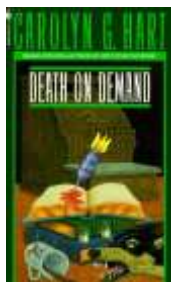


# The Death on Demand mystery series

By Carolyn G. Hart



## Death on Demand [1987]

At Annie Laurance's Death On Demand bookstore on Broward's Rock Island, South Carolina, murder most foul suddenly isn't confined to the well-stocked shelves. Author Elliot Morgan's abrupt demise during a weekly gathering of famous mystery writers called the Sunday Night Regulars is proof positive that a bloody sword is sometimes mightier than a brilliant pen.

With Annie in the unenviable position of primary police suspect, the pretty young mystery maven and her wealthy paramour, Max Darling, embark on an investigation into a classic locked-room mystery with high stakes. For failing to unmask a brutal and ingenious killer could mean prison for Ms. Laurance. While success could mean her death.



## Design for Murder [1988]

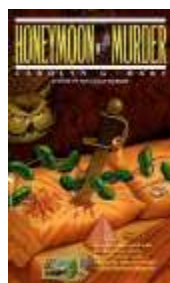
Annie is asked to stage a murder mystery event for the annual spring house tour sponsored by the Historical Society of Chastain, South Carolina. Her only problem is deciding which fictional murder to stage – until a corpse turns up in the town pond, and Annie suddenly finds herself the prime suspect in a real-life killing.



## Something Wicked [1988]

Everyone – including mystery bookstore owner Annie Laurance – loves Arsenic and Old Lace. But something wicked is poisoned a local summer stock production as cast members stab each other in the back and props are sabotaged. Worst of all, the star, aging Hollywood beach-blanket hunk Shane Petree, butchers his lines--while getting top billing in bed with

wives and teenage daughters around town. No wonder somebody wants to draw his final curtain. With a little help from Miss Marple, Poirot, and Agatha the Bookstore Cat, a pompous prosecutor tries to pin a murder on Max, Annie's own leading man. Unless Annie can prove her darling's innocence, their wedding date's off! Invoking the tried-and-true methods of her favorite literary sleuths, Annie snoops around the greasepaint and glitter of the show-stopper scene if she doesn't watch it, because theatrical murderers never play fair.



## Honeymoon With Murder [1988]

Mystery bookstore owner Annie Laurance and detective Max Darling are finally tying the knot. However as they raise their champagne glasses, a dead body is discovered and Ingrid Jones, Annie's bookstore assistant, is found to be missing.

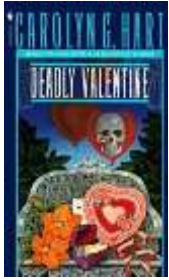


## A Little Class on Murder [1989]

When mystery Annie Laurance is invited to teach "*The Three Great Ladies of the Mystery*" class – Agatha Christie, Mary Roberts Rinehart and Dorothy Sayers – at Chastain Community College, the sometime sleuth discovers that all is not strictly academic in Chastain's hallowed halls of learning. And when a shocking scandal in the school newspaper erupts in a suicide and two violent deaths, Professor Laurance enlists the talents of her new hubby, private eye Max Darling, and dons her thinking cap to probe intrigue and vengeance among Chastain's faculty.

Max and Annie, with dubious help from three of their own great ladies of the mystery – Annie's pixilated mother-in-law, a batty local dowager, and a Christie crime fanatic – learn that just about everyone at the school had means, motive, and access to the murder weapons. From the

secretly boozing professor of advertising to the muscle-bound campus cad who barter's passing grades for a little extracurricular activity, anyone on the faculty is a possible killer – waiting to strike again!



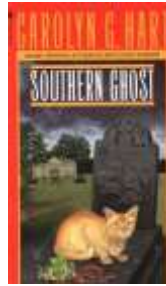
### **Deadly Valentine** [1990]

Mystery bookstore owner Annie Laurance didn't really want to go to her neighbor's Valentine Day masked ball – particularly not after the voluptuous brunette made a pass at Annie's husband, Max. So when her dizzy mother-in-law, Laurel, made a surprise visit to Broward's Rock Island, Annie thought it would be a perfect excuse to skip the party. She should have known better: True to form, Laurel accepted the invitation for all three of them. But the biggest surprise of all came at the party's end, when Annie found the amorous hostess in the gazebo – murdered.



