

## Saving Tuna Street: A Blanche Murningham Mystery

**Nancy Nau Sullivan**

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Nancy Nau Sullivan's *Saving Tuna Street* is a small-town mystery whose spunky heroine wants to preserve her beloved neighborhood.

Blanche doesn't just live in Santa Maria: she's part of the island, like its mangrove trees and wild parrots. But her slice of paradise is threatened by quick-talking land developers with slick business offers. They would keep Blanche, an inquisitive reporter, busy enough, but circumstances take a personal turn: a good friend who is opposed to the land deals is found dead. Following her instinct despite warnings, Blanche makes an intriguing ally as she works to uncover the truth.

Santa Maria's island dwellers are rendered well, their idiosyncratic histories delivered in time with mouthfuls of colloquialisms that bring them to life. They make the community feel close, though the straightforward delegation of residents versus outsiders dampens the mystery somewhat. Indigenous Haasi, whose speech is cryptic and who is unfamiliar with some modern concepts, risks falling into tropes; still, Haasi is a capable, careful lead, and she helps Blanche to gather information. Haasi's appreciation of nature mirrors Blanche's preservationist morals.

Florida's flora and fauna are highlighted in Blanche and Haasi's musings. Santa Maria's beauty is matched by the danger of its hurricanes and wayward weather, resulting in drama: Blanche's house is damaged, and her anxieties about losing multiple aspects of her home are amplified. The mystery's resolution is entertaining, featuring love connections, cast latecomers, and Haasi and Blanche's inventiveness.

The chosen family dynamics of island life are a highlight of the cozy mystery *Saving Tuna Street*, and greedy profiteers are its villains.

DELIA STANLEY (July / August 2020)

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