have supported her if they were), they had all the quirks and uniqueness needed to be both endearing and troubling.

5.Overall verdict: Overall, this is a 3.5 star read. It's plot and the murder mystery were not particularly complicated but there were a few twists and turns right up to the last minute and the clues and investigation came across as honestly done. The strength of this story came from the characters including the Aleuts and those who lived with them. Kate Shugak is a wonderfully designed and written heroine. I might have given it a 4 or higher if she's been allowed to deal with heavier action and more intense situations.

As it is this is a better than average 3 star read. The writing is smooth and polished, the characters well

thought out and well designed and Kate is fantastic.

Warnings (always warnings right?)

1. There is a lot of violence alluded too in the book. Stanbow doesn't expose the reader to gore, or gratuitous over the top violence. The level of violence as it is presented is well within the tolerance of a young adult to manage without difficulty.
2. There is some sexual situations in the book. Not too many of them and they don't last too long but they push the envelope on decency appropriate for young adults and certainly should not be considered appropriate for children. Not to mention Kate and some of the other women in the book behave like single women in their mid to late 20s and early 30s did in the 1970s and 1980s and make no secret about their open attitude towards sex and make no apologies. It's not a free-for-all or an orgy or even remotely deviant in nature and we don't get the play by play. They just don't hide it.
3. The Indian's are painted in a very realistic light. Poverty, alcoholism and addiction, and a number of other modern problems are painted in a clear picture that is likely accurate. I found it refreshing, interesting and troubling. A few who read this might find it distressing or distracting. Again, I see this as one of the story's strengths not a liability, but that's me.

Recommended for: I'd recommend this for young adults to geriatric, but, despite appearances, this is not an action story. It's a murder mystery and a "who done it." I hope Stanbow and her publishers allow the Kate Shugak stories include more action and intense scenes in later books.

Bottom line: I liked the style and setting. I liked Stanbow's prose and polished writing style and I loved the characters (though Kate was by far the most developed character in the story). It's a good read that, as good as it was, could have been better. You'll be pleased with it, enjoy it and probably, like me want to read more Kate Shugak stories in the future, but, also like me, you'll probably see that it could have been better.
