



## The Cold Between

*Elizabeth Bonesteel*

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## **The Cold Between** Elizabeth Bonesteel

Deep in the stars, a young officer and her lover are plunged into a murder mystery and a deadly conspiracy in this first entry in a stellar military science-fiction series in the tradition of Lois McMaster Bujold.

When her crewmate, Danny, is murdered on the colony of Volhynia, Central Corps chief engineer, Commander Elena Shaw, is shocked to learn the main suspect is her lover, Treiko Zajec. She knows Trey is innocent—he was with her when Danny was killed. So who is the real killer and why are the cops framing an innocent man?

Retracing Danny's last hours, they discover that his death may be tied to a mystery from the past: the explosion of a Central Corps starship at a wormhole near Volhynia. For twenty-five years, the Central Gov has been lying about the tragedy, even willing to go to war with the outlaw PSI to protect their secrets.

With the authorities closing in, Elena and Trey head to the wormhole, certain they'll find answers on the other side. But the truth that awaits them is far more terrifying than they ever imagined . . . a conspiracy deep within Central Gov that threatens all of human civilization throughout the inhabited reaches of the galaxy—and beyond.

## **The Cold Between Details**

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Author : Elizabeth Bonesteel

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## From Reader Review The Cold Between for online ebook

### Jo (Mixed Book Bag) says

The Cold Between is both a mystery and a romance. It all starts when Elena goes on shore leave and does something very out of character for her. She goes home with a man she meets at a bar. They have an instant attraction but both know it is a one-time thing. She is on shore leave off of a space ship and he lives on the planet. What neither knows is that he is about to be framed for murder. The victim is a crewmember on Elena's ship and is also her former lover. The killing took place while Elena is with him so she knows he is innocent. From there the story goes in several directions. Part of the past becomes very important as tension and danger keep ramping up. This is one of those books you really do not want to put down. I loved the world building and the skillful use of back-story. The end was a surprise but also realistic. This is the first time I have read a book by Elizabeth Bonesteel but I plan to see what else she has written and check them out.

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### Rachel (Kalanadi) says

2.5 stars. Fails too many realism tests. And yes, I expect realism. The whole 500 pages of action action action happens in about 24 hours, and that's just \*impossible\*. Maybe that wormhole DID bend time. And don't get me started on the unbelievable and sloppy military protocol and personnel behavior.

HOWEVER, it's a fast-paced fun book. It's romance meets mil SF. I appreciate the heavy romance element was concluded in a non "happily ever after" way.

I expect the next book in this series to be stronger after the debut novel jitters are settled down. Also, maybe the men will quit calling the women "my dear", because that was just patronizing and inappropriate and weird. And probably an artifact of the romance factor. But still. Eh.

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### John says

Really not my kind of book. Bones of a decent story, but the author weighs them down with talk talk talk about relationships--forming, foundering, hitting the rapids, enduring complications and misunderstandings, being analyzed--and that had me flipping forward from Chapter One. The author also makes her solar systems the about the size of small towns, has spacecraft stopping and letting "inertia slow them down," and crafts a military organization whose members are constantly disobeying and questioning orders--not very authentic. I would also say that the most complex, interesting character here is starship captain/dessert chef Treiko, and as he's not the protagonist he kind of steals the show from Elena.

Elena does get a spiffy tirade: "And there went Elena's temper. 'Now listen here, you thickheaded, slow-witted bastard. You want to follow orders? Fine. I'm a traitor. Blow us out of the sky. But when you're done, you grab Penumbra and you get the fuck out of there as fast as you can, do you hear me? Because if you keep interfering and get my ship destroyed, I swear to any and all gods you may believe in, I will find you in your sorry afterlife and I will make every instant of your existence hell and torment for fucking eternity. Have I made myself clear, soldier?'"

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### **Glennis says**

The setting of the book a bit of a murder mystery and it seems that it may link back to a missing starship from 25 years ago. Elena is on shore leave on the planet next to a wormhole that sends out an EMP blast every day like clockwork. While she is out having drinks and consoling her broken heart her ex -boyfriend is murdered and by coincidence the man she spent the evening with is framed for Danny's murder. Once she is back up on the ship she finds out Trey, the man she whiled away a night of passion is being arrested as Danny's killer. With the captain giving her some time to figure out what is going on things start moving very quickly and she realizes that she doesn't know as much about Danny as she thought as it seems he was working on the disappearance of a Central Corps ship in the area of the wormhole.

