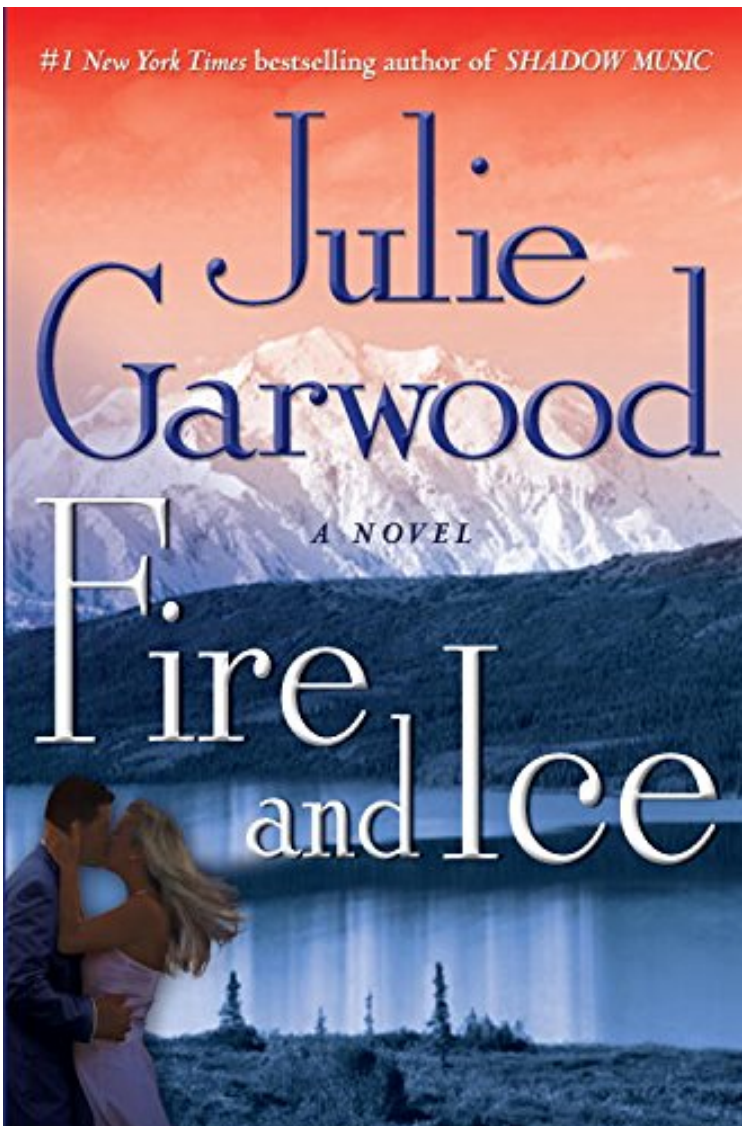


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Fire and Ice: A Novel



Par Julie Garwood
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSophie Rose is a crime reporter at a major Chicago newspaper and the daughter of Bobby Rose, a charming gentleman and big-time thief. When asked to write an expos about her notorious father, Sophie quits and goes to work at a small newspaper, covering local personalities such as William Harrington, the 5K runner whose trademark is red socks. Those sockswith Sophie's business card tucked insideare practically all that's found after Harrington is killed near Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, seemingly in a brutal polar bear attack. Sophie heads north to investigate, but danger follows in her wake. After one attempt on her life, she's assigned brash but sexy Jack MacAlister as a bodyguard. But Sophie and Jack will soon be fighting more than their growing passion for each other. Powerful forces will stop at nothing to prevent the exposure of the sinister conspiracy Sophie and Jack are about to uncover.ExtraitOne A polar bear did him in.