### **The Christie Caper** [1991]

In honor of Agatha Christie's one hundredth birthday, mystery bookstore owner Annie Laurance Darling plans a week-long celebration of mystery, treasure hunts, title clues, and Christie trivia. Yet even as the champagne is chilling and the happy guests begin arriving on Broward's Rock Island, Annie feels a niggling sense of doom. But the last thing she or her guests expect is that the scheduled fun and mayhem will include a real-life murder. The unexpected arrival of Neil Bledsoe, the most despised book critic in America, was sure to raise a few hackles. An advocate of hard-boiled detection and gory true crime, Bledsoe drops a bombshell on the devoted Christie assemblage: He's penning a scurrilous biography of the grand dame of suspense herself. Before the first title clue is solved, no less than two attempts are made on Bledsoe's life. Now Annie and her unflappable husband, Max Darling, find themselves trying to stop a murder in the making-only the first corpse isn't the one they're expecting...and it isn't the last!



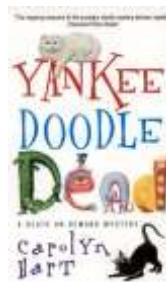
### **Southern Ghost** [1992]

Down south to solve a missing person case the local police cannot crack, Annie and Max Darling discover that the secretive, aristocratic Tarrant family may be trying to cover up a forty-year-old murder.



### **Mint Julep Murder** [1995]

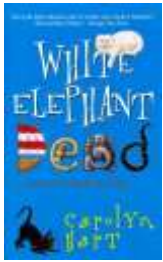
Normally, Annie Laurence Darling would be eagerly awaiting her trip to Head Island, where this year's Dixie Book Festival is being held. But this year Annie has agreed to be the author liaison to five authors honored with the much-coveted Dixie Book Festival Medallions, and she fears she is going to have her hands full juggling murderous egos. What Annie doesn't count on is the untimely death of ambitious Mint Julep Press publisher Kenneth Hazlitt. Hazlitt arrives at the Festival peddling a proposal for *Song of the South*, a trashy roman clef that details the indiscretions of some famous Southern authors at a writers' conference – writers who more than resemble the Dixie Festival Medallion winners. When Hazlitt drops dead after drinking a hit of bourbon from his private stock, the evidence points to Annie – the fatal glass is imprinted with her fingerprints. As more and more evidence points her way, Annie and Max must act fast to catch a wily killer...before the police throw the book at Annie!



### **Yankee Doodle Dead** [1998]

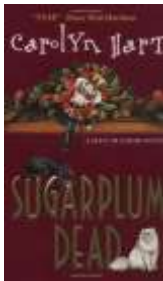
Annie Darling, proprietor of the popular South Carolina Death on Demand mystery bookstore, and her husband Max turn sleuth when an innocent young man is arrested for the murder of a malevolent retired military officer during the annual Fourth of July Festival. The library board wants to declare its independence from new member, retired Brigadier General Charlton "Bud" Hatch, a man accustomed to being in charge. Hatch's takeover attitude has alienated everyone in town, especially the women. But Annie finds

it difficult to ignore him at a crowded patriotic festival – particularly when he's shot dead before her eyes.



### **White Elephant Dead** [1999]

When a man who has been blackmailing prominent citizens in Broward's Rock turns up dead, bookstore owner Annie Darling investigates, uncovering all sorts of unpleasantness in her idyllic town. Annie's dear friend (and best customer) Henny Brawley stands accused of murdering a Women's Club volunteer-cum-blackmailer. So Annie rouses her husband Max into action, and together they dive into the shark pool of dotty eccentrics and imperious belles who constitute the island's smart set. Because only there can the Darlings prove hapless Henny innocent – by determining who among the well-heeled had the dirtiest little secret...and would kill to protect it.



### **Sugarplum Dead** [2000]

It's getting to look a lot like Christmas on the sea island of Broward's Rock, South Carolina. At the popular Death on Demand mystery bookstore, owner Annie Darling's energetic Yuletide preparations have to be put on hold thanks to several rather inconvenient distractions – including a slew of family woes...and murder.

