

Blood in the Water: A True Story of Small-Town Revenge

Silver Donald Cameron

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True crime narratives that take place in small towns often reveal as much about the town as they do about the crime itself. Such is the case with the compelling *Blood in the Water*, which concerns a death that rocked a Nova Scotia seaside community.

Phillip Boudreau was known throughout Isle Madame as a thief and somewhat likable scoundrel. But when a family of local fishermen led by James Landry came upon him cutting their fishing traps and stealing lobsters, what occurred next became a *cause célèbre*. Accounts differ as to what happened and who was responsible, but the end result was Boudreau's death by drowning, and Landry's trial for murder.

Longtime Isle Madame resident and writer Silver Donald Cameron's account features the particulars of the case, but it also delves into life on the remote island. On the surface, Isle Madame is a old-fashioned place where doors are left unlocked, neighbors assist each other, and violent crime is unheard of. But underneath, personal resentments and rivalries fester, with home-grown justice often ruling the day. To some locals, Boudreau was an unbalanced thief who threatened others; others saw him as a Robin Hood, stealing to give to the less fortunate.

Assembling interviews and anecdotes about Isle Madame's residents, Cameron fashions a vibrant portrait of a hardscrabble town with a rich Acadian history, where everyone knows everyone else. He also shows how a death that was sensationalized in the newspapers as "murder for lobster" reveals how the town's approach to self-policing clashed with its more conventional legal systems, which were unable to curb Boudreau's criminal ways before a boiling point was reached.

A rueful yet compassionate look at a community in crisis, *Blood in the Water* demonstrates how even the quietest towns are capable of explosive violence.

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