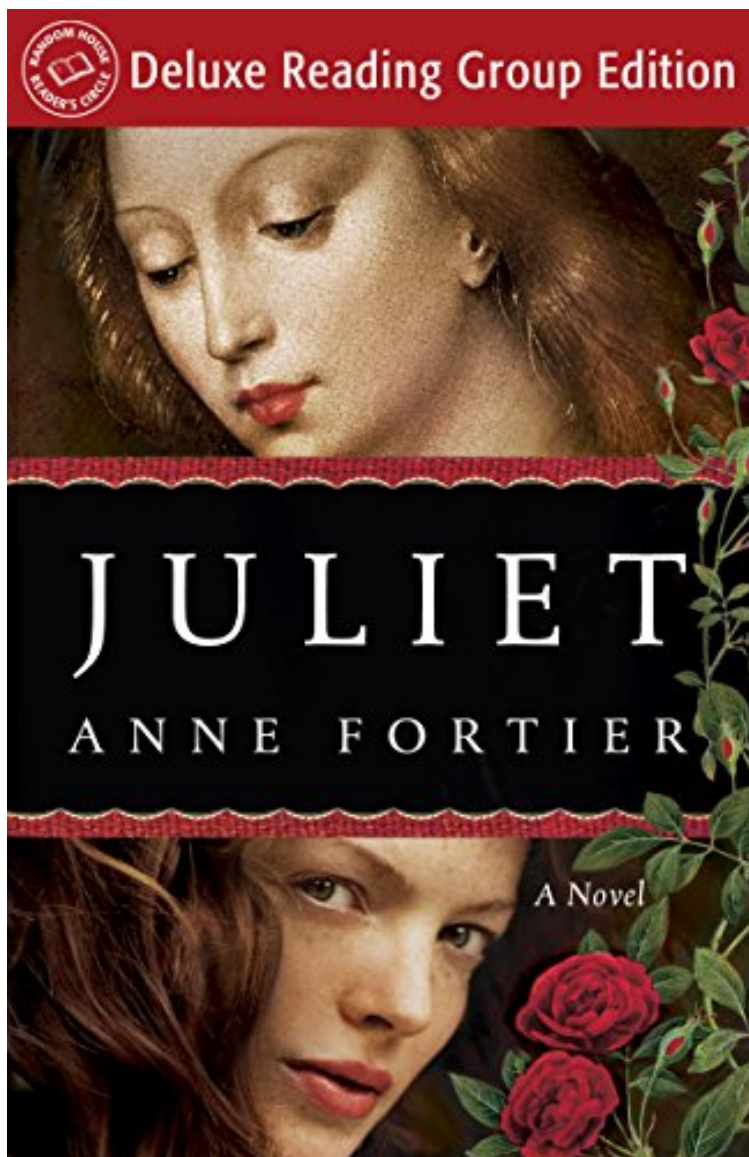


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# Juliet (Random House Reader's Circle Deluxe Reading Group Edition): A Novel



*Par Anne Fortier*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThis new deluxe eBook edition features more than eighty additional pages of exclusive, author-approved annotations throughout the text, which contain new illustrations and photographs,to enrich your reading experience. You can access the eBook annotations with a simple click or tap on your eReader via the convenient links. Access them as you read the novel or as supplemental material after finishing the entire story. There is also Random House Readers Circle bonus content, which is sure to inspire discussion at book clubs everywhere. When Julie Jacobs inherits a key to a safety-deposit box in

Siena, Italy, she is told that it will lead her to an old family treasure. Soon she is launched on a winding and perilous journey into the history of her ancestor Giulietta, whose legendary love for a young man named Romeo rocked the foundations of medieval Siena. As Julie crosses paths with the descendants of the families immortalized in Shakespeares unforgettable blood feud, she begins to realize that the notorious curseA plague on both your houses!is still at work, and that she is the next target. It seems that the only one who can save Julie from her fate is Romeobut where is he? One of those rare novels that have it all . . . I was swept away.

Sara GruenExtraitAlack, alack, what blood is this which stainsThe stony entrance of this sepulchre?It has taken me a while to figure out where to start. You could argue that my story began more than six hundred years ago, with a highway robbery in medieval Tuscany. Or, more recently, with a dance and a kiss at Castello Salimbeni, when my parents met for the first time. But I would never have come to know any of this without the event that changed my life overnight and forced me to travel to Italy in search of the past.

