



## The Homeplace: A Mystery

*Kevin Wolf*

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## **The Homeplace: A Mystery** Kevin Wolf

Chase Ford was the first of four generations of Ford men to leave Comanche County, Colorado. For Chase, leaving saved the best and hid the worst. But now, he has come home. His friends are right there waiting for him. And so are his enemies.

Then the murder of a boy, a high school basketball star just like Chase, rocks the small town. And when another death is discovered— one that also shares unsettling connections to him—attention turns towards Chase, causing him to wonder just what he came home to.

A suspenseful, dramatic crime novel, Kevin Wolf's *The Homeplace* captures the stark beauty of life on the plains of Colorado.

## **The Homeplace: A Mystery Details**

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Author : Kevin Wolf

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Crime

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## From Reader Review The Homeplace: A Mystery for online ebook

### Maxine says

Chase Ford left his small Colorado hometown years ago to play for the NBA. Now his career is over thanks to injury, drugs, and a messy divorce and he has returned home ostensibly to tie up loose ends after the death of his father but also to find a quiet place out of the spotlight where he can lick his wounds. Almost as soon as he arrives, though, three murders occur including a young star basketball player at Chase' old high school. The town's sheriff has held a grudge towards Chase since long before he left and would love nothing more than to be able to pin the murders on him.

The Homeplace by author Kevin Wolf is fast-paced, interesting and engrossing, with plenty of action and believable characters. It is both a mystery and a portrait of small-town America struggling to survive. This is Wolf's first novel but, with the exception of the ending which seemed a little rushed, it is very well-written and kept my interest throughout.

*Thanks to Netgalley and St Martin's Press for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review*

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### Elizabeth McIlhaney says

This author, winner of the 2015 Tony Hillerman contest, knows how to spin a yarn. Having read almost all of the winners' books to date, the first woman to win the contest, and Wolf, are tied as my favorites. A blurb on the cover of the hardback I read compares Wolf to both Pat Conroy and James Lee Burke, the latter my favorite living American writer. I also have enjoyed Conroy's works immensely. So I had great expectations as I began this book, Wolf's first (he now has two published, with another on the way for 2018). It did not let me down. My only criticism is that the setting was too generic for my taste. Set in Eastern Colorado with both mountains and forests, plus plains, in a fictional county, it left me feeling unhinged, as part of the draw of the Hillerman contest winners is -- or should be -- location, location, location, combined with historical and cultural accuracy within a fictionalized mystery plot. This book made it difficult to determine which was which, given the generic and specifically fictional location -- a great opportunity missed by the author in which he could have lassoed his readership soundly. But I still will and so far, have, read everything he writes. Location and historical facts aside, he remains a fine storyteller. I would compare his page-turning free-flowing thriller-style of writing more to John Grisham than Burke or Conroy. But Grisham is one of my favorites as well, so no loss there. And Grisham has mastered the art of generic fictionalized locations, especially small towns in Mississippi. For commercial purposes, an author would prefer to be compared to Grisham than to Burke or Conroy, I suspect. Being compared to all three makes one a winning writer in today's world, without doubt. In addition to spinning a great story, the author's obvious detailed, complex knowledge of basketball and coaching, hunting and firearms, the climate and terrain of his fictional location, and small-town and rural life in Colorado farming and ranching communities, makes this book stand out in ways not expected of a typical detective novel, even one specifically supposed to be set in the Southwest, as this had to be in order to gain access to the Hillerman prize. I hope the author will become more historically and culturally specific in future books -- and there will be a future for this brilliant new writer.

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## **Cindy McBride says**

It is now just a few minutes past 1:00am, and once I wiped away the water from my eyes (must be dust or something) after finishing the final chapter in this book, I was compelled to get up, fire up the old computer, and write this review while my impressions are still so fresh.

