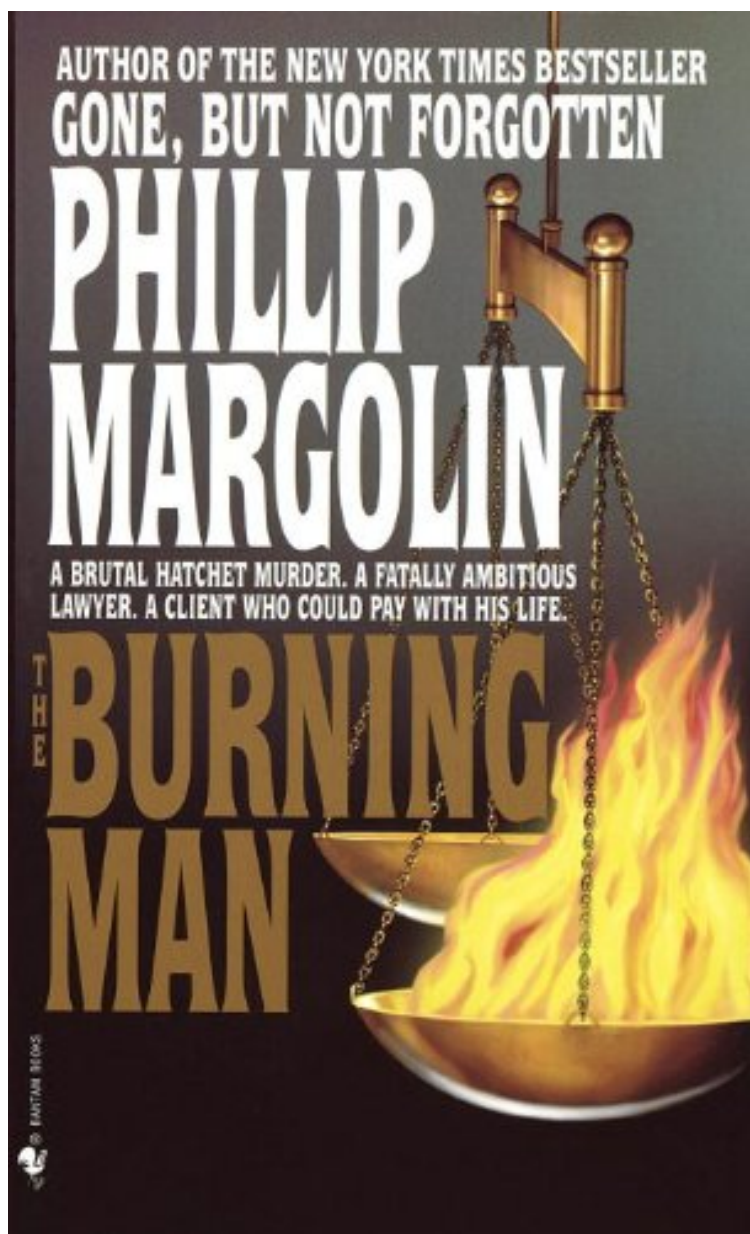


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The Burning Man



Par Phillip Margolin
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom bestselling author Phillip Margolin, a fast-paced legal thriller packed with page-turning suspense.Peter Hale is a young attorney struggling to make his own mark in his father's venerable law firm when he is presented with the opportunity of a lifetime. During the trial of a multimillion-dollar case, Peter's father, the lead counsel, suffers a heart attack and asks Peter to move for a mistrial until he's feeling better. Peter decides this is his only chance to prove to his father that he is the terrific lawyer he knows himself to be, and he chooses tocarry on with the case against his father's wishes. In his zeal to prove

himself, Peter neglects his client and ends up losing everything—the case, his job, and his father. Unemployed and disinherited, Peter takes the only job he is offered—that of a public defender in a small Oregon town. He hopes that if he can make good there, he can reinstate himself in his father's good graces. But his ambition again gets the best of him when he takes on a death-penalty case, representing a mentally retarded man accused of the brutal hatchet murder of a college coed. He's in way over his head, and it's only when Peter realizes that his greed and his ego may end up killing his client that he begins to understand what it really takes to be a good lawyer and to become a man. The Chicago Tribune said "It takes a really crafty storyteller to put people on the edge of their seats and keep them there. But Phillip Margolin does just that." In *The Burning Man*, with its intricate plotting, legal intrigue, and many twists and surprises, Phillip Margolin has done it again. This is sure to be his biggest bestseller yet. From the Paperback edition. Excerpt

