



## Home Fires

*Margaret Maron*

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At a stop along her campaign trail, Judge Deborah Knott attends a community picnic at the Mr. Olive Church. When the historic building is destroyed by a fire shortly after the outing -- and the charred skeleton of a young man is found among the ashes -- Knott begins her own investigation into the tragedy. Earlier national news reports of a fire at a local African-American church had already gained the attention of Wallace Adderly, a Black Panther from the '70s. Knott and Adderly team up to discover if the blazes are merely coincidence, or the work of a racist arsonist. As the number of suspects rises, Deborah finds herself re-examining her own beliefs and values as she and Adderly race to prevent another devastating loss in the community.

## Home Fires Details

Date : Published January 1st 1998 by Mysterious Press

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Author : Margaret Maron

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## From Reader Review Home Fires for online ebook

### Susan says

This mystery finds Judge Deborah Knott close to home, focusing on an outburst of arson at local African-American churches and dealing with family problems.

BTW, I'm used to cover illustrations not matching the story, but inaccurate descriptions in the blurb here on Goodreads? — c'mon, publishers, it's not that hard to get it right, just read the book.

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### Michelle says

I am reading this series again because I enjoy the main character so much. Deborah Knott is the youngest in a family of twelve and the only girl. She is a respected judge in her small North Carolina town of Dobbs who manages to get involved in the latest crime wave. In this book, the story is again set in Dobbs and involves members of her community. Fires are being set and black churches are burning to the ground. Deborah manages to be in the thick of it and helps solve the crimes. I also want to mention that the quotes at the start of each chapter are great too.

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### Richard Brand says

This is a story of church burnings in North Carolina in the early 60's or 70's. I am not real sure. Helms and Harry Gant were listed as senate candidates. Of course, one of the Knott relatives is accused of the being a part of a group of teenagers who did the fires. We have all kinds of love interest with Deborah and her game warden. There is her building of a new house. There are lots of interesting discussion about race relations and there are many good insights into the dynamics of black white. This being read at a time when Black Lives Matter and Dallas cops being shot, it was troubling how much of this story is still deja vue. Maron does make her major character and the supporting cast feel like real people you know, and being southerners in North Carolina it is fun to know the TV announcers she mentions and the locales.

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### Merlot58 says

I really love the Deborah Knott series. Set in the South, there is always an intriguing mystery, but more importantly, family and the general social network of the towns in the area factor as a more important part of the story. The characters are consistently well fleshed out and believable. These are relatively short books but they are so good.

This book (and others in the series) also deals with the race issues inherently found in North Carolina, in what feels to me a very real way. Admittedly, this is fiction. This was written in 1998 and Maron is talking about white privilege, a current topic, and this was written 20 years ago. So, I would say these books are still relevant as we still have the same problems.

There are still some glaringly dated turns of phrase, even though the heart of this book is in the right place.

## **Bonnie says**

I am on a reading quest to read all of Margaret Maron's Deborah Knott Mystery series. So far I have read Shooting At Loons, Killer Market, Death's Half Acre, and Long Upon the Land. I have just finished Home Fires and it might be the best one yet. The series is about the Knott family of North Carolina. Deborah is a Circuit Court Judge at the start of a reelection campaign. Her father plans a picnic to kick off the start of her campaign with a pig smoked in a cooker, soft drinks iced in big garbage pails bought for this purpose, wooden tubs filled with lemonade, roasted pork slathered with a vinegar based sauce, hushpuppies, and slaw. During the celebration her nephew is arrested, with two friends, for desecrating a cemetery. When the same spray painted graffiti shows up at an African American church that's been torched, the young men are suspected of arson. Deborah is determined to help her nephew, but when two more black churches are burned, she is totally blindsided when two bodies are uncovered under one of the churches. Though Deborah is busy with her reelection and building a house at the back of her father's property, she is determined to help a member of her family.

The author does an incredible job of making the reader part of the action. She describes two inner voices for her protagonist, "the Preacher" and the "pragmatist" who seem to perch on her shoulder and compete for her main character's decisions. A foil is introduced with the local D. A. who is black, strict, and aloof to Deborah's openness. She routinely deals out harsher recommendations of punishment to the black men, while the judge is far more lenient. A case comes up in Deborah's court involving a black woman charged with writing two cold checks to a local department store. In offering her reason, she claims to have added up wrong and loaned her sister money for her son's glasses. Her sister was supposed to give her the money back but couldn't until she received a check for work she had done. She stated that her sister had the money now, but she needed to get it. Deborah asked where she lived and the woman said in Raleigh. Deborah asked if she had a car and when the woman said she did, Deborah told her to drive to Raleigh, pick up the money and return to court. After the afternoon recess, the Judge saw her sitting in the courtroom and asked if she had the money. She did and paid.

The book is a blend of the old south country comfort and New South sophistication. The reader feels at home with the vivid descriptions of the location, customs, food, and love of family. A solid five stars.

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## **Michelle Young says**

Debra and Dwight! Yippee!

