

The Cinderella Murder: An Under Suspicion Novel

By Mary Higgins Clark, Alafair Burke

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In this collaboration between “Queen of Suspense” Mary Higgins Clark and bestselling author Alafair Burke, “the snappy pace, layered characters, and many plot surprises will keep readers guessing in this fascinating mystery” (*Booklist*).

Television producer Laurie Moran is delighted when the pilot for her reality drama, *Under Suspicion*, is a success. Even more, the program—a cold case series that revisits unsolved crimes by recreating them with those affected—is off to a fantastic start when it helps solve an infamous murder in the very first episode.

Now Laurie has the ideal case to feature in the next episode of *Under Suspicion*: the Cinderella Murder. When Susan Dempsey, a beautiful and multi-talented UCLA student, was found dead, her murder raised numerous questions. Why was her car parked miles from her body? Had she ever shown up for the acting audition she was due to attend at the home of an up-and-coming director? Why does Susan’s boyfriend want to avoid questions about their relationship? Was her disappearance connected to a controversial church? Was she close to her computer science professor because of her technological brilliance, or something more? And why was Susan missing one of her shoes when her body was discovered?

With the help of *Under Suspicion* host Alex Buckley, Laurie knows the case will attract great ratings, especially when the former suspects include Hollywood’s elite and tech billionaires. The suspense and drama are perfect for the silver screen—but is Cinderella’s murderer ready for a close-up?

Together Mary Higgins Clark and Alafair Burke deliver “plenty of intrigue and excitement” (*Publishers Weekly*) in this exciting start to a new series that will keep you guessing until the final page.

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Editorial Review

Review
"Fans of MWA Grand Master Clark will find plenty of intrigue and excitement in this contemporary thriller...Clark keeps readers guessing and in suspense."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"The snappy pace, layered characters, and many plot surprises will keep readers guessing in this fascinating mystery by two talented writers."
—*Booklist*

"This serendipitous series launch, or continuation, will satisfy Clark's legion of fans and may well win her some new ones."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

Mary Higgins Clark

Mary Higgins Clark, #1 international and *New York Times* bestselling author, has written thirty-four suspense novels; three collections of short stories; a historical novel, *Mount Vernon Love Story*; two children's books, including *The Magical Christmas Horse*; and a memoir, *Kitchen Privileges.* With her daughter Carol Higgins Clark, she has coauthored five more suspense novels. She also wrote *The Cinderella Murder* with bestselling author Alafair Burke. Her books have sold more than 100 million copies in the United States alone.

Alafair Burke

Alafair Burke is the *New York Times* bestselling author of eleven novels, including *Long Gone*, *If You Were Here*, and the latest in the Ellie Hatcher series, *All Day and a Night*. A former prosecutor, she now teaches criminal law and lives in Manhattan.

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The Cinderella Murder

1

It was two o'clock in the morning. Right on time, Rosemary Dempsey thought ruefully as she opened her eyes and stirred. Whenever she had a big day ahead she would inevitably wake up in the middle of the night and start worrying that something would go wrong.

It had always been like this, even when she was a child. And now, fifty-five years old, happily married for thirty-two years, with one child, beautiful and gifted nineteen-year-old Susan, Rosemary could not be

anything but a constant worrier, a living Cassandra. Something is going to go wrong.

Thanks again, Mom, Rosemary thought. Thanks for all the times you held your breath, so sure that the birthday upside-down cake I loved to make for Daddy would flop. The only one that did was the first one when I was eight years old. All the others were perfect. I was so proud of myself. But then, on his birthday when I was eighteen, you told me you always made a backup cake for him. In the single act of defiance that I can remember, I was so shocked and angry I tossed the one I had made in the garbage can.

You started laughing and then tried to apologize. “It’s just that you’re talented in other ways, Rosie, but let’s face it, in the kitchen you’re klutzy.”

And of course you found other ways to tell me where I was klutzy, Rosemary thought. “Rosie, when you make the bed, be sure that the spread is even on both sides. It only takes an extra minute to do it right.” “Rosie, be careful. When you read a magazine, don’t just toss it back on the table. Line it up with the others.”

And now, even though I know I can throw a party or make a cake, I am always sure that something will go wrong, Rosemary thought.

But there was a reason today to be apprehensive. It was Jack’s sixtieth birthday, and this evening sixty of their friends would be there to celebrate it. Cocktails and a buffet supper, served on the patio by their infallible caterer. The weather forecast was perfect, sunshine and seventy degrees.

It was May 7 in Silicon Valley and that meant that the flowers were in full bloom. Their dream house, the third since they’d moved to San Mateo thirty-two years ago, was built in the style of a Tuscan villa. Every time she turned into the driveway, she fell in love with it again.

Everything will be fine, she assured herself impatiently. And as usual I’ll make the birthday chocolate upside-down cake for Jack and it will be perfect and our friends will have a good time and I will be told how I’m a marvel. “Your parties are always so perfect, Rosie . . . The supper was delicious . . . the house exquisite . . . ,” and on and on. And I will be a nervous wreck inside, she thought, an absolute nervous wreck.

Careful not to awaken him, she wriggled her slender body over in the bed until her shoulder was touching Jack’s. His even breathing told her that he was enjoying his usual untroubled sleep. And he deserved it. He worked so hard. As she often did when she was trying to overcome one of her worry attacks, Rosemary began to remind herself of all the good things in her life, starting with the day she met Jack on the campus of Marquette University. She had been an undergraduate. He had been a law student. It was the proverbial love at first sight. They had been married after she graduated from college. Jack was fascinated by developing technology, and his conversation became filled with talk of robots, telecommunications, microprocessors, and something called internetworking. Within a year they had moved to Northern California.

I always wanted us to live our lives in Milwaukee, Rosemary thought. I still could move back in a heartbeat. Unlike most human beings, I love cold winters. But moving here certainly has worked out for us. Jack is head of the legal department of Valley Tech, one of the top research companies in the country. And Susan was born here. After more than a decade without the family we hoped and prayed for, we were holding her in our arms.

Rosemary sighed. To her dismay, Susan, their only child, was a Californian to her fingertips. She’d scoff at the idea of relocating anywhere. Rosemary tried to wrest her mind away from the troublesome thought that

last year Susan had chosen to go to UCLA, a great college but a full five-hour drive away. She had been accepted closer to home at Stanford University. Instead she had rushed to enroll at UCLA, probably because her no-good boyfriend, Keith Ratner, was already a student there. Dear God, Rosemary thought, don’t let her end up eloping with him.

The last time she looked at the clock, it was three thirty, and her last impression before falling asleep was once again an overwhelming fear that today something was going to go desperately wrong.

Users Review

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