



Ice Blues

Richard Stevenson

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Someone's left a man's body in Donald Strachey's car -- the grandson of Albany's most connected political fixer. A letter from the deceased asks Strachey to dismantle his grandfather's party machine. Like a chess master, Strachey moves ten suitcases, an army of colorful pawns (all of whom think they're king), and \$2.5 million across the continent and around Albany. One of the funniest in the series.

(Filmed for release by HereTV in 2008; originally published 1986.)

Ice Blues Details

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Author : Richard Stevenson

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From Reader Review Ice Blues for online ebook

Neet says

This is the in the Donald Strachey mysteries and we find our intrepid PI trying to stay warm in the cold Albany winter. Donald hates the cold, a complaint that Tim is tired of hearing. If that's not enough, Donald's car is towed and while paying the fine, Donald goes to check his car he finds a body in the back seat. Checking the pockets of the stiff, he recognizes the name of the man in his wallet. The man was badly beaten and Donald calls the homophobic homicide detective he's dealt with in the past to report the murder. I really dislike Detective Bowman, his homophobic rants are sickening, this is one character that though true in some aspects, becomes trite and foolish once he comes on the scene. Nevertheless, the story is filled with political intrigue, and we find there was more to the murder victim than what we thought. I like this book and there is plenty of Tim (which is always a good thing) and we get confirmation that Donald has finally become monogamous. Possibly his monogamy is because of the AIDS virus, I don't care, I just love Don & Tim! This again is a highly recommended series!

Richard says

Solid entry in the Strachey series. It's pretty much got the same strengths and weaknesses as the previous two books; if you liked them you'll like this one, if you didn't, this isn't going to win you over.

Strengths-Strachey is as solid a character as ever, and his dry, acerbic wit keeps the story entertaining. Timmy has more to do here and is less of a piece of set decoration, but he's still a bit too Mary Sue. I get that he's meant to be Strachey's moral compass and the yin to his yang, but I still don't understand what holds the relationship of these polar opposites together. His antagonistic, prickly relationship with Detective Bowman is far more interesting than his romantic one.

Stevenson's idea to set the story against the background of an Albany winter, making winter almost a character in itself, works wonderfully and brings out the best one liners from Strachey. The great use of setting lifts the writing here a notch or two above the previous books. Less witty is the double entendre of the title-referring to the winter timeline but also referring clichely to an evil character's ice blue eyes in the book.

Weaknesses-The plot is once again melodramatic and contrived, though not as much as the first two books. There are too many background characters which gets confusing. But-perhaps it's a waste to criticize a private eye novel for melodrama. Also, the story is terribly dated-this takes place at the start of the AIDS epidemic, and the way that has affected the characters, particularly Strachey's formally less than rigid views on monogamy, is interesting. There is also one hilarious reference to a character dreaming of owning a \$1200 compact disc player.

Finally, what is UP with the cheap, horrible editing job on the Kindle editions of these books? Typos galore, and the text will suddenly turn into italics for pages on end for no reason. Very irritating.

ConM says

Another enjoyable read.

But the editing was terrible!

inbetween says

After 20 pages I had to concede defeat, but I didn't want to. After 30 pages I was so bored I started reading my crappy old CSS hand-outs instead.

There are 200 pages. And half a dozen books in this series. Unheard of of me, I started with the third, because people agreed it focussed most on the relationship between Donald and Timothy - except what there is is so little, and not written like two distinct voices or anything.

Still hoping though ...

It picked up a bit when boyfriend Timmy and Kyle Toot were around, but to throw in that the female was raped in ONE SINGLE LINE AT THE VERY END was cheapest, trashiest crap writing - one suspect something like that anyway, but after having found enough other reasons for her to run away, and hearing about her hellish life, to add that is just so ... chauvinist? Male?

PS: Don (and Timmy) are closer to 50 than 40, Don looking like an aged Tom Selleck (the author himself sports a moustache/beardie), rather different to the series. There is no actual sex, just a single word here or there alluding to them being a couple, and that's mostly regret about not being able to fuck every single comely man Don sees *shrugs*

Josh says

I've read all of Stevenson's Strachey mysteries and highly recommend them.

Paul says

Hmm, still really liking the series - so interesting spending some fictional time in the early '80s.

