

I'm not robot!

A corrupt congressman, a mother's secrets, and a sizzling romance ignite passion and suspense in the new novel from #1 New York Times bestselling author Julie Garwood. Cordelia Kane has always been a daddy's girl—her father raised her alone after her mother died in a car crash when Cordelia was just two years old. So when he has a serious heart attack, Cordelia is devastated, and the emotion is only intensified by the confusion she feels when he reveals the shocking truth about her mother. Cordelia can't suppress her curiosity about the woman who gave birth to her, and when she discovers the answers to her questions lie in Sydney, Australia, she travels there to get them. Hotel magnate Aiden Madison is Cordelia's best friend's older brother. He's oblivious to the fact that she's had a crush on him for years. When he gets railroaded into taking her along to Sydney on his company jet, he unknowingly puts her life at risk. He's recently angered a powerful congressman by refusing to purchase overvalued land. Congressman Chambers is not a man to let such an offense slide, and he has the resources to get even and to get what he wants. In Australia sparks are flying between Cordelia and Aiden, but multiple attempts on Aiden's life are made while Cordelia is with him, and he realizes he must put a stop to the madness before he loses the thing he values most. ***This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof***O N EIt was Andrew Kane's third heart attack, and he wasn't going to come back this time. Too much damage had been done to the anterior wall to hope for a recovery. He knew it, and so did his daughter, Cordie, who sat by his side in the critical care unit and prayed for a miracle.Her father was hooked to a plethora of machines by a series of tubes and IVs. The constant beep from the heart monitor was a comfort to Cordie because it assured her that, even though his eyes were closed and his breathing was shallow, he was still alive. She wouldn't leave him, not even for a minute, fearing he would take his last breath alone in the cold, sterile environment while machines sounded his passing with wailing alarms.Cordie's life had come to a screeching halt at eleven o'clock Friday night when she got the news. She had just arrived home from a charity event at St. Matthew's High School for Boys, and she was exhausted. Her day had started at six fifteen in the morning when she left her brownstone to go to work. After teaching three chemistry classes and two biology classes, she graded papers during study period, supervised two lab experiments, broke up a fight, and filled in for a math teacher who was home with stomach flu. Then, once the students had been dismissed for the day, she, along with most of the other underpaid teachers, helped transform the gymnasium into a Monte Carlo atmosphere for the annual charity auction. The remainder of the evening was spent serving soft drinks and smiling at donors until her face felt frozen.She had been teaching at St. Matthew's for three years while she finished her PhD. The school was located on the edge of Chicago's south side, a rough area of the city, to be sure, but thus far she hadn't had any real trouble. A ten-foot-high wrought-iron fence that had been there since the school was built surrounded the property and the parking area, and she had to drive only two blocks from the highway exit to get to it. There was always a guard at the gate. An anonymous benefactor had made a substantial contribution to the school with the condition that there would be a guard on duty at all times, and ever since the principal had hired the highly recommended security firm, the number of slashed tires and smashed windshields had plummeted.Although her father wouldn't admit it, Cordie suspected he was the benefactor. When she started working at the school, he became a staunch supporter. He even took over the auto shop classes when the regular instructor quit in the middle of the semester. The boys could be difficult. Most of them were high risk, but her father didn't have any problem controlling them. He'd grown up in New Jersey and, even now, after all these years living in Chicago, still had a bit of a Jersey accent and a tough-guy façade. He treated the boys with respect, and they responded in kind. His gruff, no-nonsense attitude and his enthusiasm won them over. The fact that he had built a national chain of auto repair shops from the ground up didn't hurt. In the eyes of his otherwise cynical students it gave him credibility. While he was teaching the class, attendance was one hundred percent.She knew it couldn't have been easy for him raising her alone. It had always been just the two of them. There weren't any relatives on either side of the family. Her mother had died when Cordie was a baby, so of course she didn't have any memories of her. Her father told her she looked like her mother, but he never shared any stories about her. Cordie believed it was too painful for him to talk about losing the love of his life.She wasn't ready to lose him. He was her dad. He had always been . . . indestructible. Until his first heart attack six months ago, he had never been sick, never missed a day of work. Cordie depended on him for strength when times were difficult, and he was always there for her. Always.When she had first entered the ICU room, the shock nearly undid her. A priest was standing over him administering the last rites. She barely recognized her father, and she stood there paralyzed with fear. He was a big man, almost six feet, with a muscular frame, but he looked so much smaller in the hospital bed, so weak and vulnerable.Now, sitting next to him, she was overwhelmed with the need to help him. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she impatiently wiped them away. It took several minutes for her to gain control of her emotions. If he opened his eyes, she didn't want him to see her crying.A senior cardiologist resident came in to check on her father and assured her that he was resting comfortably. He couldn't tell her how long it would be before his heart stopped beating."The heart is an amazing organ," he told her."Then he could get better," she whispered, clinging to the possibility.Snatching her hope away, he shook his head. "No," he said. "Dr. Platte explained the severity—"She interrupted. "Yes, he explained."The damage—"I know," she interrupted again. "He's dying."She couldn't let herself believe it, though. Oh God, please don't let him die.She knew she wasn't being rational, pleading for the impossible. She was a fully grown woman, yet sitting there watching him she felt like a little girl again. And she was so scared.She took hold of his hand. She wanted him to know she was there and that he wasn't alone. Gradually her panic began to ease. The initial shock wore off, and she was calm once again.As she sat there hour after hour, she thought about her father's life. He really was a remarkable man. When she was just a toddler, he went back to school to finish his college degree in business. To support them, he worked as a mechanic in a tiny auto shop. By the time she was five years old, he owned that shop and four more. Then he expanded to sixteen shops in neighboring cities. By her tenth birthday, Kane Automotive was nationwide, and her father was a multimillionaire. Last year he'd sold the company, which had grown to more than twelve hundred shops around the country, but he still tinkered in his garage rebuilding old cars just for the love of the work.There was never a time he wasn't busy. Yet he was always in the front row for any of her school events. He took her to dance classes and piano lessons and never missed a recital. He was at every parent-teacher night as well. And how many times did he put up with all those sleepovers with her two best friends, Regan and Sophie? Three little girls who giggled over everything must have driven him crazy, but he took it all in stride. The countless trips to the art museum, the zoo, the science exhibits, and the children's movies she wanted to see again and again—her dad had the patience of a saint. When he wasn't teaching her how to rebuild an engine or change the oil, he was monitoring her schoolwork. Smiling at the memories, she realized how very blessed she was to have such a great father.Around two in the morning she dozed off. She awakened with a start when he squeezed her hand."Cordie."She jumped up and moved closer to the bed. She thought his complexion wasn't quite as gray, and he seemed surprisingly alert."I love you, Dad," she whispered."I love you, too." He took a breath and said, "This one wasn't like the other two. It snuck up on me and grabbed me from behind. It felt like my heart was being squeezed by a vice. Dropped me to the ground."Are you in pain now? Fear made her voice quiver."No, no pain at all. I didn't think I would go like this . . . or so soon. I thought I had more time, but I guess everyone thinks that." He closed his eyes, took another shaky breath, and called her name again."I'm here," she answered."You're going to be okay. You know I don't want to leave you all alone, but you'll be okay."She thought he needed her assurance. "I know."The lockbox at the bank. The papers are there. Jared Newton, my attorney, will help you. You remember him."Yes. Please don't worry about me. You taught me how to take care of myself."Several minutes passed in silence. His grip had loosened on her hand. She watched him struggle for each breath, and she could feel the fear catching hold once more.She thought he had fallen asleep, but suddenly he spoke again. "It's all in your name. She won't be able to get her hands on it."What? Was he hallucinating? "Who are you talking about?"He didn't answer her. "When you fall in love with the right man, I won't get to walk you down the aisle. I'm sorry."Don't worry about such things now, Dad."Just don't make the same mistakes I made. Don't long for what you can never have. Before you know it, you will have wasted years waiting. And then it's too late. I should have remarried, but I couldn't let her go."Do you mean Mother?""Yes," he said, his voice weaker now, his eyes closed. "It's all there in the box. I waited too long."His words came slowly and were whispered between labored breaths. "When you were little I didn't know how to tell you. And when you grew up it didn't seem important. There was never the right time."She softly stroked his hand. "Tell me now."There was no accident. . . Your mother didn't die in a car accident."Cordie was confused. Why would he lie about that? They never talked about her mother, so why was he focusing on her now? "Then how did she die?"His last words were faint but unmistakable. "She didn't."(Continues...)Excerpted from "Fast Track" by . Copyright © 2015 Julie Garwood. Excerpted by permission of Penguin Publishing Group. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher. Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. solely for the personal use of visitors to this web site.

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