Things move off planet and towards the wormhole as things don't appear to be what everyone first thought. The story is good and the mystery of the wormhole is pretty much solved by the end of the book but there are more questions and a good ending for most of the people involved.

Digital review copy provided by the publisher through Edelweiss.

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### **Mandi Schreiner says**

First - this is Sci-Fi Fiction, as this book does NOT end with a HEA. There is definitely a romance element - as Trey and Elena fall in love, and are in love at the end of the book, but are not together at the end of the book. If you are looking for a Sci-Fi Romance, this is not it.

There are some great parts in this book - the beginning is amazing. Then it gets a little tedious and slow, then it gets great again, back and forth, back and forth.

And being a romance reader, I wanted the romance between Elena and Trey to be more of a focal point (and obvs to fly out into space together at the end). There is also a love triangle that sprouts its head. FYI.

For those that want a Sci-Fi, murder mystery with a strong heroine - this is for you.

Full review coming.

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### **Lindsay says**

An engaging space opera with elements of romance, mystery and military SF that doesn't quite live up to the complexity of its world-building.

The setting is a remote sector of human-colonized space. There are two armed space-faring organizations that take responsibility for aiding and policing the human colonies. Central Corps is the Earth government navy of which the ship *Galileo* is part. The main character, Commander Elena Shaw, is the Chief Engineer of the *Galileo* and there are a couple of other view point characters there as well including the Captain. The

other group is PSI who act as an independent group that actually has whole families on crews. The romantic interest for the main character is a retired PSI Captain, Treiko Zajec.

Central Corps and PSI disagree on methods, but are generally allies. That may all be about to change with unknown forces pushing them towards a conflict, starting with a ship-to-ship combat before this book starts and continuing with the murder of Elena's ex-lover and the framing of Treiko for it.

I can't believe I'm saying this about an already exposition-heavy book, but this one needed more exposition. There are so many areas where the reality of the political situation is a given, but the background is just not there. Case in point, we never find out what PSI stands for or even where the organization has come from. All the point-of-view characters must know, but the audience is left completely in the dark. Not explaining does avoid the trap of "As you know Bob, ..." but it feels like a huge hole in the narrative.

I can say something similar about the eventual bad guys. I have only the vaguest notions of what their motivations are and that makes the outcome of the book a bit questionable. Yay! We won! Against who? To stop them doing what?

But enough on the negatives. The romance in this was great with a realistic outcome. The look into how a mixed military as an almost family group would work is interesting (although I think most military SF readers would be fuming - far too much insubordination and arguing about orders). The mystery was really well done with a steady pace of unveiling and a good grasp of the stakes.

Recommended, and I hope there's more in this universe.

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### **Tim Hicks says**

So, we have a romance/SF/military murder mystery.

I have always thought that books like that, with the possible exception of Bujold's Vorkosigan series, are likely to do none of the parts well.

Indeed, I saw one review that compared this to Bujold. That's a bit like saying Coors Light and Trappist Rochefort 10 are alike because they are both beers.

Bonesteel's third book will probably be good. Her second will be mostly good.

Near the end, I was finalizing my opinions when I came across - within less than a full page - three examples of things I hate from inexperienced authors, who probably learned them in workshops.

One: unconscious man wakes up, sees a man, and decides from the man's posture that he is a doctor. OK, Sherlock, right on.

Two: You already know what the just-awakened man's first words are going to be, don't you? Are they "Where am I?" or "What happened?" or "What day is it?" or "Who are you?" or "%\$& my head hurts"? No, no, silly. They are, as always, "How long have I been out?"

Three: He sees the doctor's green eyes, and instantly knows she is intelligent. Why can't the TSA learn just to look at people's eyes? Maybe I was sensitized to that because early on we learned that one of the heroes has

eyes that are ... what colour are they, class? ... yes, they are grey. 3% of real people have grey eyes, but 75% of novel heroes do. Oddly, in movies, it's blue eyes that are vastly over-represented.

