

# Sugar plum Dead Death on Demand Mysteries, No. 12



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Carolyn Hart's Agatha, Anthony, and Macavity Award-winning mystery series, *Death on Demand*, has long been a readers favorite, with its richly evoked Southern atmosphere, ticklish wit, wildly eccentric characters, perplexing puzzles, and the most endearing pair of married sleuths since Nick and Nora Charles. Now the investigative efforts of Annie and Max Darling soar to a breathtaking new level, with a delightfully unexpected whodunit that's as sumptuous as a holiday dessert. *Sugarplum Dead* 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.

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