



Mobbed: A Regan Reilly Mystery

By Carol Higgins Clark

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New York Times bestselling author Carol Higgins Clark is a native of New Jersey. So is her sleuth Regan Reilly. In Mobbed, Clark sends Regan “down the shore” where they have both vacationed since childhood. But this trip turns out to be no vacation for Regan!

PI Regan Reilly and her husband, Jack, head of the NYPD Major Case Squad, plan to spend the weekend at the Jersey shore with her parents. Regan’s mother, suspense writer Nora Regan Reilly, will be celebrating her birthday on Saturday. But Regan’s weekend gets off to an early start when she receives a phone call from her mother asking if she’d hop on a train right away.

Regan had just finished delivering bad news to a high school classmate. Hayley Patton is a successful New York City event planner, who had become suspicious that her beau, Scott, was seeing other women and hired Regan to follow him. When Hayley got the lowdown on Scott’s treachery, she vowed revenge with such vehemence that Regan is worried that Hayley might go too far.

Turns out Nora had also just spoken to an agitated high school classmate. Karen Frawley Fulton, who lives in San Diego, called Nora after learning her mother’s plans for the day. To Karen’s shock, Edna Frawley just sold their home at the Jersey shore and is having a garage sale to end all garage sales. Everything the beautiful young actress Cleo Paradise left behind when she recently rented the house is up for grabs. The irrepressible Edna even rented a plane to fly over the beach touting the sale, using Cleo’s name as bait. Karen’s heading East but asks Nora to please go to the house and, she hopes, curtail any other outrageous antics her mother probably has in mind. Nora agrees and asks Regan to join her.

Regan and Nora arrive at the Frawley home to find a mob of garage-sale junkies waiting at the front gate. Regan is astonished to see Scott’s brand-new fiancée, who quickly makes herself scarce.

Once inside the house, Regan becomes increasingly suspicious about why Cleo left so many belongings behind when she vacated Edna’s home unexpectedly. Was she in that much of a hurry? Regan wonders. “Where did Cleo go?” is a question too many people are suddenly asking. But no one has the answer. It isn’t long before Regan finds herself searching for Cleo, whose next hours may be her

last.

Mobbed is another “fast-paced mystery with unexpected plot twists and Clark’s trademark humor” (*The Daily Beast*).

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Get that phone call over with.” Jack Reilly leaned down, kissed his wife, then opened the front door of the loft they shared in TriBeCa.

“I will,” Regan answered, with a slight grimace. “I had the feeling that guy wasn’t going to turn out to be Mr. Right for Hayley, but I certainly didn’t expect what we witnessed last night.”

“He’s a first-class creep,” Jack said. “Hayley dodged a bullet.”

“You’re right,” Regan agreed. “But somehow I don’t think that will be the first thought that runs through her mind when I tell her what happened. It’ll probably take a little time for her to reach that conclusion. Like another ten years.”

Jack smiled, then started out the door. “If she has to hear the bad news from anyone, she’s lucky it’s you. You’ll know what to say.” He turned back and gave Regan a hug. “What a relief to be out of the singles scene. Another reason to raise a glass to your father.”

Regan smiled. “That’s for sure. And Dad never gets tired of hearing us thank him. We can toast him for the millionth time tonight.”

Regan and Jack had met when Luke Reilly, owner of three funeral homes in New Jersey, had been kidnapped with his driver in New York City. He’d just stepped out of the hospital where Regan’s mother, Nora, had been recovering from a broken leg. Jack, head of the Major Case Squad, had been called in. The rest, as they say, is history.

“Let’s plan to be on the road by seven,” Jack said as he stepped out into the hallway. “Hopefully the traffic will have eased up by then.”

They were headed to the Jersey Shore to spend what was predicted to be a hot and sunny weekend with Regan’s parents at the beach house they had purchased in Spring Lake, after spending years in the Hamptons. Saturday was Nora’s birthday.

Regan smiled as she watched Jack turn and press the button for the elevator. He was the best thing that ever happened to her—and so handsome at six foot two with green eyes and light brown hair that tended to curl. Regan, five foot seven, was black Irish, with dark hair, blue eyes, and light skin. People often commented that they seemed made for each other.

The elevator door opened. “See you later, Regan Reilly Reilly,” Jack said with a wave.

That was another thing. They had been born with the same last name. No messy paperwork for Regan when they got married.

“Love you,” Regan called. She closed the door, then walked with deliberation to her office. A private investigator, she’d been living in Los Angeles at the time she met Jack and had a small, funky office in Hollywood. When she moved to New York, she’d set up shop in their spacious and painstakingly renovated loft. Heavy on the pain, Regan always said. The renovation had been no picnic. But it had been worth it.

The sight of her home office, with its gleaming mahogany desk and matching shelves filled with books and pictures, normally felt welcoming. But today was different. She wished she could have made this phone call last night, but Hayley had to work until well past midnight. Regan pulled out her chair, glancing at her grandmother’s old-fashioned clock on the mantel as she sat down. It was 8:10. Hayley’s cell phone number

was on a piece of paper by the phone.

