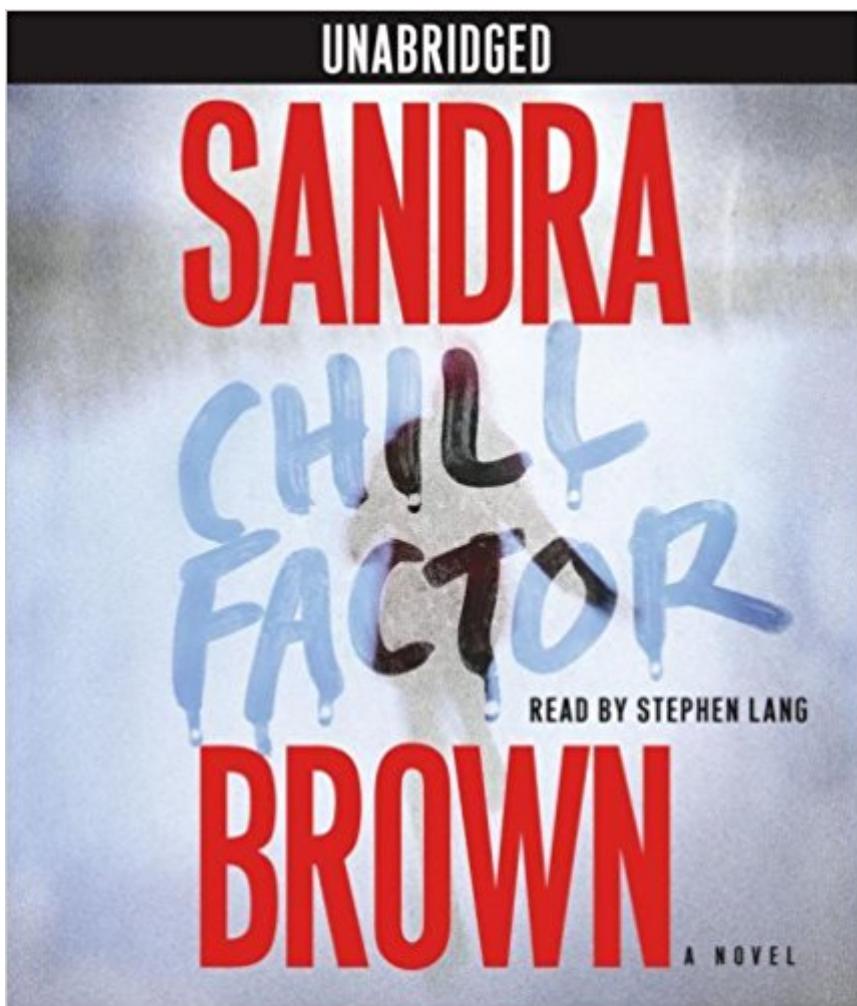


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Chill Factor: A Novel



Synopsis

Cleary, North Carolina, is a sleepy mountain town -- the kind of place where criminal activity is usually limited to parking violations. Not so, lately. Four women have disappeared from Cleary over the past two years. And there's always a blue ribbon left near the spot where each of the women was last seen. There are no bodies, no other clues, and no suspicion as to who their abductor might be. And now, another woman has disappeared without a trace. It is to this backdrop that Lilly Martin returns to close the sale of her mountain cabin, marking the end of her turbulent eight-year marriage to Dutch Burton, Cleary's chief of police. Dutch's reluctance to let her go isn't Lilly's only obstacle. As she's trying to outrun a snowstorm, her car skids on the icy road and strikes a man. She recognizes the injured man as Ben Tierney, whom she'd met the previous summer. They're forced to wait out the storm in the cabin, but as the hours of their confinement mount, Lilly begins to wonder if the greatest danger to her safety isn't the blizzard outside, but the mysterious man right beside her. Is Ben Tierney the feared abductor? Or is he who he claims to be...her rescuer from harm and from the tragedy that haunts her?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lust, jealousy and murder suffuse Brown's crisp thriller (after *White Hot*), set in the snowbound mountains of North Carolina. Lilly and Dutch Burton's marriage didn't withstand the loss of their three-year-old daughter, despite their attempt at a fresh start with the purchase of a vacation cabin in bucolic Cleary, N.C., where the novel opens on the divorced couple discussing its sale. Dutch is now Cleary's chief of police, and Lilly is a magazine editor in Atlanta. As she races back to the city

to beat a blizzard, her car skids out, striking a hiker emerging from the woods. Turns out he's a man she knows: handsome freelance writer Ben Tierney, whom she met and flirted with the summer before. With no choice but to wait out the storm in the cabin with Ben, who is injured, Lilly calls Dutch, but he can't reach her via the now impassable mountain road. Meanwhile, Cleary is haunted by the case of five missing women— all now feared dead. With Lilly still stranded, Dutch goes ballistic when the FBI arrives in town with evidence that Tierney is the serial killer. The snowy suspense will cool off Brown's fans during the dog days of summer. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

Brown's new yarn is set in the small town of Cleary, North Carolina, where magazine publisher Lilly Martin is packing up her things at the cabin she shared with her ex-husband, Dutch Burton. Now the police chief of Cleary, Dutch desperately wants another chance with Lilly. She refuses, and he leaves the cabin, warning her of an impending blizzard. On her way down from the mountains, she accidentally hits a man in the road. She manages to get the man, Ben Tierney, back to her cabin, where they decide to wait out the storm. But the more time she spends with Tierney, the more Lilly fears he might be the serial killer dubbed "Blue," who has been abducting women in Cleary for the past year. Despite her mounting concerns, Lilly can't help her growing attraction for the man. Back in town, Dutch is frantic when he learns Lilly is trapped up in the cabin with Tierney, whom the FBI also suspects might be Blue. Dutch's concern grows, and he mounts a desperate attempt to rescue his ex-wife. The suspense builds as Brown's novel chugs toward a gripping, surprising conclusion. Kristine HuntleyCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Mass Market Paperback edition.

