



## Scared Stiff

*Annelise Ryan*

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**Scared Stiff** Annelise Ryan

An appealing series on multiple fronts." -*Booklist*

Shows skill at mixing humor with CSI-style crime." -*Publishers Weekly*

When Deputy Coroner Mattie Winston and her boss/best friend, Izzy, are called to the home of waitress and part-time model Shannon Tolliver, they find the ghoulish Halloween decorations a bit too authentic. Among the fake blood and skeletons is the corpse of Shannon herself. Since the whole town knows Shannon recently had a very public spat with her estranged husband, Erik, he's suspect #1. But Mattie happens to know Erik truly loved his wife, and is simply incapable of the brutal act-even if he owns the exact same caliber handgun as the murder weapon. . .

Determined to unearth the truth, Mattie puts her scalpel-sharp medical skills to work, and digs a little deeper. What she uncovers is stranger than anyone could have imagined. . .

### **Praise for Annelise Ryan and Working Stiff**

"Has it all: suspense, laughter, a spicy dash of romance. . ." -Tess Gerritsen

"Sassy, sexy, and suspenseful. . .wry and original." -Carolyn Hart

"Make way for Mattie Winston, the funniest deputy coroner to cut up a corpse since, well, ever." -Laura Levine

### **Scared Stiff Details**

Date : Published (first published September 1st 2010)

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Author : Annelise Ryan

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## From Reader Review Scared Stiff for online ebook

### Nell says

\*\*1/2 - This is the first mystery I've read by this author; though it is the second in this series. The actual mystery is pretty good but I found it difficult to relate to the characters. The author, who is a nurse, puts in a lot of scenes and/or characters unrelated to the main story line and whose purpose seemed to be an excuse to discuss body fluids in detail or the putrid state of severely decomposed bodies. The prat falls by the main character, Mattie, were also overdone. Specifically, Mattie's car accident resulting in a senile old man with urinary problems becoming her chauffeur and the fall where Mattie ends up covered with maggots are both completely unnecessary. The YCCK factor was too high. I was also put off by the adolescent way she handled her physical attraction to the main detective. All of this detracted from the core mystery which turned out to have a nice twist at the end. This was a free Kindle download and I won't be reading any more. It's not what I'm looking for in a cozy mystery.

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### Anita says

#### Actual Rating: 3.5 Stars

This second installment of the cozy *Mattie Winston Mystery* was, somehow, not as great as the first one, *Working Stiff*. I'm not entirely sure why, but I'm half wondering if it has to do with how obsessed Mattie is with Detective Steve Hurley. We barely got into the book before every other thought flitting through her mind had to do with either impressing Hurley, getting his attention, or running her "love rival" Allison the reporter over with a bus... or something.

Of course, those were mere portions of the book and not all of it, so I'm not entirely letting it influence my like or dislike of *Scared Stiff*.

Because aside from the frustrating romance parts in this book, the rest was pretty good and entertaining. The murder mystery was done well and had me guessing, though it was pretty obvious who *didn't* do it; the twist it took was a bit strange, yes, but I can see it falling together properly. The forensics aspects, with the autopsy, crime scene evidence collection, etcetera, are always awesome to see. Even a little bit of Mattie's own investigations were pretty promising as well now that she's learned to keep her knowledge to herself--if she continued to go around telling everyone all the sordid details of each crime while trying to conduct interviews, I'm not sure how well that would pan out for her career in the medico-legal field.

The klutzy Mattie trope is still in effect, I see, although this time around, some of the antics were actually quite humorous, even if half the time it wasn't really her fault. It's not like she intentionally fell down the hill side, causing ripped scrubs, a crotch vent, and mud on her behind. Although her penchant for getting the murder victims'... stuff... all over her made me grimace really hard.

I still feel it would be nice to tone down the "How many ways can be embarrass Mattie Winston on the job?" trope, though. Once or twice in one book is funny. Every other scene can get a little old.