Jane says

I'm a little disappointed, because Ice Blues is one of the more humorous novels of the series, but it is also has the most outrageous and out-of-character development ever. Ice Blues deals with politic intrigue more heavy-handed than Strachey's Folly and it was sort of impossible for me to suspend belief in order to accept Donald's actions and what drove him - or any of the character's acceptance of them. (So in Ice Blues, I

couldn't find Donald's actions and motive believable and in Strachey's Folly I couldn't understand the point of one of the character's motive and actions.)

Molli B. says

Ah, glorious Northeast winters. I understand Don's dismal attitude. He should really follow his daydreams about fleeing south (and stay there).

It's interesting to track Don's progress through the 80s. I'm enjoying his colorful commentary.

I am thoroughly enjoying these books. Assuming they continue on as they have been going--good humor, strong mysteries, fun characters--I feel like they're the kind of books that I'll largely score with 4.25 and 4.5 but the overall series will end up a 5.

And (view spoiler). If only!!

Franzi says

Okay, so this is a difficult one to rate.

I accidentally started with this one instead of book #1, but from my experience and from what I read you can pretty much start anywhere in this series.

The mystery was solid and interesting, the detective work nice and old school, so the book did score on this part. It didn't quite grip me though. I wanted to see it solved, but I wasn't in a state where I couldn't put it down.

Now my main problem with this book (and also with another of the series I've started) is the emotionless characters. This is especially true for Donald's personal relationships.

Now - I didn't expect a romance, because I already knew this isn't a romance book which is even part the reason I started reading this. Because I wanted a good mystery with a background relationship instead of a focus on this relationship.

BUT that does not mean I don't the main character to have emotions. And this is what it felt like to me. Donald's relationship with Timmy is described very impersonal and in most situations (also outside this relationship) you barely get a glimpse at what Donald feels.

I mean, come one, when (view spoiler)

Maybe that's just how this writing style is. Less personal, less focused on the people and all that. But I cannot really get into a book series when I don't care about the characters and I cannot care about the characters when it feels like *those characters themselves* don't care.

And it's a pity, because the characters seem like they might have interesting personalities. It just feels like this personality is not quite shown to the reader.

But maybe that's just me. Mystery wise it's still a solid book, but I don't think I'll read much more of this series, sadly. :(

Jon says

Richard Stevenson does not disappoint. This is one tightly packed mystery with my favorite gay private detective. Stevenson keeps you on the edge of your seat the entire way, tossing bits of new information here and there, along with excellent sleuthing to keep serious mystery lovers guessing. As usually, I love the banter between Strachey and his partner, who are so opposite each other - yet their relationship works and is wonderful; so real - and not the main feature of the story.

Though the book written two decades ago (and recently re-released), I'm so glad I picked up reading where I left off with book three. I'll certainly be looking forward to reading the #5 book in the series, as he's up to #9!

Lena♥Ribka says

The third instalment of **Donald Strachey Mystery** was-considering the mystery probably the most ~~complicated~~ tricky one comparing to the first two books.

There were more suspects and persons who were not necessarily suspected but who were directly or indirectly involved in that case and that made a whole story a bit overcrowded for me.

The fact that I couldn't read it in one sitting -RL interruptions- in combination with a lot of participants made me scroll back to the previous pages to remind myself of WHO was WHO more often than normally.

It is the reason that prevented me from enjoying the third book *in all its glory*. That's a bit pity. But I swear, at 96% I still had no idea what was going on.

In spite of a frozen body hidden in a Dan's car + 5 mysterious suitcases with a lot of money + a thrilling plot with unexpected turns and twists, there were still a lot of hilarious moments that all included Donald, of course. His sense of humour, besides the good structured mystery, is the most important aspect of the series. And what exactly makes the first person's POV to a great read for me.

"Don is a loyal friend, a stimulating social companion, and a great fuck. It's just that he's sloppy around the house and unable to abide sloppiness outside it. As you can see, this makes life complicated for him—and for just about everybody who crosses his path."
(Timmy, Don's lover)

I have though to warn all romance junkies- if you want a tender love story with a smart badass PI in the main role, you should probably skip this series. Not that Don not a smart badass, he could win this title without a big effort. But it is not a romance. And there is almost as good as no sex in it. IT IS GAY MYSTERY.

