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NEW YORK
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NORA ROBERTS



BORN IN FIRE

"Refreshingly realistic (and) compelling."
—*Publishers Weekly*

Born In Trilogy

By Nora Roberts

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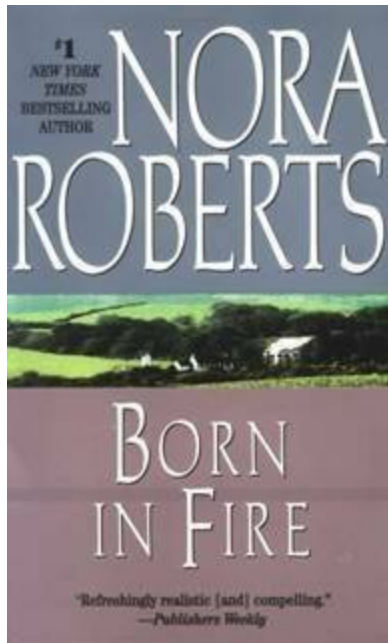
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Born In Trilogy 1

-- BORN IN FIRE --



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Dear Reader:

All of my life I've wanted to visit Ireland. My ancestors came from Ireland and Scotland, and the pull has always been there to see for myself the green hills and to sit in a smoky pub while listening to traditional music being played. When I was able to make the trip with my family, I knew I was home the moment I landed at Shannon Airport

Setting a story in Ireland was a natural decision. Both the land and its people inspire, as well as thrive on, stories. The idea, for me, was to write of Ireland, and of family, as they intertwined in my heart. In each book in this new trilogy I chose to feature one of three sisters, different in type but bound by blood. Their lives have each taken a different course, yet it is Ireland that inspires them, as it inspires me.

Born in Fire highlights Margaret Mary Concannon, the eldest sister, a glass artist with an independent streak as fierce as her volatile temper. She is a woman who is both comforted and torn apart by family, and whose ambitions will lead her to discover herself and her talents. Hand blowing glass is a difficult and exacting art, and while she may produce the delicate and the fragile, Maggie is a strong and opinionated woman, a Clare woman, with all the turbulence of that fascinating west county. Her relationship with the sophisticated Dublin gallery owner, Rogan Sweeney, won't be peaceful, but I hope you'll find it entertaining.

And I hope you'll enjoy, in this first book of my BORN IN trilogy, the trip to County Clare, a land of green hills, wild cliffs, and enduring beauty.

NORA ROBERTS

To AMY BERKOWER,

for a decade of taking care of business

I never will marry, I'll be no man's wife. I intend to stay single for the rest of my life.

-nineteenth-century Irish ballad

Chapter One

HE would be in the pub, of course. Where else would a smart man warm himself on a frigid, windblown afternoon? Certainly not at home, by his own fire.

No, Tom Concannon was a smart man, Maggie thought, and wouldn't be at home.

Her father would be at the pub, among friends and laughter. He was a man who loved to laugh, and to cry and to spin improbable dreams. A foolish man some might call him. But not Maggie, never Maggie.

As she steered her racked ng lorry around the last curve that led into the village of Kilmihil, she saw not a soul on the street. No wonder, as it was well past time for lunch and not a day for strolling with winter racing in from the Atlantic like a hound from icy Hades. The west coast of Ireland shivered under it and dreamed of spring.

She saw her father's battered Fiat, among other vehicles she recognized. Tim O'Malley's had a good crowd this day. She parked as close as she could to the front entrance of die pub, which was nestled in a line of several shops.

As she walked down the street the wind knocked her back, made her huddle inside the fleece-lined jacket and pull the black wool cap down lower on her head. Color whipped into her cheeks like a blush. There was a smell of damp under the cold, like a nasty threat. There would be ice, thought the farmer's daughter, before nightfall.

She couldn't remember a more bitter January, or one dial seemed so hell-bent on blowing its frosty breath over County Clare. The little garden in front of the shop she hurried by had paid dearly. What was left of it was blackened by the wind and frost and lay pitifully on the soggy ground.