

# THE GIRL *& in the* ICE



*Jason Vail*

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December 1262 is one of the harshest in living memory. A series of terrible blizzards strikes England, falling with particular heaviness on the March, the blood-soaked borderland between England and Wales.

The blizzards have one salutary effect in that they drive the Welsh under Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, who had attacked all along the March, back to their fortresses, but otherwise it is still a time of suffering, misery, and death, with sensible people shivering about the fire in their homes.

How much death, however, is not fully known until there is a sudden thaw on Christmas Day, when the beggar Harry finds a dead girl of extraordinary beauty frozen beneath the snow off the pathway to Saint Laurence's church in Ludlow.

No one has ever seen the girl before or knows who she is. But there are hints as to how she died. It looks like murder, and deputy coroner Stephen Attebrook feels compelled to find those responsible.

It is a task that propels him into the domain of his worst enemy, Earl Perceival FitzAllan, where he must play an involuntary role in the shadow war being waged between the supporters of King Henry III and the rebellious barons under Simon de Montfort.

## **The Girl in the Ice Details**

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# From Reader Review The Girl in the Ice for online ebook

## Lonnie says

I am embarrassed at the price I paid on downloading this series of books to my kindle, this is no indication of the books' merit. Yes, there's some typos; no, the writing skill is not as good as C.J.Sansom, but these books are a damn good read (better than Cadfael). If you like your medieval time period and a mystery whodunnit (who doesn't?), all 4 books are worth it.

Fallen from grace ex-knight now deputy coroner hero, Stephen Attebrook and his sidekick, clerk and landlord, Gilbert solve those heinous crimes in late 1200s. The history is fascinating and the Welsh are fierce.

I'm not going to go into the story, start from Book 1 and enjoy.

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## Lesley says

I like reading Jason Vail's Stephen Attebrook stories. I've read the first 4 and I've downloaded the 5th, so why only give them 2 stars? Well, they also annoy me - a lot.

What I like? The characters are interesting and the plot holds me. I like the period and the genre.

What annoys me? The mistakes and the anachronistic Americanisms.

Now, in a way I can forgive some of the mistakes, especially when they are down to proofreading. I write historical fiction too and know how hard being your own editor is. Something always seems to slip through, but this was published in 2013, so there's been plenty of time to find and correct them.

Other mistakes are less forgivable - Cambridge is not in Norfolk. I know this. I live there. I can't find much out about the author, but I'm assuming from his use of language that he's American, so maybe he doesn't know England all that well, but checking is only a quick Google away these days and besides, it's in the name - Cambridgeshire.

What really annoys me about the stories, and stops me rating them higher, is the use of modern American language. I can just about tolerate American spelling in general, and I would never advocate that historical fiction should be written in the language of the time (if I wanted that I'd read Chaucer), but words such as 'dumbass' and names such as 'Mike' and 'Steve' really jolt a reader out of the era, and, in my opinion, should be avoided at all costs.

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## Francis Mulhern says

A much more in-depth storyline in this book. Attebrook has to deal with a complex and meandering mystery which leads him into a variety of dangerous situations as the Welsh army attacks and plunders the local area on the borders of Wales.

Characters are great, with simple, yet effective, descriptions of the tough life of local people in the time period.

A really enjoyable series of books so far.

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## **James says**

This is a very good mystery book set in the world of the Middle Ages. The historical details seem to be right on with what we know of that period of time. The author has good character development even to the peripheral characters. It would have been good to have read the earlier books of the series since reference is frequently made to earlier events.

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## **Martha Johnson says**

### **Book 4 different from first 3**

Book 4 was sort of interesting because it has the MC, Stephen Attebrook, on his own for much of the crime investigation. His usual sidekick, the innkeeper and ex-monk, Gilbert, is certainly around with the usual banter but Stephen works out much of this mystery by himself. I rated this book 3 stars because the ending felt rushed, there was a (minor) loose end in the plot that was not tied plus the usual annoying collection of typos and missing words. Really, I try not to blame the writer for typos as this is the job of the editor and publisher, but I beg Jason Vail to have a care on this issue if there is to be a Book 5.

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## **Jen says**

Girl in the Ice by Jason Vail features Stephen Attebrook, a knight who lost half his foot during the crusades. His military career over and his prospects considerably dimmer, he takes a job as a deputy coroner. (I'm finding that coroners are frequent characters in medieval mysteries. I mentioned some of the background of the crowner, coronarius, coroner, Keeper of the Pleas here. )

The winter of 1262 has been brutal, frequent snow storms all but burying the village. On Christmas Day, the frozen body of a young girl is discovered buried in a drift of snow. She is very young and very beautiful and captures the imagination of the villagers.

Stephen must discover her identity, and no one in the village or its immediate surroundings knows who she is. His investigation leads to some political complications that are dangerous.

