



Dangerous Waters

Susan Hunter

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In Susan Hunter's thriller *Dangerous Waters*, a newspaperwoman undertakes a murder investigation while navigating the difficulties of her romantic life.

Leah returns to her dilapidated hometown after a failure in the big city. Leah's belief in "the need for community, the obligation to keep your word, and the importance of seeking the truth" propels her to buy the town's newspaper, though she admits it might not be the smartest investment. The rival news source is an online paper that sensationalizes and stretches the truth.

After a wealthy townsman is found murdered, the police and the two news sources scramble for leads. Although Coop, the county sheriff, has been Leah's best friend since childhood, he resists her badgering for information. Leah follows her instincts and uncovers relationships and potential motives that the police have missed. She is aided by her friend and sidekick Miguel, with whom she shares a lively repartee. Ross, a hard-boiled detective, also becomes an ally after overcoming his initial resentment over Leah's intrusion.

But her investigating leaves Leah little time for her boyfriend, Gabe, and his young son. When her mother questions whether it is Gabe she really loves, or Coop, Leah faces an topic she has been avoiding with intention.

The tension is ratcheted up by heavy rains threatening the local dam. When Leah goes to photograph the rising waters, she is trapped; she has no place to go—except the place where the suspected killer is waiting.

The key to a good thriller isn't only its twists and turns; equally important are the characters involved. Leah is smart and motivated with a healthy sense of humor. She narrates her story with a good balance between action, conversation, and introspection. Together with Miguel, Coop, Ross, and her mother, Leah claims a meaningful place for herself in her hometown.

KAREN MULVAHILL (September / October 2021)

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