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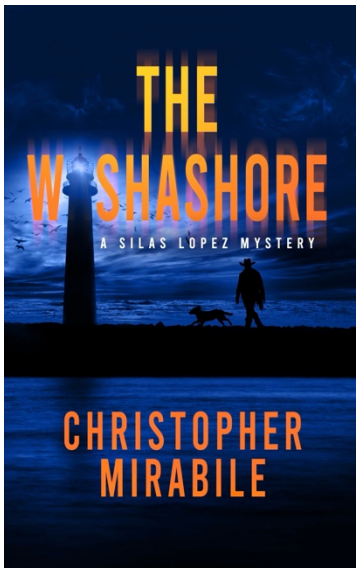
A western cowboy finds a new home: The Washashore by Christopher Mirabile



It's difficult to imagine two places that could be any more different from each other than the mountains of Montana and the dunes of Provincetown, Massachusetts. From the heart of ranching—and conservative-to-right-wing mentality—to a gay seaside resort town is a tough transition to make, but Silas Lopez, the protagonist in Christopher Mirabile's debut novel *The Washashore*, is called upon to do just that when he's hired to become the town's new police chief. He handles the transition with less angst than anticipated and in short order finds himself embroiled in a hit-and-run "accident" that turns out to be anything but.

Lopez is a little folksy for my taste, particularly in his inner monologue, but he's a great antidote to many mystery-novel alternatives of hardboiled sleuth or saccharine cozy protagonist; he's anything but cookie-cutter, and Mirabile deserves credit for allowing him the time and space to reveal himself to the reader. Lopez feels genuine and doesn't take anything for granted in either his personal or professional spheres, an attitude that serves him well in his new environment: he's out of place in Ptown, but he knows it and walks an interesting line between claiming the authority he needs to be professionally effective and yet finding his way in a town that's wary of outsiders ("washashores," in the local parlance).

I'm a great sucker for effective opening lines, and Mirabile delivers a terrific one, so he gets extra points with me there. And while even police procedurals often rely on the detective getting a lucky break or there being unrealistic plot coincidences, it's clear here that Lopez is putting in solid investigative work, something else I really appreciate: Mirabile doesn't skip over any of the puzzle pieces that Lopez eventually puts together.

The Washashore gives readers a protagonist well-suited for a series, someone with room to grow and develop, as well as a backdrop that will no doubt reveal more layers in the books to come.