Annie's mother-in-law Laurel – not normally the straightest of arrows anyway – has taken to chatting up ghosts in the local graveyard. Across the island in a spacious, spooky mansion, ancient onetime movie star Marguerite Dumaney Ladson has called together all her living kin and their multitude of exes for her gala combination Xmas/birthday bash. Among the honored guests are two that Annie could well do without: her errant father, whom she hasn't seen in twenty five years, and Dr. Emory Swanson, Laurel's guide down "The Golden Path."

Like Laurel, wealthy old Rita Dumaney Ladson has fallen for Swanson's new-age-pseudo-occult gobbledygook. The question is: how are the gathered relatives going to react to the grande dame's announcement that she's leaving her fortune to the charismatic charlatan's Evermore Foundation? Not well, apparently, since a murder follows right on the heels of Rita's shocking revelation. And the

finger of suspicion seems to be pointing straight at Annie Darling's recently arrived deadbeat dad.

Annie can feel no loyalty toward the father she's never really known, but she doesn't believe for a minute he's guilty. And when a second murder puts her conflicted emotions into an even more chaotic tailspin, Annie realizes that she will need all the help her easy-going PI husband Max can offer to solve a related pair of homicides. Because, in this season of giving, fate is giving her more major headaches – and a killer is giving her more corpses – than even the normally unflappable Annie Darling may be able to handle.



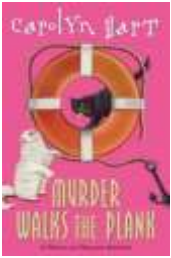
### **April Fool Dead** [2002]

Someone is playing a rather nasty April Fool's prank on mystery bookstore owner Annie Darling. A felonious forger on the idyllic – if rarely tranquil – South Carolina island of Broward's Rock has made it appear as if Annie is accusing some of her neighbors of murder. In the wink of a bloodshot eye, the Darling name is mud...and then the Broward's Rock body count starts mysteriously increasing. And now it's up to Annie to follow the well-hidden trail of the vicious trickster – or a secret slayer's next lethal "joke" may very well be on her!



### **Engaged to Die** [2003]

When wealthy, widowed art patron Virginia Neville officially announces her engagement to Jake O'Neill – her handsome, charming, and much younger fiancé – at a gala gallery opening, not all the gathered friends and stepfamily are pleased. And before the last champagne bubble pops, murder disrupts the grand celebration. Bookstore owner Annie Darling has a vested interest in the investigation, and she's determined to untangle an unholy marriage of jealousy, blackmail, and malicious mischief, even if it means having to cross swords with hubby Max and cross paths with a cruelly clever stalker.



### **Murder Walks the Plank [2004]**

Annie Darling, popular proprietress of the Death on Demand bookstore, has done it again! Her murder-mystery cruise in the waters off her not-always-idyllic isle of Broward's Rock is sure to be a roaring success, with every participant dressing up as a favorite fictional sleuth. And sure enough, everything goes swimmingly – until one of the revelers plunges overboard. And despite hubby Max Darling's courageous rescue attempt, faux murder turns all too quickly into real-life death. Over the next few days, the body count rises and Annie strongly suspects that all the victims were murdered most foully and that they are all connected in some unknown way. The trick now will be to prove it, with the able assistance of investigator-spouse Max, best friend and best customer Henny Brawley, local bestselling superstar Emma Lloyd, and even (surprise!) Annie's normally ditsy mother-in-law, Laurel. But what the intrepid crime solvers do not realize is that the killer they seek is more ingeniously efficient than most – and the puzzle they wish to solve is, in reality, a time bomb packed with an explosive mix of arson, assault, kidnapping, robbery...and homicide, of course. One false step and Annie and her canny cohorts will be blown off Broward's Rock for good...and they'll sink like stones into the cold, briny deep.



### **Death of the Party [2005]**

The murder of an unloved media magnate maroons the crime-solving Darlings on a remote island with a killer in the latest Death on Demand delight from the incomparable Carolyn Hart.

