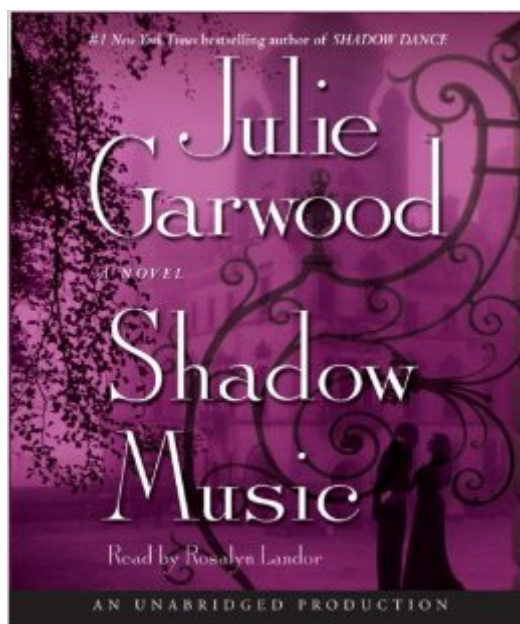


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Shadow Music: A Novel



Synopsis

Throughout her acclaimed writing career, Julie Garwood has captivated readers with characters who are compelling, daring, and bursting with life. Now one of the most popular novelists of our time proudly returns to her beloved historical romance rootsâ “in a thrilling tale of love, murder, adventure, and mystery set against the haunting landscape of medieval Scotland. For Princess Gabrielle of St. Biel, Scotland is a land of stunning vistas, wild chieftains, treacherous glens, and steep shadowsâ “skullduggery, betrayal, and now murder. Prized for her exquisite beauty, the daughter of one of Englandâ™s most influential barons, Gabrielle is also a perfect bargaining chip for a king who needs peace in the Highlands: King John has arranged Gabrielleâ™s marriage to a good and gentle laird. But this marriage will never take place. For Gabrielle, everything changes in one last burst of freedomâ “when she and her guards come upon a scene of unimaginable cruelty. With one shot from her bow and arrow, Gabrielle takes a life, saves a life, and begins a war. Within days, the Highlands are aflame with passions as a battle royal flares between enemies old and new. Having come to Scotland to be married, Gabrielle is instead entangled in Highland intrigue. For two sadistic noblemen, underestimating Gabrielleâ™s bravery and prowess may prove fatal. But thanks to a secret Gabrielle possesses, Colm MacHugh, the most feared man in Scotland, finds a new cause for courage. Under his penetrating gaze, neither Gabrielleâ™s body nor heart is safe. A gripping novel that delves into the heart of emotionsâ “unyielding passions of love, hate, revenge, and raw desireâ “Shadow Music is magnificent gift from Julie Garwood and a crowning achievement in her amazing career. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Random House Audio; Unabridged edition (December 26, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0739357581

ISBN-13: 978-0739357583

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.2 x 6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.7 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (325 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,415,803 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 inÂ Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (G) > Garwood, Julie #2153 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Romance #3366

inÂ Books > Romance > Historical > Medieval

Customer Reviews

Wow, I'd like an Alka Seltzer and a refund, not necessarily in that order. What a huge disappointment, and a hardcover disappointment at that. Others have covered the plot particulars ad nauseum, and since they weren't worth discussing even once, I won't repeat them. Instead, I'll say this: IF Julie Garwood indeed wrote this book, is it really the best she thinks her fans deserve? Her strengths in the past have included strong, likeable heroes and heroines, quirky but believable, who fit her historical style to a "T". Even the repetitive storylines (hard to avoid in romance) worked, because of the characters and her ability to make us root for them. And many of her stories were first-rate as well. Her earlier historicals are among my favorites, especially *The Secret*, *The Wedding*, *The Prize*, *The Bride* and of course, *Honour's Splendor*. At some point, Ms. Garwood turned to writing "modern" romance; those books (yes, I actually bought one new based strictly on her name, then another used) were mediocre at best. The snap and vitality of her historical characters just didn't translate to modern times to make those works anything special. At least, not for me. And now, after all these years, apparently Ms. Garwood has decided to settle for being a mediocre (at best) historical romance novelist as well. I know the "modern" romances didn't do as well (that happens when the work doesn't shine). But really....she just phoned this one in. It doesn't sound like her, doesn't work at any level, and has just become for me an expensive doorstop. I've complained in earlier reviews of the dreck pumped out this year by so-called "established" historical romance writers; I was counting on Ms.

The biggest issue I have with this book is that the voice in this book is not the Julie Garwood of *THE PRIZE*, *SAVING GRACE*, *THE SECRET* etc. I realize it has been a long time since we have had a historical offering from Ms Garwood, and that historical romances have evolved into well researched history as well as character driven stories, but Ms Garwood's voice has disappeared. Gone is the quirky funny heroine and the stern but lovable hero who is leveled by the love he feels for his heroine and her antics- typical Garwood "historical light", where the history is a subtle backdrop with characters who drive the romance. Colm and Gabrielle, who don't even come together until after page 100, appear one dimensional: she hardly needs him as she is so perfect (Scottish Gaelic, not the language of King Wm's Scottish court, would hardly be a language she would have learned, at least in a previous book she had Jamie learn it from a native speaker adding a spark to the humor of the story) Garwood missed a chance for misunderstanding by having her heroine so perfect, hardly a reflection of real women of the period royal or not. And he is over shadowed by his brother who would have made a better hero. The inaccurate history takes the knowledgeable reader right out of

the story in the beginning and could have been avoided as the elements/characters from other books could have been used as the device to plot the story into the highlands. No fan expects indepth history from a Garwood novel but we do expect the scenarios to at least be believable and this one was flawed from the beginning and so out of character reflecting Ms Garwood's talent to weave a satisfying tale. Sadly, the story so long anticipated by Garwood fans fell far short of her previous hardcovers and mass market fiction.

Shadow Music is the back-story of the feud between the MacKenna's and the Buchanan's that was discovered in her contemporary novel Shadow Dance: A Novel. Princess Gabrielle's mother was part of the royal family of the Island of St. Biel, before she moved to England to be with her baron husband. The late king of that island was clever and when the Crusaders came he outwitted them, collected tolls, and sent gold to appease the Pope. Since that time rumors have existed about whether or not the king held back some of that gold. Gabrielle is a great beauty and her physical allure is the cause of a competitive feud between two barons. The two baron's, fueled by empty promises by King John that one of the barons will have her hand in marriage, become obsessed with Gabrielle. When King John dupes the barons and promises Gabrielle to a Scottish Laird, the two baron's become more and more devious in their plans for Gabrielle. Gabrielle accepts her fate and travels to Scotland only to have her life turned upside down, yet again. Needing protection she takes shelter with the Laird MacHugh and begins a journey of another sort. I absolutely loved the first half of this story and flipped through the pages rapidly as I got caught up in the characters and intrigue. The romance between the Laird and Gabrielle promised to be explosive and the mystery of the gold and the devious barons added intrigue and excitement. The middle of this book was also great, though it began to plateau a bit. I began to wonder when things were going to start happening.

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