Mr. Wolf has crafted a novel that will not be easily forgotten once read. He created unique, complex characters with whom you establish an emotional bond almost immediately -- some good, some bad. The main character, Chase, is a famous ex-pro basketball star who, after high school, left the tiny town in Colorado in which he grew up, largely to escape the emotional scars suffered in his youth. He returns 16 years later, expecting to spend only a short weekend there to take care of some anonymous (or so he thinks) philanthropic business details with his banker, but events -- the deaths of 3 people in 2 days, including his beloved high school coach -- conspire to extend his stay. Chase's character is so achingly well-developed that he simply shines throughout the entire book. The individual histories he shares with nearly all the inhabitants of this community are perfectly and intimately articulated.

Creating realistically-drawn characters, however, is only part of what makes a novel truly memorable. The plot, the pace, the unexpected twists and turns, and the dialog must also achieve the same level of excellence as does the character development, and Mr. Wolf achieves high marks in all those areas as well, seemingly almost effortlessly. Even more impressive is the fact that this is a debut novel; this author is on the road to superstardom, without a doubt.

This is a truly remarkable tale, and I suspect you might just lose some sleep -- unable to stop reading -- just as I did. Highly recommended.

\*\*\* This book was provided to me by the publisher and/or the author as an ARC in exchange for my honest review. \*\*\*

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## **Gina says**

I needed a western to complete a spot in my book club, and this definitely fits. Set on the plains of Colorado, this Tony Hillerman Prize winner begins with the death of some buffalo but quickly transforms into something else. The best way I've got it to describe it is "contemporary western noir" or "the western Fargo." Told from multiple first person viewpoints with subtle show not tell character development, it's a quick read with more depth than expected from 272 pages. I knew who did it well before the end, but I enjoyed the journey it took the other characters to figure it out and accept who the killer could be. That ending, though.... It is a satisfying ending that ties up all loose ends, but it just doesn't fit with the rest of the book. It is truly the last 20 pages that kept this from being a higher rated book for me.

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## **Shannon says**

This is a great portrait of small town in the west. Everyone knows about everyone else... or do they? The characters are well-drawn and the plot twists keep coming. Hard to put down.

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## **Jane Dugger says**

It was a bit slow starting and I figured it out after reading 2/3 of the book.

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## **Kristina says**

A convoluted plot, ridiculous dialogue, poor character development (very surface) all combined to make this a very disappointing read. Honestly, by the end of the book I didn't even care anymore about the whodunnit and just wanted it to be over. Here's an example of the ridiculous dialogue I mentioned:

“Birdie has—whatcha call it?” Marty mopped the dirty sweat from his forehead. “Uh—feelings for you. And she has since high school. Seein’ you again, after you’d been away for sixteen years, brought it all back.”

The writing style was, I don't know, very simplistic, very surface, as I mentioned about the character development. It almost felt like a YA Novel, definitely not literary fiction, as I was hoping for. The "big mystery" just went on and on and on, in ridiculous ways, then was wrapped up in around a paragraph or two. This is not a book I'd recommend to anyone who is looking for something of substance.

Thank you to Netgalley and St. Martin's Press for an advance copy of this in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Julia Ash says**

A great mystery with exceptional writing. Wolf has mastered the use of powerful language, dialect, and points-of-view. Loved it!

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## **Jill Meyer says**

The Eastern Plains of Colorado occupy about half the state and the area is much more similar to Kansas than to mountainous regions of the state. Eastern Colorado is mainly covered in farmland, along with small farming villages and towns and livestock and food crop are the main products. Driving through this part of the state on I-80, the traveler senses the vast emptiness of the area. It is in this part of Colorado that author Kevin Wolf has placed his novel, "The Homeplace". Set over a late fall weekend, a series of murders shock the town's people of Brandon, and lives are in turmoil.

Kevin Wolf depicts Brandon, Colorado as a place pretty up to date with cellular service and a pretty modern police department. Brandon is also the home town of college and pro basketball star Chase Ford, who left 18 years before in a blaze of fame, but returns to try to set a few things straight in his home town. After a career with the Lakers, he was injured and has been working as a sports commentator. He's at a crossroads in his life and perhaps a few days in the old burg will help him sort things out. Chase meets people he had last seen 18 years ago and their lives have moved on, as well. They're strangers to him...as he is to them.

