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TITLE INFORMATION

THE HOLDFAST
Christopher Mirabile
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BOOK REVIEW

A new police chief takes on the suspicious death of an elderly woman in this installment of Mirabile's mystery series.

Silas Lopez is settling into his role as police chief in Provincetown, Massachusetts. He's called out to investigate the death of an elderly woman; what initially looked like a fatality stemming from natural causes instead reveals evidence of foul play ("This wasn't an ordinary death"). The dead woman, Constance Blanchard, was poisoned by tampered-with medication, and her recent complaints about harassment by predatory real estate developers may be the reason why (she had been the one property owner on her block who refused to sell). Silas and his team uncover evidence of a large-scale land grab, with developers willing to bribe and threaten public officials to get their plans approved. Witnesses are hard to come by at first, as they are afraid of attracting retribution. In the meantime, Silas grows closer to social worker Wren, though he worries about wanting to impress her affluent family at Thanksgiving. His dog, Bandit, who is eager but unruly, runs afoul of the town manager, but Silas quickly gains the esteem of his colleagues and fellow townspeople. When Silas starts getting too close to the truth in the Blanchard case, the hotheaded perpetrator strikes back. This mystery is a slow-burn, the action interspersed with domestic moments and team bonding—it feels more cozy than thrilling. Still, the case is gripping right down to the end, and Mirabile deftly weaves a tangled web of shady scheming and zoning shenanigans without confusing or boring the reader. Silas is a solid protagonist, confident but still a fish out of water in New England—he's folksy, but sharp as a tack. As he grows in his role as chief and opens up to Wren, the stage is appealingly set for more books in this series.

A satisfying, slow-paced mystery with small-town charm and big-time intrigue.

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