We get a new addition to Mattie's little refuge in the cottage behind her best friend, Izzy's house, in the form of an abandoned pup to add onto the abandoned kitten she picked up from the first book. I'd like to focus on them a bit more too, but aside from Mattie's penchant for picking up strays, they don't seem to play a very big role in the story itself.

Finally, back to the love interest, Steve Hurley... I'm still not very enamored of him. He doesn't stand out, and at times kind of comes off as a carbon copy male lead jackass. I DO like that he gets so petty and jealous rather than acting like he doesn't even notice when Mattie's being seduced by other men... but at the same time, he acts like a dick. And this also all plays into Mattie's frustratingly one-tracked focus on Hurley and what she can do to win his favor.

Anyway...

I will probably continue on with the next book in the series, but I'm not entirely in a hurry to do so. It's entertaining and I really like Mattie. In spite of her klutzy personality trait, she's resourceful and skilled and really knows what she's doing when it matters.

I'm hoping for a better turn for her romance, but I've noticed that the love stories in cozy mysteries aren't always that great. Granted, they *are* cozy mysteries and romance isn't exactly the focus. I've read a good one before, but I'm not too excited about how Mattie's love life is turning out so far. It almost seems too... unnecessary, actually.

And also, again, I'm really digging Izzy as the mentor slash best friend role in Mattie's life.

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#### **2016 Reading Challenges:**

- Goodreads Reading Challenge
- BookLikes Reading Challenge
- 2016 Halloween Bingo

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### **Bonnie Drummond says**

A witty cozy mystery to read. You are brought into this mystery by a Halloween Party and then get a call for a dead body that brings a whole lot of trouble for Mattie Winston. Not only is a friend accused of the murder but then yet again a dead body's beckon again and this time Mattie has her hands full from falling into corpse goop and having to take her clothes off to the delight of all the men around and having feelings for a Very Handsome Detective that has all her feelings all jumbled up and trying to uncover what is up with the New Therapist that has a strong connection to two of the victims and also trying to stay out of the way of a very big family feud that has to do with the two dead bodies found in the trees in the woods. This is all in a day's work for the Deputy Coroner Mattie Winston.

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### **LORI CASWELL says**

Dollycas's Thoughts

I now have another author in addition to Julie Mulhern that makes me laugh out loud so much my family thinks I am losing it. The first book in this series, Working Stiff, made me laugh a lot but this one had me laughing from start to finish.

Former nurse now assistant medical examiner Mattie Winston is a hoot and a half. In this story Mattie gets called away from a blind date to a residence that has taken their Halloween decorations very seriously. Unfortunately one of the dead bodies in the yard is real, part-time model and waitress Shannon Tolliver has died surrounded by her fake tombstones and skeletons. Separated from her husband, he becomes the prime suspect. Maddie's gut tells her he didn't do it. She is going to use her new job to dig into the case on her own. Maddie is also called to the site of a car accident in this book. Her arrival is one of the hysterical moments I mentioned above.

The story picks up almost where the last one leaves off. Maddie has left her husband, the doctor and has taken up residence in her boss/best friend's guest house. She gets into an accident with her car and not wanting to ask her husband for help getting a new vehicle she ends up making a very interesting choice in her mode of transportation. There is still a growing romantic tension between Maddie and Detective Steve Hurley. Their dialogues are priceless. Maddie reminds me of Lucille Ball/Ricardo (I Love Lucy). You know how Lucy would just get herself in situations where she had the best intentions where everything went wrong and that were sidesplitting funny. Maddie is just like that.

Along with all the humor there is a very well plotted mystery they brings in all kinds of secondary characters. They are all very fleshed out and unique and run the gambit of nice to crazy. The story twists and turns with odd connections that have to mean something. This was a tough one to solve and I was totally wrong. The secondary plot line almost overtakes the main one due to the characters involved and I loved the way that part of the story was wrapped up.

Murder, mayhem, romance, a Wisconsin setting, and a huge dose of humor have got me addicted to this series. I have already placed my order for book #3, Frozen Stiff, and will be getting the rest of the series too.