Wolf's characters - for the most part - are well written and believable. There are a couple of characters and story lines which are not as believable and the end of the mystery - "who's killing the town's residents" - is a bit shaky. The confession is a bit too pat, but that's often the case with a first time novelist. The rest of the

book is very good.

Is Kevin Wolf writing a murder mystery or a look at a man who returns "home" and has to adjust to the changes? It's a bit of both but the Chase Ford character is interesting and well-worth reading. This is a good first novel which is very evocative of the times and place.

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### **Allison says**

I had high hopes for this book because it won the Tony Hillerman prize and it's set in rural Colorado. I loved the character of Birdie Hawkins, the wildlife officer. I would love it if Wolf wrote a story with her as the main character. This book was OK, but I thought it fell flat towards the end.

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### **A Reader's Heaven says**

(I received a free copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for an honest review.)

*Chase Ford was the first of four generations of Ford men to leave Comanche County, Colorado. For Chase, leaving saved the best and hid the worst. But now, he has come home. His friends are right there waiting for him. And so are his enemies.*

*Then the murder of a boy, a high school basketball star just like Chase, rocks the small town. When another death is discovered—one that also shares unsettling connections to him—law enforcement's attention turns towards Chase, causing him to wonder just what he came home to.*

This is a hard one to describe. On one hand, it is the story of a small town hero, who returns home after making it big in basketball, and his possible involvement in a spate of murders and disappearances in town since he arrived back. That was interesting. I didn't mind that at all. Some real tense moments throughout.

On the other hand, it was kinda slow. I don't know if that was because of the dull-ish characters or the painful build-up to the somewhat predictable conclusion, but there were times when the mystery itself saved this book from being tossed into the corner of the room and forgotten.

Paul  
ARH

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### **Julie says**

The Homeplace: A Mystery by Kevin Wolf is a 2016 Minotaur publication.

Not only is this solid mystery, but it is also a novel that explores regret, confronting the past, and allowing the heart to choose its home.

I see real talent with the author and I will be keeping an eye out for his next publication. If you like an absorbing mystery, with a slight western flavor to it, strong characterization, with a sprinkle of touching

emotion, you will want to check this one out.

This review is the property of Night Owl Reviews. To read the full review, click on this link:  
<https://www.nightowlreviews.com/v5/Re...>

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## Jean says

First of all, I wish to offer my sincere thanks to NetGalley, St. Martin's Press, and Mr. Kevin Wolf for providing me with an ARC copy of *The Homeplace: A Mystery* in exchange for my honest, unbiased review.

The hook caught me immediately. Wait. Let me back up. The dedication actually did it: "Dad, I wrote a book." These two pages illustrate the contrast that exists in Wolf's writing. The first is plain, simple language. It is the language of small town, lived-here-my-whole-life kind of folks. The second is that of a painter, who rather than telling us that the wind blowing 50 miles per hour, makes us hear it screeching and crying. When it settles down, it whispers.

Chase Ford is grown up now. Once he was a high school basketball star in Brandon, Colorado. He went on to become a college star as well, then on to the NBA. Rather than marrying his high school sweetheart, he wed a glamorous country western singer. A knee injury ended both his career and his marriage.

For the first time in sixteen years, Chase is back in his hometown in Comanche County. Why? He has sworn off the pain pills that got him into trouble and he seems to be trying to make amends – to his community, to his past, and to himself. But when a high school basketball player much like himself is found murdered, Ford wonders what he's gotten himself into, and he wonders if he should just pack up and leave.

The consensus is that crimes like this don't happen in Comanche County. It's a quiet place where the biggest violations seem to be hunting without a license and underage drinking. (Warning: For animal lovers, there is deer hunting in this book.) The town has its share of drunks, losers, and liars – Cecil being one of the worst of the bunch. There's also Ray-Ray. Is he a crook, or is he just a guy who's anti-government and wants to live his life without anyone telling him what to do? There are minor characters aplenty, and it took me awhile to keep them all straight. But the dialogue, what there was of it, seemed real and unforced. No, it's not elegant or complex, but it struck me as the way that folks often talk when they're very familiar with one another.