Annie Darling is thrilled at the golden opportunity to visit Golden Silk, the luxurious private island estate of wealthy Jeremiah Addison. She leaves her Death on Demand bookstore in the capable hands of her employees and sets sail from Broward's Rock with her hubby, Max. Unfortunately, Addison himself won't be there to greet them, since he is, at present, quite dead. After tampering with evidence that suggests the widely despised curmudgeon's death was no accident, Addison's sister-in-

law, Britt Barlow, is inviting back everyone who was in attendance during the victim's last weekend – as well as locally known sleuth Max Darling, whom Britt has hired to uncover the killer. And, of course, Annie wouldn't miss this party for the world!

There is certainly no lack of suspects among the guests gathered on Golden Silk. Each had a substantial motive for wanting to do in their late host – from disinherited sons to the cuckolded husband of an adulterous politician to a jilted girlfriend who dreamed of being the next Mrs. A. to a scandal-mongering TV investigative reporter with a talent for character assassination and, quite possibly, blackmail.

But the party is well and truly pooped when a mysterious houseman vanishes, along with the boats that are the only escape off Addison's island. Suddenly Annie and Max – who are getting too close to a solution for comfort – are up a creek without a canoe, stuck on a rock in the middle of nowhere, and stalked by a crafty murderer who hides fiendish bloodlust behind an innocent smile.



### **Dead Days of Summer [2006]**

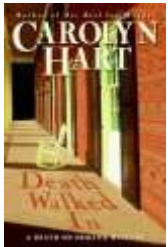
Murder hits close to home for Death on Demand bookstore owner Annie Darling and her beloved husband, Max. While investigating a new case, Max calls Annie to let her know he may be late getting

home. He never shows up. Annie knows something dreadful has happened to him.

During the search for Max, his car is found on a remote road – with a murder weapon in the trunk and a beautiful but very dead young woman nearby. The case becomes a media sensation with Max portrayed as an unfaithful husband willing to kill to get rid of a mistress.

As the evidence against Max continues to mount, chief of police Billy Cameron is called off the case. But Billy risks his career to continue the hunt for a silver car briefly seen following Max's on the night of the murder, and Annie is forced to go undercover in a desperate attempt to clear her husband's name. Risking her life, she enters the victim's unfamiliar world in the hopes of understanding

how and why Max is involved. With time running out, Annie has one last chance to capture a wily murderer who just may have committed the perfect crime.

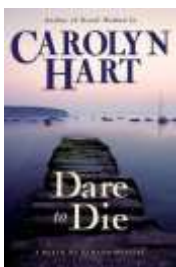


### **Death Walked In [2008]**

Max Darling hasn't been interested in crime since his brush with a seductive young woman put him in danger of losing his freedom. He even refuses to talk to a woman who calls for help and says she is afraid. The caller leaves word she's hidden something in the antebellum house Max and his wife, Annie, are restoring. When Annie finds out, she hurries to the woman's home, only to discover her shot. Annie hears her final whisper as she holds the dying woman's hand.

Evidence links the dead woman to a nearby home, where a fortune in gold coins has gone missing. The gold coins, rare Double Eagles, were stolen from a house filled with visiting family members, twentysomethings hungry for money and several with secrets they must keep. Is one of them willing to kill for a fortune in coins? Or is it the dead woman's high school dropout son? Max is there when the police arrest the son, but the boy's shock upon learning of his mother's death convinces Max of his innocence. Max and Annie plunge wholeheartedly into the investigation.

But are the coins hidden in Annie and Max's Franklin house? The intruder who shoots at Max seems to think so. And who walks in when Annie discovers the secret of that house?



### **Dare to Die [2009]**

She came in the rain. Alone. On a bicycle.

Annie and Max Darling are completely unprepared when the arrival of a mysterious young woman shocks their sea island and stirs up more than just gossip.

It turns out that Iris, the beautiful stranger, is a former resident of Broward's Rock. Her arrival throws the normally happy town into a downward spiral that pits neighbor against neighbor.

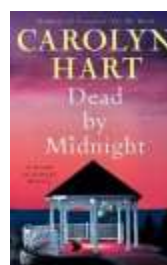
Things take a turn for the worse when Annie befriends Iris and invites her to attend the Darlings' party at the pavilion where Death is the uninvited guest. Suddenly, Max and Annie find themselves in the middle of a fight they don't understand and at the mercy of an unknown assailant who's trying to kill them – and all they know is that it is one of their friends.