The biggest damned polar bear anyone had ever seen in or around Prudhoe Bay in the last twenty-five years, or so it was reported. Arrogance got him killed, though, and if William Emmett Harrington hadn't been such a narcissist, he might still be alive. But he was a narcissist, and he was also a braggart. The only topic of conversation William was interested in was William, and since he hadn't accomplished much of anything significant in his twenty-eight years on earth, he was painfully boring. William lived off his inheritance, a hefty trust fund set up by his grandfather, Henry Emmett Harrington, who must have had an inkling of the lazy-ass gene he was passing down, because his son, Morris Emmett Harrington, didn't work a day in his life. And William happily followed in his father's footsteps. Like all the Harrington men before him, William was a handsome devil and knew it. He didn't have any trouble getting women into his bed, but he could never lure any of them back for a repeat performance. No wonder. William treated sex like a race he had to win in order to prove that he was the best, and because he really was a narcissist, he didn't care about satisfying his partner. What he wanted was all that mattered. His past conquests had come up with various nicknames for him. Pig was one. Quick Trip was another. But the one that was uttered most behind his back was The Minute Man. All the women who had gone to bed with him knew exactly what that meant. Besides self-gratification, William's other passion was running. He'd made it a full-time job because, as with sex, he was shockingly fast. In the past year he had accumulated twenty-four first-place prizes within a six-state area, and he was about to enter a 5K race in his hometown of Chicago to collect his twenty-fifth. Since he believed crossing the finish line first was going to be a momentous event that everyone in Chicago would want to read about, he called the Chicago Tribune and suggested they do a feature article about him in the Sunday paper. Harrington also mentioned more than once how photogenic he was and how a full-color photo of him would enhance the article. One of the local news editors at the Tribune took the call and patiently listened to William's pitch, then bounced him to one of the entertainment editors, who quickly bounced him to one of the sports columnists, who bounced him to one of the health and fitness editors, who wrote an entire article on the top-five allergens plaguing Chicago while he listened to the spiel. None of them was impressed or interested. The last editor to speak to William suggested that he give him a call back when he had ninety-nine wins under his belt and was going for one hundred. William wasn't discouraged. He immediately called the Chicago Sun Times and explained his idea for a story. He was rejected yet again. William realized he was going to have to lower his expectations if he wanted to see his name in print, and so he contacted the Illinois Chronicle, a small but popular neighborhood newspaper that focused primarily on local issues and entertainment. The editor in chief, Herman Anthony Bitterman, was an antacid-popping seasoned veteran of the press with a pronounced Brooklyn accent. For thirty years he had been on the foreign desk of The New York Times and had garnered several prestigious honors including the RFK Journalism Award and the Polk Award, but when his good-for-nothing son-in-law ran off with another woman, his daughter's yoga instructor, for the love of God, Herman retired from the Times and moved with his wife, Marissa, to Chicago where she had grown up and where their daughter now lived with her four little girls. A newsman at heart, Herman couldn't stay retired long. When the opportunity presented itself, he took the job at the Chronicle as a distraction from boredom and an escape from the horde of meddling in-laws. He liked Chicago. He'd gone to Northwestern University, where he'd met Marissa. After graduation, they had returned to his hometown, New York, so he could take a job at the Times. Coming back to Chicago after decades in New York was a real adjustment. He had lived in a cramped two-bedroom Manhattan apartment for so long that a two-story brownstone took some getting used to. His only real complaint was the lack of noise. He missed falling asleep to the soothing sounds of cars screeching, horns blaring, and sirens shrieking. With so much quiet, even at the office, Herman found it difficult to get any work done. To compensate, he brought in an old television set from home, plopped it on top of his mini refrigerator, and left it on all day with the volume turned up. When the call came in from William Harrington, Herman hit the mute button before picking up the phone. While he ate his lunch, an Italian sausage and green pepper sandwich drenched in ketchup and washed down with an icy cold Kelly's Root Beer, he listened to Harrington pitch his story idea. It took Bitterman all of half a minute to sum up William Harrington. The man was an egomaniac. Red, huh? You always wear red socks and a red T-shirt for every race. And white shorts. Yeah, that's interesting. Even when you run in the winter? Still wear the shorts? His question encouraged Harrington to ramble more, allowing Bitterman time to finish his sandwich. He took a long swig of his root beer, then interrupted Harrington's grandiose opinion of himself and said, Yeah, sure. We'll do the story. Why not? After scribbling down the particulars, Bitterman disconnected the call, then wadded up his brown lunch sack and tossed it into the trash can. He crossed the office to get to the door, a no small feat considering nearly every

