

Trouble Down Mexico Way: A Blanche Murningham Mystery

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Light Messages Publishing (Jun 29, 2021)

Softcover \$14.99 (266pp)

978-1-61153-375-0

The flavors, colors, and history of Mexico are a vibrant backdrop for *Trouble Down Mexico Way*, a funny, fish-out-of-water mystery novel.

Part-time journalist and amateur sleuth Blanche “Bang” Murningham is an avid traveler of a certain age. She and her cousin Haasi Hakla are wandering through an exhibit of ancient Mayan ruins in Mexico City when they spot a clue that one of the mummies may be fresher than the museum suggests. A pink hair clip, smooth nails, and taut skin point to foul play, and soon Bang and Haasi are drawn into a conspiracy that takes them deeper into Mexican street life than any tourist guide would.

The lively supporting cast includes a pompous museum director, a wise *chilanga*, local law enforcement, and the mummy’s grieving mother. Bang does not weave her way through the mystery as much as bounce through it. Her effervescence is contagious, and although she and Haasi risk kidnapping, her self-assuredness makes her seem invincible.

Haasi, who’s confident and cool, is a foil for Blanche’s unremitting enthusiasm. They may be “strangers in a strange land,” but her attitude toward Mexican culture is respectful. The book avoids stereotypes and shares mouth-watering scents, spices, and sights instead. Food, drinks, and cultural details are woven through each scene, giving insight into the characters’ private lives. Over a tantalizing lunch of pozole (a soup of hominy and pork shoulder), “a table was set with an embroidered cloth and bowls of sliced avocado, chopped green onions, shredded cabbage, radishes, bits of fried tortillas, strips of pigskin, oregano, and chopped cilantro.” The novel enlivens the senses as the mystery winds through the city.

Mexico City and its mysteries are bright and beautiful in *Trouble Down Mexico Way*, a spry mystery led by adventurous investigator Blanche Murningham.

CLAIRE FOSTER (July / August 2021)

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