OK, well, then. Trey and Greg are right out of *Sex and the City*. Trey is the mysterious, older, highly capable man who appears to be mad, bad and dangerous to know. Greg is the Real Nice Guy who is obviously the perfect catch, but he's just So Dumb About Some Things. Jessica's OK. Elena's your Tom Swift character: give her a spoon and two twist ties and she'll build you a raygun in eight minutes. Most of the bad guys are nyah-hah-hah mustache-twirlers with no nuance at all. Danny, well, I can't tell you about him just now.

Sci-fi readers, please adjust your settings, This is Star Trek science, where to go somewhere you grimble the frammis beyond safe settings and hope it works. If something has to be done, a hero will hop into a troop carrier solo, and whiz around like a real pilot. I can only hope it's a really SMALL troop carrier, for a platoon maybe. As another reader noted, the local galaxy seems to be about the size of Chicago. I prefer my SF to come from authors who can tell me why a planet has unusual tides and then make them a key plot point; who can work out the challenges of landing a crippled ship on a strange planet.

There's a great deal of action where characters have very incomplete information. That's a good thing up to a point, and works most of the time, but eventually it all added up to just a bit too much.

And don't get me started about the big scene near the end with Stoya. Quite possibly the most predictable scene I have read in 20 years. Two full demerits.

And I'm not at all sure about the scene where they fly low over a city that has been dead for at least ten thousand years, and look in a window to see a table covered with knick-knacks. Perhaps I could note that Pompeii was destroyed by a volcano in 79AD, 1,937 years ago. Picture those ruins. Now imagine that they were five times older than that, or more. Maybe on a planet with no atmosphere, with knick-knacks made of adamantium. Bah.

Summary: Bonesteel has enough promise to make it if she works with an experienced SF editor who will be mean to her. Or else she could give up and join the writers who are getting rich dashing off careless novels every few months; maybe some urban fantasy or a vampire romance.

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### **Scott says**

I thought this was really well done. It was definitely a page turner with an interesting mystery and strong willed characters that I enjoyed reading about. Loved the relationship between Elena and Trey. Elena was especially entertaining, was cheering for her the whole way!

Will be interested to see where this goes from here after that ending

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### **Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says**

Well-crafted, gritty mystery with a little romance, wrapped in a space opera. The Central Corps spaceship *Galileo* is visiting the colony planet of Volhynia, with much of the crew enjoying shore leave. Its chief engineer, Commander Elena Shaw, unexpectedly finds an older man in a bar that she clicks with, Treiko

Zajec (Trey), and takes off with him for a long night of sex ... and eating gourmet desserts.

When they part the next morning, Trey finds the murdered corpse of Elena's crewmate and former lover, Danny, practically on his doorstep. Trey is promptly accused of Danny's murder, and Elena - realizing that Trey couldn't have had anything to do with the murder because he was with her the entire night (and they never slept) - sets out to rescue him.

Oddly, Volhynia law enforcement still seem intent on charging Trey with the murder, ignoring the fact that there's the real killer on the loose. As Elena, Trey, and the *Galileo*'s ship captain (who's rather reluctantly dragged into this mess) dig deeper, they find that the current mystery has some seemingly inexplicable ties to a twenty-five year old tragedy, the mysterious explosion of another Central Corps starship at a nearby wormhole.

Full review to come. Some good characterizations and an unusually strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships (not just the romantic ones) for a space opera mystery. For a military environment, though, there sure is a lot of arguing with superior officers and disregarding of orders. Yes, it's a different culture, but that kind of thing doesn't seem sustainable.

Content notes: Countless F-bombs, one explicit sex scene, violence.

Original post: The publicist sent me the sequel to this book a while back, but I decided I needed to do this series in order (jumping into a series midstream doesn't tend to work so well for me). Luckily for me this one showed up on a Kindle sale!

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### **Robyn says**

This one is light on the science and on the world-building, but heavy on plot and character. Thankfully, that worked very well for me. Even the whirlwind romance felt genuine, and I think it was the interplay between the four central characters and several supporting members of the crew that really hooked me. In particular, I quite liked Elena, even if she could be incredibly (and yet, in my experience, realistically) oblivious at times.

