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The Holdfast

Christopher Mirabile
Slack Tide Press (2026)
ISBN: 979-8899891175
Reviewed by Paul Knobloch for Reader Views (08/2026)
5*- Holding Ground

Christopher Mirabile's *The Holdfast: A Silas Lopez Mystery* is a sharply plotted mystery that combines a murder investigation with a larger story about greed, development, community, and the meaning of home. At its center is Silas Lopez, the recently arrived police chief of Provincetown, Massachusetts, whose investigation into the seemingly natural death of seventy-seven-year-old Constance "Connie" Blanchard gradually reveals something far more sinister.

Connie appears to have died from acute kidney failure, and a conveniently placed Do Not Resuscitate order initially discourages further questions. Silas, however, is bothered by several details surrounding the death, including an earlier fire at Connie's house and the insistence of his partner, Wren, that Connie had been healthy. Toxicology eventually reveals that Connie died from a dangerous interaction between her prescribed statin and azithromycin, an antibiotic she apparently had no reason to be taking. When suspicious pills are discovered in her medication bottle, Silas begins treating the case as murder.

The investigation quickly becomes more complicated. Connie had complained that she was being watched and pressured to sell her cottage, while unusual zoning decisions, permits, easements, renovations, and property transfers have been occurring around her neighborhood. What initially sounded like the fears of an elderly woman increasingly appears to have been an accurate assessment of a coordinated campaign against her.

At the center of that campaign are Carter Drayton, an arrogant local operative, and wealthy Boston developer Jack Raddick. Through shell companies and intermediaries, properties surrounding Connie's home have been quietly acquired for an enormously lucrative luxury hotel project. Connie's refusal to sell makes her more than an inconvenience: she is the remaining obstacle to the project's expansion. The potential financial rewards are enormous, giving Silas both a motive for the murder and an increasingly dangerous group of adversaries.

Mirabile keeps raising the stakes without abandoning the procedural elements that make the mystery convincing. Silas follows property records, interviews witnesses, examines forensic evidence, tracks corporate connections, and relies upon his officers to pursue separate leads. At the same time, someone repeatedly attempts to derail the investigation. Records are targeted by fire, Silas is attacked, a tracking device is attached to his vehicle, and he and Bandit narrowly escape death after being locked inside Connie's shed while it fills with propane.

Connie herself remains an important presence even after her death. Evidence she leaves behind—including correspondence and recordings of threatening calls—demonstrates that she understood much of what was happening around her and had carefully documented it. Her stubborn refusal to surrender her home also gives the novel its thematic center. Connie is quite literally holding her ground against people who regard Provincetown primarily as an investment opportunity.

As Silas follows the increasingly tangled trail, the investigation draws him deeper into the collision between money, influence, and a community whose character is itself at stake. Mirabile keeps the mystery moving toward a satisfying resolution while leaving room for Silas and Provincetown to become as important as the solution to Connie's death.

Silas is an appealing protagonist partly because Mirabile allows him to be competent without making him infallible. He is stubborn, irreverent, occasionally abrasive, and willing to operate unconventionally, but his commitment to the people under his protection is genuine. The supporting police characters also matter because the investigation becomes a collective effort rather than simply a showcase for an impossibly brilliant detective.

The murder mystery ultimately parallels Silas's personal story. He arrives in Provincetown as something of an outsider, but the investigation gradually makes him responsible for protecting a place to which he is becoming increasingly attached. His developing relationship with Wren, his companionship with Bandit, and the possibility of a future at Bayberry Hollow all give the conclusion an emotional dimension beyond solving Connie's murder.

That makes *The Holdfast* more than a conventional whodunit. The title captures the novel's central concern: what anchors people to a place, and what happens when money and power attempt to uproot them. Connie refuses to surrender her home; Silas learns that he may finally have found one. Christopher Mirabile brings those two strands together in an engaging mystery that balances procedural detail, suspense, humor, and a surprisingly thoughtful examination of what it means to belong.