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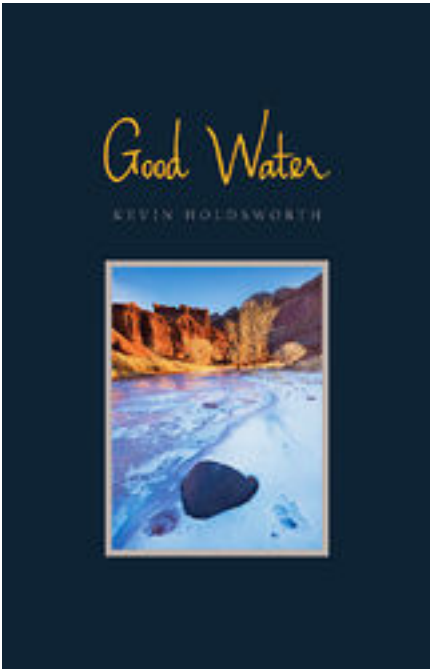


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Go off grid with Kevin Holdsworth’s ‘Good Water’



Kevin Holdsworth



QUICKREAD

Town Owl

“It takes a village, sure, but it takes someone in that village, or rather up above in the trees of that village, watching and preying, to reinforce what is right and just. Not community standards, for the crowd is untruth and hell is other people, but an observer with scaly claws: tripartite holdovers from the days of the thunder lizards, tools used to cling to branches when the storms come rough and tumble, cat’s paws for clutching prey.

“The role of the owl is mainly watching: ear tufts up, yellow eyes remarkably sensitive to detecting movement, head that can rotate around the compass, ears attuned to minutest vibration. With feathers mottled and blendy, a body down-garbed to last through winter’s double shift.

“A creature up above in the fir trees or cottonwoods, swooping in on silent sunset wings to alight, scrutinize, and speak. Alert aware, and watching. Because when someone is watching, you flutter to somewhere you can defend.

“Chorus with a memory. Keeper of the stories.”

— *From “Good Water” by Kevin Holdsworth, about a long-memored neighbor attuned to the goings-on in the small community*

[By Laurena Mayne Davis](#)

Sunday, April 10, 2016

“Good Water” by Kevin Holdsworth is unvarnished memoir and evocative biography of place.

But the author also populates the high desert of south-central Utah with complex characters you couldn’t possibly get to know from a distance; they must be lived with, up close.

Holdsworth chronicles the land and the people — “the survivors and casualties” in the remote Utah area of ranching, recreation and recluses. “Good Water” is Holdsworth’s name for the place — you won’t find it on a map — but a careful reading of the text will reveal the exact location.

Laurena Mayne Davis: *Do you still have your place there?*

Kevin Holdsworth: I do. It works best as a getaway place rather than a full-time place. I learned several years ago that making money in Wayne County is very difficult. It is better to make money elsewhere and spend time in Good Water with a more open agenda. As you know, Laurena, to truly get away you have to get off the grid, although there are different grids for different people.

Davis: *I can’t quit thinking about your “regrettable shed of regrets” — a poorly built shed full of painful mementoes. What role do you think that metaphor serves in life?*

Holdsworth: It’s regrets cubed, so to speak. I was thinking about an old Eurythmics song and wanted something more tangible, more concrete.

Davis: *How did this book come about?*

Holdsworth: I had all these pieces in the shed and wanted to see what would fit together in a book. In the process, I had to decide what to use, store or throw away.

Davis: *Good Water is a very small town. Do you think there is a golden mean — a Right-sized Town — or just a Right-sized Town at the right time of your life?*

Holdsworth: As the question correctly implies, it depends on where a person is in life. Rural, small-town living didn’t hold any allure until I had lived in large and very large cities.

Davis: *You describe methamphetamines: “Crystal was the rainbow with claws.” That intoxicant took down at least one of your friends. Do you see a loosening grip?*

Holdsworth: No, meth is just the flavor of the month. There are a lot of substances that mess people up. In other places, it's heroin or cocaine or prescribed pills. Elsewhere, it's hatred and racism that fuels.

Davis: *That letter to President Bill Clinton offering to give him a tour of Escalante-Grand Staircase National Monument: Did you really send it?*

Holdsworth: Actually, the letter was printed in a magazine about 10 years ago, and I did not hear from Mr. Clinton then. I'm hoping somehow he comes across this missive, and if he does, that he passes it on to President Obama, so that he will do a similar thing at Bears Ears/Cedar Mesa (region in Eastern Utah). One hears a lot of persiflage about Clinton and the Escalante-Grand Staircase National Monument, so it's necessary to even-up the discourse a bit. President Clinton did a pretty great thing in designating the monument, and sometimes in politics the end justifies the means.

Davis: *Your Zen Principles of Horseshoes are good instructions for all throwers. Why is horseshoes such an enjoyable experience?*

Holdsworth: Because often it is not enjoyable. It is necessary to endure much pain and suffering in horseshoes — that way the victories are sweeter. Also, I think, because you can and must take points away with a very good toss — it's extra good for me and extra bad for thee.

Davis: *Do you have any book-signings coming up?*

Holdsworth: At the Tattered Cover Colfax on Sunday, April 17, at 2 p.m. I'd love to read in Grand Junction sometime.

Davis: *What are you writing now?*

Holdsworth: I have two projects that are "in the can" with publishers: a book about climbing the highest peaks in Utah and a collection of short fiction. Right now, I'm working on something about the Wind River Mountains.

■

Have news about local authors, bookstores, book clubs or writing groups? Email Laurena Mayne Davis at laurenaatwork@gmail.com.

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