



Bones Under the Ice: A Jhonni Laurent Mystery

Mary Ann Miller

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In Mary Ann Miller's chilling mystery novel *Bones Under the Ice*, cold temperatures are no barrier to murder.

In the days following a blizzard, the body of a pregnant teenager is uncovered in a snowdrift outside of rural Fields Crossing, Indiana. At first, people presume that the deceased, Stephanie, was caught in the storm and froze to death, but after the body thaws, they discover hammer blows to her head and conclude that she was murdered. The cold temperatures might have done her in, but a person made sure that she was left to die. This realization sends the town into a tailspin of recrimination and worry.

The case is Sheriff Jhonni Laurent's first murder case; it complicates her reelection bid. When a second body appears, Laurent must decide if they are connected or if there are two killers at large. At the same time, Laurent struggles with limited resources, a pesky reporter, and growing concern that this case might be her last. But she's up to the challenge of finding the murderer, even in a town where everybody knows everybody and grudges run deeper than the winter snows.

Though the sheriff narrates, there are some alternate, tension-building points of view from townspeople whose actions show that they know more than they are saying. Indeed, the story holds tight to its rural roots, stressing the interconnectedness of small-town life. In Fields Crossing, farmers and retired people mingle at the Skillet, the local greasy spoon. And people also have cultural clashes, as with those between a hardworking farm family, the Martins, and the Tillmans, a collection of n'er-do-wells whose latest scheme is to add wind farming to their land.

Bones Under the Ice is an engrossing mystery novel in which a small-town sheriff's skills are tested when she's tasked with solving cold-minded murders.

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