I liked the book, but didn't love it. Stephen, Gilbert, and Harry are interesting characters and the plot has some historical aspects concerning the Welsh March and the Simon de Montfort rebellion. I like that the ebook was 99 cents, and I was able to experience another medieval author. Would I read another in this series? Yes, but I'm also interested in trying other new authors.

Medieval Mystery. 2013. Print version: 270 pages.

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## **Jim says**

**A thoroughly good read. I love the Stephen Attebrook mysteries.**

A fast read. Great attention to details and plenty of action. If you like period pieces from the middle ages, this series is hard to best.

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## **Leah G says**

Another British medieval detective book for me! I knew I'd like this genre as soon as I found it.

Stephen seems like such a normal, sympathetic guy for someone who lived like 800 years ago. And then he starts killing people and reacts like, "Oh oops that was annoying, I have to defend myself, whatever." Which is very jarring for a modern reader but probably perfectly accurate for the time. I liked how even in an era where life was so precarious and fighting and Welsh raids and poor crops and dangerous weather etc etc- he still cared about the life of one girl who died young (and also the salt merchant family who got murdered too) and he was determined to solve the mystery of her death. Even if he had to find reasons to justify his interest to people who looked at him askance, or tried to outright ban him from doing anything about it, or threatened to kill him if he came any closer. He cared, he really did, whatever excuses he made, and that was sort of nice.

And oh boy does he get into trouble once he gets started! What the poor guy suffers in his quest my goodness gracious is he brave. And the ending was perfect. The historical research was superb and incorporated seamlessly into the plot. Historian-reader side of me was satisfied. I kept looking things up online as I went along and learned about burgrave and the etymology of Oswestry and motte-and-bailey castles. And the general setting of life in 1200s England on the Welsh border areas, not a subject I knew much about before. The pictures on wikipedia make it look really cute I would love to visit the area someday.

I'm not sure why I started with this one when it's not first in the series, I usually don't do that. But things from the past were explained pretty much as I went along. And I would definitely like to read more from this series and Stephen Attebrook. I'm a fan!

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## **George says**

A Stephen Attebrook mystery set from December, 1262 to February 1263 in the small town of Ludlow, England. Attebrook is an impoverished crippled (lost part of a foot fighting in Spain) knight who is seeking to earn a meager living by taking the position of deputy coroner.

This follows a month after the previous novel in this series with unrest along the Welsh boarder continuing and the area in the grip of a particularly bad winter. As the snow in Ludlow starts melting off, a body of a young woman is discovered in the town square near the entrance to the church. The body had been buried in the snow for a while. As Stephen seeks to solve her murder, he is again brought into contact with the noble from the Clun area who is out to kill him as well as the continuing raids by the Welsh. A second layer is added as Stephen is asked to check into the raids as it is believed that anti king british nobles maybe behind the raids to undermine the king.

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## **Linda Bean says**

Ok, mildly diverting, didn't believe it some of the time. But others in my book club enjoyed it.

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## **Lyn Hood says**

I found the premise of this book intriguing - set in 12th century England in a period of civil unrest the story's main character is a younger son returned from Spain and eking out a living as a deputy coroner. This book is the fourth in the series and I quickly read the other three and enjoyed them just as much as *The Girl in the Ice*. The descriptions of daily life seem authentic and the attitudes and customs are sometimes surprising. The author has obviously researched the era about which he writes and it is as lively and interesting as his characters. A good read - the mystery of who the girl in the ice is and why she was killed is satisfactorily solved, not with modern methods, but with the means at Attebrook's disposal. Best of all, these novels are not expensive and some can be borrowed from Amazon if you are a Prime member.

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## **Kathie Frobe says**

### **Harry becomes a new man**

Things take a turn for the better for Stephen and Harry in this novel, and another mystery involving a beautiful corpse is solved.

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## **Susan says**

It's now December 1262 and snowstorms are striking Ludlow making the going treacherous. On Christmas morning as everyone goes to Church Harry the beggar finds a body under the snow, along the church path. No one recognises the body and deputy coroner Stephen Attebrook takes responsibility to determine the who and why, which leads into enemy territory and danger.

Some minor mistakes found, which seems not to be unusual in most books but I enjoyed the story and really like the characters

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## **Rachel says**

I got this as a deal for having purchased a certain number of kindle books on Amazon.

Instead of trying to be overly medieval about its language, the dialogue and vocabulary is quite modern - and it actually works.

Pacing and plot was slow in the beginning and middle and overly quick at the end, as if the author was just trying to wrap up a story he didn't know what else to do with. Not how I like my mysteries.

I would call this one a beach read and have done.

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### **Jennifer says**

I have now read all four books in this series and this book is by far my favorite as I feel that it was by far the most developed (in terms of characters, plot and descriptions). I really feel his writing would improve quite a lot with a good editor but I have really enjoyed the characters which is why, even though I only gave his other books three stars, I feel like I could recommend these stories to others. Are there typos and other plot issues? Yes, but I feel like he has the key ingredients in this series; he just needs to tighten the recipe a bit.

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