I loved this story but it does cross over some cozy norms by containing explicit language and some coarse and a little gross moments, but dead bodies being found and examined it not all wine and roses. So this book may not be everyone's cup of tea. If you are a fan of Lucille Ball and Stephanie Plum these books are right up your alley

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## Betty says

### Another Fun Read

I am addicted to Mattie Winston series. There is a lot of humor, romance and mystery skillfully woven together. Making the books great for a sunny day at the beach or a stormy day curled up before a fireplace. It is Halloween and Mattie is on a blind date. Her plans to make Steve jealous have gone away as he hasn't turned up yet. The date is interrupted by a call to a murder scene. She meets Steve there and manages to antagonize Steve again. She disagrees with Steve again about the killer and sets out find it first. Mattie adopts a puppy who she calls Hoover. How does Rubbish accept the new addition? Mattie needs to find answers before Steve and her are no more.

## **Linda says**

Laugh out loud wonderful! There were actually parts where I couldn't read for a few minutes because I was laughing so hard. Good mystery too.

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## **Anastasia says**

Scared Stiff by Annelise Ryan is the second book in the Mattie Winston Mystery series. A waitress and part time model is found shot dead amongst Halloween decorations. This book is just as fun and entertaining as the first one. Mattie is a smart investigator, although she finds herself in a lot of awkward and funny situations. She has added a stray dog Hoover to her home, in addition to Rubbish, a stray kitten whom we were introduced to in the first book. There has been little progress in her love life though. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in this highly addictive series.

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## **Jamie says**

I didn't get more than a handful of chapters in. The book seems to focus more on trying to be funny than on the mystery, with the lead character immediately treating the murder scene as nothing more than a way to show off for the hot lead detective, who later was flirting back in the murder victim's bedroom after catching the lead character rooting through the victim's mail (because nothing is hotter than a coroner wandering around a murder scene disturbing evidence). And when the hot female photographer showed up the protagonist suddenly goes all catty. The lead character was tolerable at first but as soon as the other characters were introduced there was just way too much chewing the scenery going on.

I was prepared to give it three stars, assuming that the casual attitude to murder scenes and hammy character relationships was due to the book being further into the series and giving it some leeway, but it's only book 2 so my opinion of it dropped accordingly. The scenes that aren't pushing hard for 'humor' are well written and funny, even if they seem to drag on a bit, but I've got too long of a reading list to put up with a book that laughs at its own jokes.

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## **Mystereity Reviews says**

Heh. Poor Mattie doesn't have an easy time of it, does she?

During a blind date with the OCD William-not-Bill, Mattie is called out on a dead body call. Shannon Tolliver was found dead in her front yard, amongst the Halloween decorations. When Shannon's estranged husband Erik is arrested, Mattie knows he's not the killer, so the real question is: who killed Shannon and why?

This was a great followup to the first book; thoroughly entertaining and completely engrossing, it was full of hilarious cringe moments (I laughed out loud through the whole scene when they were recovering the rich couple!) lots of intrigue and one creepy suspect (am I the only one who thought he was creepy at the get-go?) The main plot, Shannon's murder, leads Mattie far and wide in her search for suspects, uncovering quite a few and introducing a few new characters I hope to see more of (the gay bar scene? Loved it!)

Just one thing, I've got a Dropped Thread Alert!(view spoiler)

Overall, an excellent second in this series and it made me excited to read more.

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### **Rosemary Cantrell says**

This book was very funny. It is a murder mystery and the mystery part of the story is interesting and well-done. A housewife is found dead on her front steps on Halloween night, appearing to be just another body in the Halloween display. The estranged husband is the first and logical choice as the murderer. From there, the story gets interesting. The humor is unbelievable. I actually laughed out loud a couple of times, something I almost never do that in a book. Mattie, a nurse who is working for the medical examiner's office, is always getting herself into the strangest predicaments or saying the wrong things. Good read.

