The Holdfast

In Mirabile's second Silas Lopez mystery (following *The Washashore*), readers are swept into an idyllic small town with deep rot festering beneath its charming surface. Ex-ranch hand Silas is now Provincetown, Massachusetts's chief of police—a quiet, instinctive investigator who trusts his team enough to let them lead. Outside work, he's building a life with social worker Wren Bradford while trying to turn his unruly dog Bandit into a trained K9. When the elderly Connie Blanchard is found deceased in her home, it looks like the kind of mundane death that never registers—except Silas can't shake the feeling that something is wrong.

Silas makes excellent use of his team. Anna Marsh and Gavin Byrne trace Connie's movements, property records, and hidden evidence; Kevin Clark and Laura Burig pursue parallel investigations; Genny keeps the case moving behind the scenes; and, meanwhile, forensic analyst Neel Bhatt and medical examiner Tammy Reynolds prove that Connie did not die of natural causes. Piece by piece, their discoveries convince Silas that Connie Blanchard was not an old woman whose death was peaceful—she was murdered. That single murder leads Silas and his team to uncover a conspiracy far bigger than anyone suspects: soon, the investigation extends to developer Carter Drayton and influential Boston businessman Jack Raddick, revealing that Connie Blanchard had stumbled upon a scheme involving land, power, and corruption.

The Holdfast is a crisp, fast-paced mystery with short chapters that keep the story moving. Alongside the investigation, the warm relationship between Silas, Wren, and Bandit gives the novel emotional warmth, with one of the book's most moving moments coming when Wren, drawing on her experience as a social worker, struggles to reconcile Silas's kindness with his ability to use force when needed. It is precisely this balance of mystery and humanity that makes *The Holdfast* such a satisfying read.

Takeaway: Clear-eyed mystery deftly balances suspense with humanity.

Great for fans of: S.A. Cosby's *King of Ashes*, Chris Mullen's *Dead Land*.

Production grades
Cover: **A**
Design and typography: **A**
Illustrations: **A**
Editing: **A**
Marketing copy: **A**