Oddly, for a book that I enjoyed so much, I do think the book could use some paring down - and, somewhat contradictorily, more back story on the main groups (Central Corps and PSI) involved. While I appreciate Bonesteel not overloading us with unnecessary detail, I had a number of unanswered basic questions.

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### **Beth says**

[It was obvious from the first, for example, that Will Valentis was exceedingly bad news; I hoped this

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### **Carolyn F. says**

I can't believe I'm saying this but there was too much romance in this sci-fi romance. There's an old love, a want to be your lover and then a new guy that gets in her pants hour(s?) after meeting her. The mystery was okay. Not really game changing to me although it seemed to say a lot to everyone else in this book. I thought

this was okay.

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### **Felicia says**

I really liked this book. The cover has a dude with a tiny pony tail on it, which I think is just the worst. But inside, this is a really solid mystery-sci-fi-romance. I really liked the main characters and setting and world.

The tiny ponytail aside, recommended.

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### **Captain says**

Interesting premise but I couldn't get past the near constant bickering/insubordination going on in the book. It had a promising start, hybrid space ship goes missing near a pulsar/wormhole; conspiracy from the top down, cover ups, space pirates, kidnapping, murder! This book had a lot of potential but unfortunately it fell flat and was largely overshadowed by the shitty interpersonal relationships and constant miscommunication that goes down between the captain and several crew members. I mean no wonder a crewman ends up dead, the captain doesn't keep in house in order. Which is why he seems like the perfect fall guy, dude can't seem to see a set up when its literally unfolding right in front of him.

Another issue I had was the way the writer sort of rushed things with the characters in chapter two two of the main characters are having crazy good sex and by chapter four they seem to be ready to die for each other. When it comes to the character Elena, the author does a lot of telling rather than showing and she ends up coming off as one dimensional; which is tragic because she's kind of badass. Greg seems like an incompetent captain, Trey is just sex on two legs, after a while you start to wonder what's the point.

Also there's some sort of YA love try angle crap going down and I'm just not in the mood for it.

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### **Carrie Mansfield says**

2.5 stars

ARC provided by the publisher in exchange for review consideration.

Oh The Cold Between, how much I wanted to love you. You're a military sci-fi novel written by a woman that contains several strong and likable female characters: there just aren't enough of you out on the shelves these days. So I stuck with you. I kept going and kept going just waiting for that moment when it would all click together for me and somehow it never quite happened, which is just so disappointing.

Trying to peg the why of it, however, has been difficult.

Pacing may be an issue: the book touts the mystery surrounding the tragedy that happened twenty-five years ago; and yet we don't really learn what happened until 80% of the way in. So we have an extremely slow build-up, which then forces a quick resolution that ultimately feels anti-climactic because it all happens so fast. The revelation surrounding the mystery doesn't really aid things either: it's not exactly obvious, but it

doesn't feel as revelatory as it should either especially since it's a conspiracy 25 years in the making.

The antagonists may be another issue: there are two, and both feel one note. One is a sadist who goes fully as far as threatening to rape our protagonist - both while she's alive, and promising to continue to do so after she's died. The other is power hungry, or maybe power mad, and he seemingly has no other speed so he's either angry that he's getting shut down, or probably abusing the power that he does have. Nuance would have gone a long way for both characters here. I know that Bonesteel was trying to make a point about corruption and unchecked power, but those kind of messages tend to get muddled when the bad guys are so flat.

Finally, I'm not sure that I quite bought into the relationship between Elena and Trey. While I appreciate her sense of justice in not wanting to leave him behind, Bonesteel wrote them as if they'd been together or known each other for quite some time - at one point Trey even tells another character something to the effect that he doesn't know Elena at all. But you know what, neither does Trey. They had a one night stand. Even by the time you factor in the time spent in space and running and what not, they've known each other for what, a week? Maybe two absolute tops? He doesn't know her that well either, and so when he's telling her he loves her, it's kind of suspect. The book does focus a lot on that relationship (and Elena's relationships in general), so if it doesn't work for you, it hurts the book as a whole.

So yeah. Like I said. I wanted to love this book and I just couldn't and that's just such a shame.

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