### **Laughed 'til He Died [2010]**

Intrigue and foul play are no strangers to the idyllic South Carolina sea island of Broward's Rock. Mystery bookstore owner Annie Darling, and her husband, Max, who specialize in solving problems, plunge into a startling web of danger and deceit when a trio of deaths is linked to the island's youth recreation center.

With the evidence mounting against her, the center's director seeks out Max to clear her name. When it comes to intrigue, where Max goes, Annie isn't far behind. To save an innocent woman, the pair scrambles to unravel three complex interlinked puzzles: the mystery of three guns, the pulled-out pant pockets of one victim, and the disappearance of a teenager whose stepfather always had the last laugh – until he died.



### **Death by Midnight [2011]**

A recent death appears to be suicide, but Annie suspects murder. To solve the case, she unravels the mystery of a towel hidden at midnight in a gazebo, the lack of fingerprints on a crystal mug, blood on a teenager's blue shirt, and the secret of a lovers' tryst.

Annie believes she has set the perfect trap for a merciless killer until her cell phone rings and Death whispers in her ear.



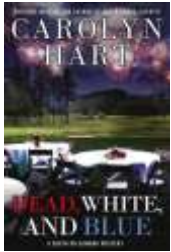
### **Death Comes Silently [2012]**

Winter has arrived in Broward's Rock, South Carolina, and business has slowed for Annie Darling, owner of mystery bookstore Death on Demand. So when the

island's resident writer publishes the latest in her popular mystery series, Annie jumps at the chance to host a book signing, even though it conflicts with her shift at the local charity shop, Better Tomorrow.

Luckily, fellow volunteer Gretchen Burkholt agrees to sub for her. The signing goes well, but Gretchen interrupts the event multiple times, leaving voice mails about scandalous news she's dying to share. Even though Gretchen tends to be excitable, Annie heads over to Better Tomorrow, where she finds Gretchen dead on the floor, an axe by her side.

Annie enlists the help of her husband, Max, to piece together a puzzle involving an overturned kayak, a stolen motorboat, a troubled love affair, and a reckless teenager. And she must tread carefully in her investigation, because a killer is on the loose, and that killer works well in the foggy days of winter...



**Dead, White and Blue** [2013]

Summer is a hectic time of the year for Annie Darling. Sun and scorching temperatures never fail to bring swarms of tourists to her mystery bookstore, Death on Demand, for the latest beach reads. But Annie still finds time to enjoy herself. The Broward's Rock Fourth of July dance is just around the corner, and the island is buzzing with excitement – Shell Hurst included...

Shell is the kind of woman wives hate – for good reason – and most of them wish she would just disappear. But when she does, and a teenage girl is the only one who seems to notice, Annie can't help but feel like someone should be looking for her. Last seen walking into the pine trees at the Fourth of July fireworks display, Shell has seemingly vanished without a trace.

The residents of Broward's Rock grow uneasy when a second islander mysteriously disappears. Annie and her husband, Max, know something dangerous is brewing. They soon find themselves following a twisted trail marked by blackmail, betrayal, and adultery, winding from the corridors of the island's lovely inn to a pier

lashed by pelting rain, to a gathering on the terrace of a country club where a trap is set for a calculating killer...

**Death at the Door** [forthcoming 2014]

Annie Darling — owner of the mystery bookstore, Death on Demand—prefers fictional crimes as opposed to the real things. But in one tragic week, two acts of violence shake the island community of Broward's Rock. First, a beloved doctor is found shot dead, seemingly by his own hand. Only days later, a local artist is arrested after his wife is found murdered, bludgeoned by her husband's sculpting mallet.

Convinced her brother did not commit suicide, the doctor's sister turns to Annie and her husband, Max, for help. She has found a cryptic sketch her brother drew, linking him with the murdered woman. Did someone want them both out of the picture?

With the police considering both cases as good as closed, it's up to Annie and Max to sort through a rogues' gallery of suspects to see if someone is trying to frame the artist. But if Annie isn't careful, she may find herself having her own brush with death...

**[Official Carolyn G. Hart website](#)**

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