A high school classmate, Hayley Patton, had contacted Regan on Monday morning, just three days ago, after spending another miserable weekend without her beau. Scott Thompson, the guy she'd been dating for four months, had recently gone through a less than amicable divorce and claimed he needed to spend his weekends with his sixteen-year-old son, who lived with his mother.

"Until this all settles down, I have to focus on Trevor," he'd told her.

Scott lived and worked in northern New Jersey. Hayley was a rising star in the world of event planning and had a great apartment in New York City.

"Call me crazy," Hayley had said to Regan. "But how many sixteen-year-old boys want to spend nearly every Saturday night with Papa Bear?"

"Not many," Regan agreed.

Hayley's words came spilling out. "Scott can spend the day with the kid, then drive across the George Washington Bridge and have dinner with me. He's done it a few times, but I haven't seen him on a weekend in over a month. It's summertime. God forbid we should ever go to the beach like normal couples do. I'm going crazy. We have such a good time when we're together. He seems to really like me. And I like him. Maybe he does need time before getting involved in another relationship. But if he is giving me a line, I want to know *now*. He certainly loves going to the parties I bring him to—maybe a little too much." Hayley paused. "Regan, can I hire you to check him out?"

"Of course, Hayley," Regan had said. "When are you supposed to see him again?"

"Thursday."

"What's he doing the next few nights?"

"Beats me."

"I can start today by following him after work."

"Perfect!"

On Monday and Tuesday, Regan had tailed Scott after he left his office. Both nights he'd gone to the gym, then straight home. Yesterday, after putting in late hours the two nights before, Jack left work early and accompanied Regan on her surveillance.

Regan reached for the phone. Here goes nothing, she thought, as she dialed Hayley's number.

"Regan!" Hayley cried, answering on the first ring. It sounded as if she were out on the street—horns were blowing and a siren was wailing in the distance. "Scott just texted me he has to cancel our date tonight. He said he'd call later. Do you have any news?"

"Yes, I do."

"I can tell by your tone it's not good."

Regan frowned. "No, it isn't."

Hayley groaned. “He really wanted to come to the premiere with me last night, but I couldn’t bring anyone. There was such tight security with all those stars. He even called me yesterday, hinting around for an invitation. Where did he end up?”

Oh boy, Regan thought. Here goes. “Hayley, he was out with someone who—”

“I knew he must be dating someone else!” Hayley interrupted. “Did they look like they were having a good time?”

“Well,” Regan said, then paused. “Hayley, I might as well just say it. Scott got engaged last night.”

“Engaged?!”

“Yes. Jack was with me. We followed Scott from his office to a restaurant an hour south. After he’d gone inside, we waited for about fifteen minutes, then went in and sat at a table near his. He was with a woman ...”

“Did you hear him propose?” Hayley practically shrieked.

“Not exactly. It was a Chinese restaurant. When she cracked open her fortune cookie, the ring fell out.”

“So what happened then?”

“I guess the fortune said, ‘Will you marry me?’ She screamed, said yes, and the waiters started clapping.”

“How embarrassing!”

“You’re right,” Regan agreed. “This was *not* the guy for you.”

“Was she pretty?”

“Well,” Regan began.

“I don’t want to hear it,” Hayley interrupted. Her voice cracked. “He must have been planning this for a while. Why did he string me along? Just to be able to go to A-list parties and hot nightclubs? Was he just waiting to see if he’d get to go to the premiere last night before he dumped me?”

“I don’t know, Hayley. But you’re better off without him. He must have been lying to this other woman, too.”

“Regan, I’m going to get back at him. Somehow. I’ll figure it out. He’ll be sorry, believe me.”

“Hayley, be careful. Forget him. You’ll meet someone else. You’re out all the time ...”

“That’s what everyone says, but it’s not easy. I work hard at these events. It’s business. Last year I tried an Internet dating service, and what happened? They set me up with my brother!”

“I know,” Regan said sympathetically.

“I have to run to the subway. I’ll call you later, okay?” Hayley asked quickly, sounding as if she were trying not to cry.

“Call me anytime, Hayley. You have my cell number.”

“Thanks. ‘Bye”

That guy is really a jerk, Regan thought as she hung up the phone and headed into the kitchen. If he had gone to the premiere with Hayley, when would he have proposed to that girl? Tonight?

The phone rang as Regan was pouring herself a cup of coffee. She reached for the receiver on the wall.

“Hello.”

“Regan, I’m going to get back at him!” Hayley shouted vehemently. Regan could hear the roar of the subway in the background. “I don’t know how, but I’ll figure something out. Talk to you later.”

The phone clicked in Regan’s ear. A moment later it rang again. She’s so upset, Regan thought as she answered, expecting to hear more specific plans for Hayley’s revenge.

But it was her mother.

“Hi, Mom. I thought you’d be writing now.”

Nora Regan Reilly was a well-known suspense writer who liked to hit the computer by six A.M.

“I was,” Nora said, “but, Regan, can you do me a favor and take the train down this morning?”

“Sure. What’s up?”

“I just received a frantic phone call from Karen Fulton. She’s the high school friend I reconnected with at our reunion in the spring, who lives in San D...

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