That event was the death of my great-aunt Rose.It took Umberto three days to find me and tell me the sad news. Considering my virtuosity in the art of disappearing, I am amazed he succeeded at all. But then, Umberto always had an uncanny ability to read my mind and predict my movements, and besides, there were only so many Shakespeare summer camps in Virginia.How long he stood there, watching the theater performance from the back of the room, I do not know. I was backstage as always, too absorbed in the kids, their lines and props to notice anything else around me until the curtain fell. After the dress rehearsal that afternoon, someone had misplaced the vial of poison, and for lack of better, Romeo would have to commit suicide by eating Tic Tacs.

But they give me heartburn! the boy had complained, with all the accusatory anxiety of a fourteen-year-old.Excellent! I had said, resisting a motherly urge to adjust the velvet hat on his head. Thatll help you stay in character.Only when the lights came on afterwards, and the kids dragged me onstage to bombard me with gratitude, did I notice the familiar figure looming near the exit, contemplating me through the applause. Stern and statuesque in his dark suit and tie, Umberto stood out like a lone reed of civilization in a primordial swamp. He always had. For as long as I could remember, he had never worn a single piece of clothing that could be considered casual. Khaki shorts and golf shirts, to Umberto, were the garments of men who have no virtues left, not even shame.

Later, when the onslaught of grateful parents subsided and I could finally walk off the stage, I was stopped briefly by the program director, who took me by the shoulders and shook me heartilyhe knew me too well to attempt a hug. Good job with the youngsters, Julie! he gushed. I can count on you again next summer, cant I?Absolutely, I lied, walking on. Ill be around.

Approaching Umberto at last, I looked in vain for that little happiness at the corner of his eyes that was usually there when he saw me again after some time away. But there was no smile, not even a trace, and I now understood why he had come. Stepping silently into his embrace, I wished I had the power to flip reality upside down like an hourglass, and that life was not a finite affair, but rather a perpetually recurring passage through a little hole in time.Dont cry, principessa, he said into my hair, she wouldnt have liked it.

We cant all live forever. She was eighty-two.I know. But I stood back and wiped my eyes. Was Janice there?Umbertos eyes narrowed as they always did when my twin sister was mentioned. What do you think? Only then, up close, did I see that he looked bruised and bitter, as if he had spent the last few nights drinking himself to sleep. But perhaps it had been a natural thing to do. Without Aunt Rose what would become of Umberto?

For as long as I could remember, the two of them had been yoked together in a necessary partnership of money and muscleshe had played the withering belle, he the patient butlerand despite their differences, clearly neither of them had ever been willing to attempt life without the other.The Lincoln was parked discreetly over by the fire pit, and no one saw Umberto placing my old pack in the trunk before opening the back door for me with measured ceremony.I want to sit in front. Please?He shook his head in disapproval and opened the passenger door instead. I knew it would all come apart.But it had never been Aunt Rose who insisted on the formality. Although Umberto was her employee, she had always treated him like family. The gesture, however, was never returned. Whenever Aunt Rose would invite Umberto to join us at the dinner table, he would merely look at her with bemused forbearance, as if it was an ongoing wonder to him why she kept asking and just somehow didnt get it. He ate all his meals in the kitchen, always had, always would, and not even the name of sweet Jesusspoken in rising exasperationcould persuade him to come and sit down with us, even at Thanksgiving.

Aunt Rose used to dismiss Umbertos peculiarity as a European thing and smoothly segue into a lecture about tyranny, liberty, and independence that would inevitably culminate in her pointing a fork at us and snorting, and that is why we are not going to Europe on vacation. Especially Italy. End of story. Personally, I was fairly certain that Umberto preferred to eat alone simply because he considered his own company vastly superior to what we had to offer. There he was,

serene in the kitchen, with his opera, his wine, and his perfectly ripened block of Parmesan cheese, while we Aunt Rose, me, and Janice bickered and shivered in the drafty dining room. Given the option, I would have lived every minute of every day in the kitchen, too. As we drove through the dark Shenandoah Valley that night, Umberto told me about Aunt Rose's last hours. She had died peacefully, in her sleep, after an evening of listening to all her favorite Fred Astaire songs, one crackling record after another. Once the last chord of the last piece had died out, she had stood up and opened the French doors to the garden outside, perhaps wanting to breathe in the honeysuckle one more time. As she stood there, eyes closed, Umberto told me, the long lace curtains had fluttered round her spindly body without a sound, as if she was already a ghost. Did I do the right thing? she had asked, quietly. Of course you did, had been his diplomatic answer. It was midnight by the time we rolled into Aunt Rose's driveway. Umberto had already warned me that Janice had arrived from Florida that afternoon with a calculator and a bottle of champagne. That did not, however, explain the second jock-mobile parked right in front of the entrance. I sincerely hope, I said, taking my pack out of the trunk before Umberto could get to it, that is not the undertaker. No sooner had I said the words than I winced at my own flippancy. It was completely unlike me to talk like that, and it only ever happened when I came within earshot of my sister. Casting but a glance at the mystery car, Umberto adjusted his jacket the way one does a bulletproof vest before combat. I fear there are many kinds of undertaking. As soon as we stepped through the front door of the house, I saw what he meant. All the large portraits in the hallway had been taken down and were now standing with their backs to the wall like delinquents before a firing squad.