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### **Hannah says**

*Scared Stiff* is even better than the first book in the Mattie Winston series. What a refreshing change not to feel let down by a series sequel! Now that her past with her ex is mainly out of the way, Mattie really settles into her new job as deputy coroner, although her contacts and experiences as an ER nurse still play a large part in her murder investigations. It's really quite fun watching her strike up new friendships while relationships with old friends develop further, but *none* of them can beat the strides forward that are made in Mattie's romance with Hurley. Things are definitely getting spicy, and I enjoy the fact that their moments are short but very much charged with tension. I find this form of development infinitely preferable to the overtly physical relationships that seem to blindside readers from nowhere.

The humor is even stronger in Mattie's second outing, and is mainly rooted in her crazy escapades; who else would manage to get maggots down the front of their gear at a crime scene and end up having to strip their top off, right in front of excited reporters? Her car also gets totaled, which leads to an absolutely *hilarious* series of events where she's forced to strike up a deal with a slightly confused old man who has trouble with his urine bag, and due to her monetary restrictions is later forced to purchase a hearse as a new car. So funny.

The only downside is that the actual murder investigation (the main case, that is) isn't as smoothly paced as the David/Karen Owenby case from the first book. Once again, someone Mattie knew from her hospital days is killed, but aside from an early attempt to question the ex-husband of the murdered Shannon, the rest of the investigation seemed to be injected periodically into the main plot as an afterthought and focused on Luke Nelson, Shannon's new boyfriend. The "clues" around Luke didn't seem to be connected to Shannon's murder, either. Even when everything was made clear at the end, Shannon's killing came across like just a small, inconsequential part of the larger problem, so I ended up feeling disconnected from the actual tragedy of it. On the bright side, though, at least I didn't guess who the murderer is? The resolution leaves things a little bit open as well, so perhaps it'll be better wrapped up in a later book.

The slight dissatisfaction with the handling of the main murder mystery aside, *Scared Stiff* was an even better read than the first Mattie Winston book. I'm definitely looking forward to getting my hands on *Frozen Stiff*, and fingers crossed that the developments between Mattie and Hurley will continue to be short and spicy without moving forward too much and too soon.

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## **Gail says**

This is the one with the murder victim mixed in with her Halloween display. Mattie has to go to the crime scene in her Glinda the Good Witch costume. She also trips and falls into a decomposing body and strips to her underwear in the woods to clean up. I think Ryan maybe works overtime to gross out her readers... She does get a lot of interesting information about forensic evidence into the story, too. I didn't suspect the killer to be who it was, so Ryan was also successful in her sneakiness, while playing fair with the readers. This is the book where Mattie acquires Hoover the dog. Good read.

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## **Jonathan says**

Almost better than the first. Can't wait to read the next one.

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## **Kaitlin says**

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. I am not sure what I expected but I was really surprised at how much I enjoyed the book.

Scared Stiff is the second book in the Mattie Winston series. Mattie is an ex-nurse / Deputy Coroner. On Halloween, the dead body of part time model, Shannon, is discovered by some trick or treaters. Working with her boss and the good looking cop, Hurley, Mattie works to discover who killed Shannon (Hurley and Mattie have a bet as to whether or not Shannon's separated husband did it).

Entertaining read with humor, mystery and romance throughout. I loved the interaction between Mattie and Hurley, the comments and little suggestions that they make to each other. Reminds of school kids when you just want to shake them and say.. **THEY LIKE YOU!**

I can't wait to read the next in the series!!

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## **Alice Teets says**

I enjoyed this second book in the Mattie Winston series. Mattie is still trying to figure things out and find her footing after the break-up of her marriage and quitting of her job after finding her husband in a compromising position.

In this one, a dead body is found amongst Halloween decorations, and the victim's husband is arrested. However, Mattie's gut tells her that he didn't do it, so she is off searching for proof that he is innocent. Hurley, the hot detective who Mattie would like to rebound with, is content to stick with the one the have arrested, but Mattie won't let it go.

I really like this series. The characters seem realistic and likable, the stories move along quickly, and it makes me laugh. I wasn't sure of the murderer, although I wasn't completely surprised by it, and there were some interesting side stories to add to the book without being overwhelming.

I've already got #3 to read next!

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