I waited ages and ages to read this book. The beginning was so enticing, but it was so expensive. I had wanted to read it for a long time and then finally succumbed to the high price. My verdict? It's all right. No more, no less. This book suffers from a weak middle. It's hard to believe but it's true. The problems don't just come from the chop and change style of alternating point of views, but from the lack of depth in the writing once you get past the first quarter of the novel. Looking back, it's hard to exactly pinpoint the place where I lost interest. But lost interest I did. I think I lost interest in Ben Tierney and Lilly after the obvious fact that Lilly's plot point of her chronic asthma was injected into the story.

And there was a real effort at the start to make the writing deeper and interesting, but then it just chopped and changed so much that it was hard to sink in and get a hold of any point of view. The writing style (not the POV changes) also made this worse, so it was hard for me as a reader to get a deep interest in these characters. By mid-way the only character I found even remotely interesting was Dutch, the cheating, weak ex-husband. He has flaws. He was doing the right thing for the wrong reasons in trying to help his ex-wife from the mountain. Lilly read like a papercut out. The short amount of time in her POV didn't let the reader sink in deeper and get to know her character, neither did the author's lack of emotion in a lot of places. All this exasperated the problems. I kept forgetting I was reading this novel. When Ben Tierney could be dying, I was just skimming. He was boring mid-way, whereas at the start his point of view was exciting and great. The writing itself was all right, but some of the characters' motivations didn't ring true. It was like people were doing stuff that was only needed to progress the story. Why the heck would Ben Tierney handcuff Lilly? Or hit her when she told him how she felt about men hitting her? Why did Ben Tierney run into the woods, thinking he could outrun two men on snowmobiles and hopefully talk to the FBI before those men shot him? He's supposed to be a smart man and yet he led these men toward him. His actions were odd and led him away from Lilly, for reasons that weren't really explained or understood, although Lilly says she understands to Ben, for reasons . . . maybe, only to finish the story, not because anything was really understood. Kind of an odd story that I would have liked to seen fleshed out more. More emotions, less horrible people, more connection between hero and heroine.

This book had a number of positives, but ultimately, it was an unsatisfying read. I liked the plot, but the pacing was too slow. The story bogged down in places and there was a lot of repetition that didn't further the plot. For example, the heroine, Lily, had slow scenes where she vacillated about whether or not the hero, Tierney, was the killer. These scenes should have built tension and quickened the pace, but instead, they seemed oddly slow and flat. Scenes with Lily and Tierney, that took place at the cabin, were also slow and dull. Too often the narrative concentrated on how cold it was, what Lily and Tierney needed to do to keep warm and hydrated, the frequent forays necessary to get wood and medication, and Lily's asthma symptoms. It focused on the mundane rather than building on characterization. Yes, Lily talked about her daughter and her marriage to Dutch, but she felt remote when talking about it and Tierney never did communicate in the cabin scenes. Consequently, it was difficult to establish any rapport with the hero and heroine, until the

end. As well, Dutch's and Wes' scenes, where they expressed anxiousness to get up the mountain and those scenes of their efforts to do so, were repetitious and ineffective at creating urgency and tension. I don't like too much sex in my romance books, so I was surprised when other reviewers felt the book had an excessive amount of sex, because I didn't think it did. Because this was a romantic suspense book, I found the supporting characters' sex scenes between teachers and students over eighteen to be acceptable for that genre. In a straightforward romance, it wouldn't fit, but this genre is usually a bit grittier. I found the depiction of the student/teacher sex scenes to be well written. The author managed to convey that it does harm, even though it is technically legal, and she was able to portray the ambivalence that a lot of people have about it. In addition, I don't like 'forced seduction' scenarios in romance books, and there weren't any; the rape fantasy is apparently popular, though, so I was not bothered by its inclusion. The book was certainly not pornographic, in my opinion. I don't think the sex scenes were hot enough for readers who want erotica, but they will probably offend those who want a clean read. I was ambivalent about this book. I liked it enough to replace my paperback with a Kindle edition when it was on sale. I liked how the author brought the supporting characters to life; they were well written and I actually felt more of a connection with these secondary characters. I liked some aspects of the hero and heroine, but disliked others, and ultimately could not really connect with them. I liked the idea of the plot a lot but wasn't entirely happy with the execution. I was disappointed with this book, but Sandra Brown writes very well, so even though it was disappointing, I still enjoyed it. I would not recommend this book as the place to start for readers who aren't familiar with Sandra Brown's writing. I would recommend it to her fans, especially for those times when a reader is looking for an easy read and understands that it isn't her best work but is still a good way to pass the time. I would have given this book two and a half stars, but rounded it up to three.

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