

Cold Blood, Hot Sea

Charlene D'Avanzo

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Charlene D'Avanzo's *Cold Blood, Hot Sea* focuses on Dr. Mara Tusconi, an oceanographer at the Maine Oceanographic Institute. Though her parents did the same work as she does and died at sea, and despite her own propensity toward seasickness and her phobias around speaking in front of strangers, Tusconi loves her job. She is also eager to collect new data that will support her theory about the warming waters off of the Maine coast and their potential effects on the fishing industry in the area.

But an accident on a research project leaves one of her team members dead, and that takes precedence. Determined to get answers for her colleague's widow and for herself, Tusconi digs into the questions raised by certain people's behaviors after the death. What she finds puts her in danger—mortal and otherwise.

Tusconi has a best friend and colleague in Harvina Allison, who assists her in her search and runs interference with their supervisor whenever possible. Tusconi is drawn as openhearted, curious, and compassionate toward her town friends who are fishers, an attitude that distinguishes her from others in her scientific community.

Cold Blood, Hot Sea also showcases the effects of climate change on a particular industry, presenting a range of opinions and attitudes toward the subject via well-drawn characters. Specific scientific processes are highlighted, including the effort to genetically engineer algae for biomass fuel, with both accuracy and a sense of the bigger picture. Through its mystery and its specificity, the novel manages to convey a global problem on a personal level.

Pacing is spot-on, resulting in a page-turner that also allows time for reflection on larger issues connected to Tusconi's investigations. Of special note is the friendship between Tusconi and Allison; their relationship is warm, believable, and modernly feminist without being preachy.

Cold Blood, Hot Sea will make for great beach reading, but it also has meat on its bones, with rich characterizations and an intriguing mystery at its core.

J. G. STINSON (Summer 2016)

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