Sheriff Lincoln Kendall is a stubborn, egotistical, my-way-or-the-highway type of lawman. He and Ford have a longstanding feud that goes back to their high school days. He seemed a bit caricatured, but he made a good foil for Chase. After all, what business does Chase Ford have poking his nose into these crimes? Maybe he does have something to do with all of this after all? Marty, a deputy, is an old pal. He's not always smart in the way he goes about things, but he's steady, loyal, and a good cop. Birdie. I loved Birdie. She's not what most folks, herself included, consider beautiful, but she's so smart. Last of all, there's Mercy Saylor. Like Chase, Mercy left Brandon, got married and divorced, and swore to herself that she'd never return. Now she runs her mama's diner. She and Chase have a history together. Do they have a future?

All in all, Wolf's plot kept me absorbed, although it could use some editing to tighten it up in places. Some of the details make the story feel a lot longer than just a couple of days. There are also a few minor typos. Solving the mystery wasn't hard, but I really had no clue as to a motive. The entanglements involving other characters were entertaining and suspenseful at times, especially given the remote setting and weather conditions that added to the overall mood. Mr. Wolf seems to be on his way to a promising future as a mystery writer.

*The Homeplace* is an impressive debut novel. I read this book in just two days, and I hope to see more from Kevin Wolf.

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## **Diane S ? says**

3.5 Small town heroes. Form this small town in Colorado that distinction belonged to Chase, whom as a senior basketball player brought this small town its only championship. A family tragedy and resulting scandal, left Chase estranged from his father and brought Chase to a closer relationship with his coach. The coach who would help him secure a four year scholarship to a prestigious school, leading to his playing in the NBA, marriage with a country western star and more money than he knew what to do with. A knee injury would end his career, his addiction to pain killer his marriage. Now returning to his home, a place he hopes will help heal him emotionally and mentally, he is instead confronted with three murders, one his beloved coach, another a young woman Chase had never met but is close to him.

The characters that make up a small town, those who left, those who stayed. Friends from the past, enemies, unresolved issues, the young woman he dated in high school who had also returned after a failed marriage. Stuck in time, wanting the glory days back, Mercy regrets everything that has happened since those days. But who would kill these people and why? Well written form the most part, though I did feel some areas in this story were dragged out, especially those concerning Ray Ray, the town outlier. Very much a character driven novel, a novel about past regrets and alternately coming to terms with the past. A novel about a town and those who make it their home.

Lastly, a novel about coming home and what that means.

ARC from Netgalley.

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## **LJ says**

First Sentence: If you listen, you will hear the wind.

Chase Ford left the small Colorado town in which he was a basketball star, to play for the NBA. Injury, divorce and drugs ended his career and now he's home. Not all homecomings are joyful; the murder of a present-day basketball star, who was very similar to Chase, causes the law, and Chase, to wonder why now and why him.

There is a very real sense of tension and suspense from the very beginning. There are grievances and relationships we don't quite understand, but know will be revealed. One-by-one, we meet the characters. And, as if pieces of a puzzle, we begin to see how they fit together.

Wolf's characters epitomize people everywhere. They are a microcosm of humanity; the best and the worst

of us. He makes the observation that while we tend to focus on our shortcomings and sins may other see the good in us and the positive things we've done.

Wolf has a very lyrical style, almost poetic at times—"Quiet slipped into the room and took the empty chair at their table." At other times, it's understandably real—"Weather coming in. And, God, the country needed the moisture. Let it snow. It was a prayer, not a curse."

"Homeplace" has plenty of suspense, danger and excitement. Although one may suspect the killer, the resolution is startling and the ending very well done. Wolf harkens back to classic authors whose books of less than 300 pages—259 in this case—are still complex and engrossing.

HOMEPLACE (Susp-Chase Ford-Colorado-Contemp) – VG

Wolf, Kevin – 1st book

Minotaur Books, Sept 2016

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