REALLY GOOD ONE.

Again, I can't believe that the book was already published in 1986!
It's so fresh, so modern, so up-to-date.

Highly recommended!

Eastendleo says

Snappy dialogue keeps this story engaging.

In the midst of a cold and very snowy winter, when Strachey goes to pick up his impounded car, he discovers someone has dumped a body in the back seat. Who did it? How did the dead man come to have \$2 1/2 million? And how do politics, drugs and family come together and fly apart?

This is not the deepest swimming hole in the river. I never had a particularly strong sense of place or character. There are a million ways this book gets across how unpleasant and unwelcome cold can be, but the town is only roughly sketched, characters are equally lightly treated and even Strachy's relationship with his partner is not lingered on.

It's very lightness, along with that snappy dialogue, a quick pace and the constant revealing of clues makes for a fun and satisfying read.

Adam Dunn says

Another great book in the series, it hits you hard in the beginning. There's a dead body in the trunk! And then has you flipping pages quickly until the end.

It seems to be standard in these books, at least in 1, 2 and now 3, that there will be too many sub-characters and the wrap-up won't make a lot of sense. After reading book 2 I watched the movie version and they cleared that up, I expect the same will happen here when I watch this movie.

An extra bonus was reading this in the summer humidity. The book is set in a long cold winter and the many descriptions of freezing cold were nice for me.

Still enjoying the series, immediately started the next one.

Tex Reader says

4.0 of 5 stars – Improved on an Already Entertaining Series.

I love gay mysteries and romances, and Richard Stevenson does a good job of combining both in one of the more entertaining such series. I liked this for the same reasons I liked each in the series. This third entry was even better than its predecessors and continued to build the story. With crisp, witty writing, it's a good mystery, set in the energized post-Stonewall/early AIDS era, and brought to life by a colorful, hard-boiled yet likable PI, who just happens to be gay.

Stevenson's style made this a light, entertaining and easy read, with a good plot, pace, tension and just enough details and clues to not slow down the action. I enjoyed the step back in time to the mid-'80s. This was the kind of historical that, at the time, was written as a contemporary piece, capturing moments of what were then current situations and culture. Among the many time capsule tidbits I enjoyed were the clothes, dated technology, and political, high-spirited post-Stonewall and now early AIDS era. And for those interested, it worked well as a standalone, with its own self-contained mystery, while also further developing Strachey, his lover and other supporting characters in a way that created a storyline spanning across the series.

What engaged me the most with this story was the character of Don Strachey (who gave his first-person POV), and you'd probably have to like him to like this book. I grew to like him for all his skills, heart and humanness; and it was refreshing that he was not in shame of but was open about being gay. He was hard-boiled, cynically humorous with witty banter, and at times a little off-kilter, including some convenient ethics (to some: "arrogant and smugly presumptuous" and a "wise acre"). While Strachey was well drawn, the others were not as much. That might be expected with secondaries, but I wished for a little more with some. Thankfully, his lover was fleshed out a little more than previously, as was the bigoted, begrudging local police detective, who served as a nice foil and seemed more human now than stereotypical.

I appreciated that the main focus was on the mystery, with the gay aspect and any romance as a subplot. As Strachey put it in Book 2, "'I'm a PI, yes, and more or less coincidentally gay.'" So, instead of being an m/m romance, there were actually two mysteries – a murder, and a missing \$2.5 million. These mysteries were good and intriguing, getting off to a good, fast start and ending in a believable solution. Along the way, the investigation was more complex (but not too much) than the previous two, with some good clues and a plot that had several expected and unexpected twists and turns.

Mixed in with all this was a nice bonus of Strachey's gay life, and I was pleased to see his relationship continuing with his lover, Timmy. It gave Stevenson the chance to explore (and for me to see) the further development of a relationship for Strachey. It's an interesting one, reflecting the realities of such things, including working out what kind of a relationship, the struggles, temptations, understanding, and amusing banter between the two. And for those interested, any sex scenes were nicely built but discretely taken offscreen.

I continue to enjoy the stories that Stevenson weaves in this series, and I look forward to the next one.

Misty says

**** 3.5 Stars ****
