



Anadarko: A Kiowa Country Mystery

Tom Holm

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Native American customs and intractable cultural divides clash in this detective story that has depth.

In this installment of his Kiowa Country series, Tom Holm brings back Irish ex-cop J. D. Daughtery and Cherokee war veteran Hoolie Smith to solve the disappearance of rancher and geologist Frank Shotz. Lively dialogue and well-paced action make *Anadarko* an entertaining novel, a detective story that has depth. Holm's authentic portraits of Native American and African American characters, and the honest and corrupt white men empowered to deal with them, create nuanced accounts of Anadarko's environs.

Anadarko opens when Kiowa Indian and wise man Charging Horse discovers a gutted white man's body on his land allotment. Charging Horse knows the trouble this situation could bring to his family. The mystery of the dead white man is slowly revealed.

The setting, a land layered with the history of Indian disenfranchisement and race riots, is mired in a tangle of bootleggers and bordellos, with an active KKK chapter to boot. The narrative comes from multiple perspectives, and through the diverse cast, differing racial elements are well handled. The detective's cultural differences complement each other as the investigation unfolds. While Daughtery's voice is matter-of-fact, Hoolie's is introspective.

Smith and Daughtery contend with the complex power structures of the small Oklahoma town and its host of questionable characters. Law enforcement officers sometimes prove to be complicit in the divide, with revelations coming through eager deputies and diners at a local café. The investigators find that the land is split by race, and rich with contested resources—and animosity doesn't exist just from one end. A discussion between Hoolie and traders reveals the racial split that likely cost Shotz his life: Shotz was a white man prospecting in Indian country without asking the Indians. In a peyote purification (sweat lodge) ceremony, Hoolie leverages the truth to bridge the divide.

The book follows a winding path of KKK villains, corrupt law enforcement, and small-town secrets. The truth proves to be complex and culturally trying. *Anadarko* is an intelligent mystery that achieves cultural sensitivity, making room for Native American customs that are treated as both sacred and crucial to restoring justice.

KAI WHITE (Spring 2016)

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