inch of the room was filled with crates of Kellys Old-Fashioned Root Beer stacked halfway to the ceiling. Since his door wasnt blocked, his office hadnt been deemed a fire hazard, at least not yet. He was hoarding what was left of Kellys Root Beer because, in his estimation, it was the best damned root beer he had ever tasted, and when hed heard the company had been forced to close its doors and was going out of business, he had done what any root beer addict would do and rushed out to buy as many bottles of the stuff as he could get his hands on. Blond Girl! he shouted. Ive got another story for you. This ones a humdinger. Sophie Summerfield Rose tried to ignore Bittermans bellow as she put the finishing touches on an article she was about to e-mail him. Hey, Sophie, I think Bittermans calling you. Gary Warner, a brute of a man and the office snitch, leaned over her cubicle. His smile reminded Sophie of a cartoon fox with his teeth bared. He looked a bit like a fox, too. His nose was long and pointy, and his complexion was as dull as his long straggly hair. Mullets had never really been in style, but Gary loved his and used so much hair spray on it, it looked starched. Since youre the only female here today and since youre the only blonde in the entire office, Im pretty sure Blond Girl means you. He had a good laugh over what he considered a hilarious observation. Sophie didnt respond. No matter how obnoxious Gary became, and he had cornered the market on obnoxious a long time ago, she refused to let him rile her. She carefully pushed her chair back so she wouldnt hit the file cabinet again. It already had so many dents, it looked like someone had taken a baseball bat to it. The Chronicle was housed in an old warehouse. It was a huge, gray stone building with gray cement floors, gray brick walls, and a dingy gray ceiling that Sophie suspected had once been white. The fluorescent lighting was nearly as old as the building. The presses were in the basement. Circulation and the other departments were on the first floor, and the editorial offices were on the second floor. It was a huge space, yet each gray-paneled cubicle, including hers, was the size of a refrigerator. A side-by-side, but still a refrigerator. The Chronicle could have been a depressing place to work, but it wasnt. Colorful posters hung above the gray file cabinets that lined the far wall, and each cubicle was brightly decorated. Some were more creative than others, but each gave a hint of the occupants personality. Garys cubicle was decorated with half-eaten sandwiches and pastries, some at least a week old. He wouldnt let the cleaning crew touch his desk, and Sophie didnt think it had ever been cleared of the clutter. She wouldnt have been surprised to find roaches skittering under all the garbage, but Gary probably wouldnt have minded. He was most likely related to some of them. Still hanging over her cubicle wall, his frame was so large she thought he might just snap the panels. When Sophie stood, Gary was entirely too close, his rancid aftershave overwhelming. So that he couldnt snoop while she was in Bittermans office, Sophie turned her computer off and made sure he saw her do it. She wasnt being paranoid. Just last week she had caught him sitting at her desk trying to get around her password to access her e-mail. He had already rifled through her desk. Two drawers were open, and he hadnt bothered to put the stack of papers back where she had left them. When she demanded to know what he was doing at her desk, he stammered lamely about his computer being down and how he was checking to see if hers was down, too. Bitterman roared again, and Sophie, feeling somewhat like a mouse navigating a maze, hurriedly zigzagged her way around the cubicles to reach his office at the end of the long room. She pictured a piece of yellow cheese dangling from a string in front of her bosss door. Wasnt that the reward for the little mouse at the end of the maze? Hey, Sophie, heard from your father lately? Gary shouted from behind. He had asked her that same question about ten minutes after she had started working at the Chronicle, which was probably why she had taken such a quick dislike to him. Not only was Gary a snoop, but at times he could be downright antagonistic. Usually, people skirted around the subject of her dad, Bobby Rose, when they first met Sophie, but not Gary. She had just started writing her first article when Gary had called over the cubicle wall, Hey, Sophie Rose . . . oops, its Sophie Summerfield, isnt it? I forgot, youre not using your daddys name. Guess you dont want the world to know who you are, huh? I wouldnt either if my old man was a crook. Whos he scammed lately? Heard hes made off with a butt-load of money. If you ever see him again, tell him ol Gary could sure use a loan. Tell him a couple of million would do just fine. . . . She hadnt answered him then or the hundred or so other times hed asked about her father, and she wasnt about to answer him now. Gary wasnt the only one interested in finding her father. She received regular visits from the FBI, the IRS, the CIA, and just about every other government agency with initials. All of them wanted to know where Bobby Rose was; all of them wanted a pound of his flesh. She heard Gary call out his question again, but she continued to ignore him as she rounded the last cubicle and reached Bittermans office. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse*[Julie] Garwood entices readers with sizzling adventure punctuated with memorable characters. . . . Humor and danger are a winning mix. . . . A genuine Garwood gem! Romantic Times Julie Garwood has become a trusted brand name in romantic fiction. PeopleFrom the

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