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## **Wendy says**

I enjoy every book in this series. the beginning of each chapter of this one highlights the quirky messages of small-town church signs. If you drive on rural roads you will immediately recognize the accuracy and giggle just a little. Since the mystery revolves around church burning, it's a great touch. This is the "food" entry of the series. Almost every chapter highlights another quintessential food of this rural area just outside (SE) of Raleigh NC area. Read for the local flavor!

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## Joyce Lagow says

6th in the Judge Deborah Knott series set in North Carolina.[return][return]The story opens with Deborah and her father, Kezzie Knott, racing to the scene of a burning church. Deborah risks her life to save a treasured Bible, hymn books and other objects from the church, as volunteer firemen battle the blaze ineffectively, as the old and tinder-dry building burns to the ground. The church is home to a black congregation; the fire is clearly arson, and the obvious conclusion is that it is a hate crime. But it is only the first of a series of arsons of black churches; during one, a sacristan dies, raising the tension in the community.[return][return]It s an exciting beginning to one of the best installments in the series. We learn that Maron does a good job of showing that racism that exists today on both sides, and the chasm that no law can really bridge; it will depend, perhaps, on the next generation to over come the deep-seated distrust of both blacks and whites.[return][return]Maron almost always does a good, straightforward plot with few twists or turns. Unusually, this one has a few fillips that up the interest nicely. She continues to have a fine protagonist in Deborah Knott, who does not wear out with increasing exposure in each book. Back are familiar, strong recurring characters: her father Kezzie; Dwight Bryant of the Sheriff s Department; various members of her family; friends. This book centers on one of her brothers, Andrew, and his family, who have not had prominent roles heretofore. In fact, it is a great strength of the series that Maron has introduced such a large family for Deborah; they re convenient for spreading plot elements around in a believable way.[return][return]Her usual strong writing about the South, its idioms and regional ways. Excellent discussion within the medium of the mystery genre of race and how it plays out today.[return][return]Highly recommended.

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## Sandra says

I really enjoyed this book, Margaret Maron adds a little bit of history, humor and family in all the books I've read of hers so far...and its a delightful cozy mystery, that keeps you guessing and often surprises you when you find out the culprit. This is book 6.

From Amazon:

Margaret Maron has brought to life the landscape and people, the history and current concerns of a contemporary South. As akin to Carson McCullers and William Faulkner as she is to her fellow mystery writers, Maron now continues her acclaimed series with a chilling story of suspense: a searing crisis of race and region and other burning issues of the heart . . .

One place the two Souths—black and white—meet is in Judge Deborah Knott's courtroom. From the pretty yet aggressive D.A. who requests harsh sentences for her fellow African-Americans to the three white teens caught desecrating a family graveyard with hate slogans, racial bias still tries the soul and tests the sense of justice in Colleton County, North Carolina.

Busy with her reelection campaign and building a new house on land that has been in her family for generations, Deborah has both deep roots and a professional stake in her community. She's shaken when her nephew A.K. is arrested with a group of vandalizing teens at a local cemetery. Torn between her duty as a judge and her loyalty to her large, close-knit family, Deborah has to decide how far she can go to protect him.

Then the first black church burns.

Determined to investigate the arson in which A.K. has become a suspect, Deborah Knott is quickly swept into the dark undercurrents of prejudice, pain, and betrayal in this rural Southern county. Add to this the

sudden arrival of a 1970s black activist-turned-public-figure, the emerging secrets of an angry young woman and the burning of two more churches, and Deborah faces a crisis that will challenge her political acumen, her detective skills, and her core beliefs.

The sins of the past return to forever change the present in Margaret Maron's most riveting, emotionally moving novel to date, a mystery that involves color and kinship, and the unbreakable bonds of love . . .

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### **Wanda says**

Judge Knott's nephew gets involved with two boys who vandalize a cemetery. Some black churches are burned down and similar writing as found in the cemetery is found on the church walls. She believes her nephew innocent and starts poking around to find out the truth.

There is still a lot of conflict between blacks and whites in this southern county and tension simmers. She doesn't want things to get out of hand and is trying to understand things from both perspectives. She is also concerned with the building of her new house and her relationship with her boyfriend who doesn't live very close to her town. She tries to befriend a deputy DA who has issues from her past that have been brought back to the present.

Deals with some interesting racial issues along with how connected to each other some families are and how important family history can be to some.

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### **Nita says**

good southern influence but i just couldn't get into it

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### **Dail Sams says**

The burning of three black churches causes Deborah and her neighbors to recognized the subtle racism that still pervades their community. Deborah builds a house on Knott land and prepares to begin a new stage of life.

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### **Diane Heath says**

I love Deborah Knott's family and her stories. I am filling in the books I have missed. I may be wind up rereading some of them. This one was new to me as Deborah's house is just being finished. She is not yet married to Dwight but is dating a character I don't recognize.

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### **Kilian Metcalf says**

Judge Knott is back home in Colleton County where she belongs. She's nesting now, building her own home on a parcel of land her daddy deeded her. She needs the privacy now for visits from her beau. Another great

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mystery from a master.

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## **Mary says**

I had a hard time getting into this book and I am really not sure why. Great writing and characters but the story did not grab me.

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