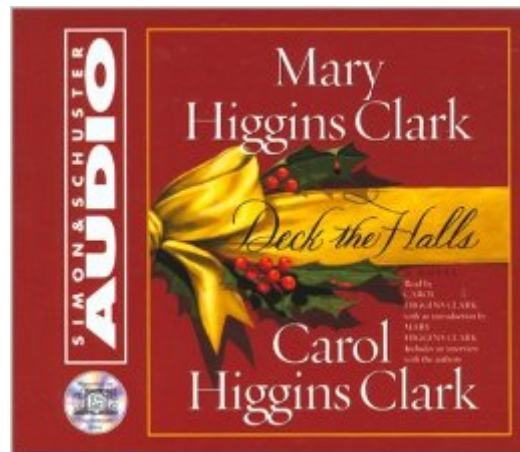


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Deck The Halls



Synopsis

Mary Higgins Clark, America's Queen of Suspense, and her daughter bestselling author Carol Higgins Clark, have joined forces for the first time to create a brilliant and exciting story of high-stakes intrigue and detection with a kidnapping layed out against a holiday setting. Three days before Christmas, Regan Reilly, the dynamic young sleuth featured in the novels of Carol Higgins Clark, meets Alvirah Meehan, the famous lottery winner and amateur detective who has appeared in several books by Mary Higgins Clark, at a New Jersey dentist's office. Alvirah is to accompany her husband home after a particularly grueling session, while Regan is there in hopes of connecting with her busy father, who is scheduled for a routine visit. Once it becomes apparent that Luke Reilly is not going to keep his appointment. Alvirah offers the deeply troubled Regan a lift home. When a call comes through on Regan's cell phone telling her that her father and his driver, Rosita Gonzalez, are being held for \$1,000,000 ransom, Alvirah insists that Regan allow her to lend a hand in trying to gain their release because Alvirah has many valuable contacts in New York's law enforcement community. Jack Reilly, head of the NYPD Major Case Squad, is called back from his Christmas holiday to lead the investigation, after the laughably inept pair of kidnappers make known their demands. Deck the Halls is a heartwarming story filled with twists and turns, intrigue and danger, as well as a hearty dose of holiday cheer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It has become an annual tradition for Mary Higgins Clark to put out a Christmas thriller. They are shorter books than her usual fare and I guess they are marketed as great stocking stuffers. Lately, I

have found myself enjoying Clark's books less and less. They have become much too predictable and at best can be described as "lite" thrillers. If this type of book appeals to you, you will enjoy *Deck The Halls*. Loyal fans of Clark's work will find the usual elements that attract them to her books. For those readers looking for something fresh and exciting, this book is not for you. I have never read any of the books written by her daughter, Carol Higgins Clark (who she cowrote this book with), so I have no point of comparison on her end. I will say that reading *Deck The Halls* does not inspire to go out and read any of Carol's other work. This is not an awful book, it's just not an interesting one. Any mystery and thriller fan will be able to predict all the action in this book by the time they've reached page fifty. I realize that is actually a positive characteristic for avid Mary Higgins Clark fans. The familiarity of both the plot and characters is attractive to these fans and the formula will produce another New York Times Bestseller. For those who have never read Clark before this is not the place to start. Go back to one of her earlier works when her plots seemed fresh and new. A true Christmas present from Clark would be to write a book as good as those early ones. These books are an annual tradition I could live without.

As one who looks forward to any new Mary Higgins Clark book, I have to sadly admit that this was a disappointment. Being a lover of mysteries set at Christmas, I was totally captivated by her previous Christmas novella, *"All Through The Night."* This current one, while starting out on an interesting note (loved having Alvira connect with Regan Reilly), falls flat quickly due to the lack of suspense. Is there any reader who does not know from early into the book how this is going to turn out? The suspense is virtually non-existent. Also, Mary has gone to the kidnapping at Christmas plot once too often. It worked so well in *"All Through the Night"* because the reader was caught up in the suspense of the helpless infant being the victim. It's hard to muster the same level of concern for two adults who seem far wiser than their inept kidnappers. I've read all of MHC's books and this one goes on the bottom of my list when ranking favorites. But I hope she does another Christmas one in 2001; just want her to be more imaginative and suspenseful.

If you are looking for a moment away from Holiday Madness, this book does its job. The characters are fun and a bit too surreal to be taken seriously, or to worry over, but *The Clark Ladies* still give a good read.

A good Christmas thriller from the author we've come to expect them from. Not the heaviest writing, but entertaining nonetheless, and with all the straightforwardness of plot that is typical of her work.

Granted, this consistency can produce a bit of predictability, but it's hard not to be caught up into it anyway because of the interesting beginning. Don't expect too much and you'll be pleased.

Deck the Halls by the mother and daughter team of Mary Higgins Clark and Carol Higgins Clark is ideal for an afternoons read by the fire. Two private detectives, each a favourite character in the respective writers novels, team up to solve a kidnapping. It's a light, pleasant bit of flummery and, being such a slim volume, takes only a couple of hours to read without any brain strain. The crooks are bumbling idiots and the outcome is very obvious right from the beginning. Another thing that bothered me was the writing style-I seem to remember this speech pattern from my schoolgirl stories when I was a child and it just doesn't suit adult books.

Both Mary and Carol Higgins Clark are well-renowned authors, and have written countless good books between the two of them. Finally, we get the chance to see them work together. This collaborative effort is quite good. In DECK THE HALLS, writer Nora Reilly is in the hospital with a broken leg. Her husband and his driver are kidnapped by a client, and held for \$1 million ransom. In a race against time, not to mention the own personal friction between the two kidnappers, several characters from the past are included in the suspense. What truly makes this novel entertaining is the diverse mesh of interesting characters. Both writers include some of your favorites from other stories. With a plethora of plot twists peppered with some incredibly zany situations, DECK THE HALLS is a real good read. The storyline is easy to follow, and the witty dialogue helps move it along nicely. This is a pleasurable, light read, and one that is perfect for this time of year. DECK THE HALLS will definitely leave you feeling quite jolly.

My review would almost mirror Michael's review, so I am only going to add to what he has already said. If you have never read a MHC or CHC book, please don't let this be the first one you start with. MHC original 12 or so books are amazing, and CHC's books are also a good read. Save reading this book until after reading their other books. To me, this book was a big thank-you to everyone in their lives. It is full of mommy, daddy, daughter, editor adoration (and others). Parts of the book were totally unbelievable. An example is when Nora (Mary) is in the hospital talking with a young handsome cop, she is thinking about how nice it would be if he was her son-in-law (Nora is always trying to fix-up the single Regan), however, if my husband had been kidnapped, that probably would be the last thing on my mind. I also found the laughing and nonstop joking from the kidnap victims with their almost overly courteous kidnappers to be a bit strange (the kidnappers do get kudos, as

they feed their victims on a regular basis!). When I first heard about this joint project, I thought this most likely was a vehicle to be used to propel Carol into Mary's arena, and make Carol the next Queen of Suspense, however, after reading this book, I have changed my mind. I now believe this was something mom and daughter did together for the fun of doing it (because there is no way this little 180 something page book is capable of accomplishing that feat). Since Mary seems to be publishing a book at the holiday season, I would like to see something with a little more meat next year. Bottom line: It's not a bad book, but it's not Mary's best (or Carol's), but I am not sorry I bought it. I just wish there was more to it!

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