And the Venetian vase that had always stood on the round table beneath the chandelier was already gone. Hello? I yelled, feeling a surge of rage that I had not felt since my last visit. Anyone still alive? My voice echoed through the quiet house, but as soon as the noise died down I heard running feet in the corridor upstairs. Yet despite her guilty rush, Janice had to make her usual slow-motion appearance on the broad staircase, her flimsy summer dress emphasizing her sumptuous curves far better than had she worn nothing at all. Pausing for the world press, she tossed back her long hair with languid self-satisfaction and sent me a supercilious smile before commencing her descent. Lo and behold, she observed, her voice sweetly chilled, the virgitarian has landed. Only then did I notice the male flavor-of-the-week trailing right behind her, looking as disheveled and bloodshot as one does after time alone with my sister. Sorry to disappoint, I said, dropping my backpack on the floor with a thud. Can I help you strip the house of valuables, or do you prefer to work alone? Janice's laughter was like a little wind chime on your neighbor's porch, put there exclusively to annoy you. This is Archie, she informed me, in her business-casual way, he is going to give us twenty grand for all this junk. I looked at them both with disgust as they came towards me. How generous of him. He obviously has a passion for trash. Janice shot me an icy glare, but quickly checked herself. She knew very well that I could not care less about her good opinion, and that her anger just amused me. I was born four minutes before her. No matter what she did, or said, I would always be four minutes older. Even if in Janice's own mind she was the hypersonic hare and I the plodding turtle, we both knew she could run cocky circles around me all she liked, but that she would never actually catch up and close that tiny gap between us. Well, said Archie, eyeing the open door, I'm gonna take off. Nice to meet you, Julie it's Julie, isn't it? Janice told me all about you. He laughed nervously. Keep up the good work! Make peace not love, as they say. Janice waved sweetly as Archie walked out, letting the screen door slam behind him. But as soon as he was out of hearing range, her angelic face turned demonic, like a Halloween hologram. Don't you dare look at me ... *Revue de presse* "Anne Fortier delivers a rollicking quest through the dark alleyways and shimmering hill towns that once inspired Shakespeare's great love story. This book has everything: Juliet and Romeo; the Italian nobility and the mafia underworld; swashbuckling heroes and spunky heroines; secret documents and hidden treasures; passionate loves and violent vendettas that span the centuries. Juliet is a thrilling debut novel, completely saturated in fascinating history." Katherine Neville, author of *The Fire* "This book is a stunner. Elegantly written in exquisite, vibrant and witty prose that rides well with the clever use of quotes from Shakespeare, it interweaves an astonishing historic take on the tale of the star-crossed lovers with a fast-paced, modern thriller. Every sentence is a joy, every character lives, and medieval and modern Siena are brilliantly evoked. The theme is delightfully original - and the kind of thing you wish you had thought up yourself. The author is to be congratulated on a truly fabulous book that will surely be a resounding success! We will never see Romeo and Juliet in quite the same way again..." Alison Weir "Spinning backward and forward from Shakespeare's immortal play, Anne Fortier puts to delicious use all the familiar Romantic motifs alternating with complex contemporary intrigue to weave a multi-layered cloth of stories within stories, where fortunes turn in an instant and every character is a shape shifter. Boldly imagined, brilliantly

plotted, beautifully described, Juliet will carry you spellbound until the gripping end. An astonishing achievement."Susan Vreeland, author of *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* and *Luncheon of the Boating Party*"In her debut novel, Anne Fortier takes a great idea a young woman discovers she is the descendant of the Juliet who inspired Shakespeare's play and executes it thrillingly. Juliet has it all history, mystery, and romance. Ms. Fortier handles the dual plot lines with mastery, beautifully rendering Siena of the past and present."Karen Essex, author of *Leonard's Swans* and *Stealing Athena*"A feast of myth, history, and tantalizing indulgences I was swept away, blown away, and taken for ransom. Anne Fortier breathes new life into the Shakespearean tragedy we thought we knew. I fell in love with Juliet all over again"Jaime Ford, author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*"Ingenious, intriguing, a thrilling story that keeps you turning the pages. This is a wonderfully textured novel of history and imagination that brings Italy, past and present, beautifully to life." Kate Mosse, author of *Labyrinth* and *Sepulchre*One of those rare novels that have it all. .  
. I was swept away.Sara Gruen, author of *Water for Elephants*