The senior partners in Hale, Greaves, Strobridge, Marquand and Bartlett looked out from corner offices on the fortieth floor of the Continental Trust Building at the rivers, towering mountain and lush green hills that made Portland, Oregon, so unique. Though the skyscraper was new, the firm's quarters were decorated with heavy, dark woods, polished brass fittings and fine old antiques, giving the place an air of timeless quality. At precisely 7:30 A.M., Peter entered a small, windowless conference room where he and his father met before court every morning to review the witnesses who would testify that day and to discuss any legal issues that might arise. Peter's father still had the same massive build that helped him win second team All-American honors in football and an NCAA wrestling championship at Oregon State in 1956. He owned a full head of white hair and his craggy face was outfitted with a broken nose and a cauliflower ear. Richard Hale practiced law the way he played sports, full steam ahead and take no prisoners. This morning, Peter's father was striding back and forth in front of a low credenza in his shirtsleeves, a phone receiver plastered to his ear, muttering "Jesus Christ!" at increasing decibel levels each time he made a turn. Peter took off his suit jacket and hung it behind the door on a hanger. He noted with distaste that his father had flung his jacket onto a corner of the long conference table where it lay crumpled in a heap. Richard loved playing the humble, hulking man of the people in front of juries and he thought that the disheveled clothes helped his image. Peter could not imagine wearing a suit that had not been freshly pressed. "When will you know?" his father barked, as Peter took several files from his attache case and arranged them in a neat pile. "No, goddamn it, that won't do. We're in the middle of the goddamn trial. We've been in court for two weeks." Richard paused. His features softened. "I know it couldn't be helped, but you don't know Judge Pruitt." He paused again, listening intently. Then, his face turned scarlet with anger. "Look, Bill, this isn't that difficult. I told you I needed the goddamn things two weeks ago. This is what happens when you wait until the last minute." "Well, you better," Richard threatened, ending the conversation by slamming down the phone. "What's up?" Peter asked. "Ned Schuster was in a car wreck," Richard answered distractedly, running his fingers through his hair. "He's in the hospital." "Who?" "Schuster. He's supposed to testify today. Now, Bill Ebling says they can't get the papers to court because Schuster had the only copy." Peter had no idea what his father was talking about. He glanced down at his files. There was one for each witness and one was for a Ned Schuster. When he looked up, his father was leaning against the wall. His face was as pale as chalk and he was rubbing both sides of his jaw vigorously. "Dad?" Peter asked, frightened by his father's ashen pallor and the beads of sweat that suddenly bathed his face. Instead of answering, Richard grimaced in pain and began rubbing his chest with a clenched fist. Peter froze. "Heart attack," Richard gasped. Peter snapped out of his trance and raced around the conference table. "I need to lie down," Richard managed, as his knees sagged. Peter caught him before he hit the floor. "Help!" Peter screamed. A young woman stuck her head in the door. Her eyes widened. "Call 911, fast! My father is having a heart attack." When Peter looked down, Richard's teeth were clenched and his eyes were squeezed tight. He continued to rub his chest vigorously as if trying to erase his pain. "Hold on, Dad," Peter begged. "The medics are coming." Richard's body jerked. His eyes glazed over. The two men were sprawled on the floor. Peter held his father's head in his lap. He was concentrating so hard on his father that he didn't notice the room filling with people. Suddenly, Richard's eyes opened and he gasped, "Mistrial." "What?" "Get...mistrial...Must..." "Don't talk. Please, Dad. Save your strength." Richard grabbed Peter's wrist and squeezed so hard his fingers left raw, red impressions. "Must...Mistrial," he managed again. "Yes, I will," Peter promised, just as someone called, "Let me through." Peter looked toward the doorway. He recognized the older woman who was pushing through the crowd as a nurse the firm had hired to assist in working up personal injury cases. A moment later, Peter was standing on the far side of the conference table as the nurse tried to save his father's life. The idea of Richard Hale dying sucked the air right out of Peter. He slumped onto a chair just as two medics rushed into the room with oxygen, a stretcher and a

portable IV. Peter's mother had died several years ago after a long illness and her death had been expected, but Peter saw his father as a mountain that would last forever. When he looked up he could not see his father through the crush of medical personnel who surrounded him. What if Richard didn't pull through? he asked himself. Peter's heart beat so rapidly he had to will himself to calm down. The anxiety attack passed. He opened his eyes and saw his briefcase and his files. The trial! Peter looked at his watch. It was almost time to go to court. Suddenly, the people in front of the door were backing away and the medics were rushing out of the room with a stretcher that supported his father. Peter wanted to follow them to the hospital, but someone had to tell Mrs. Elliot what had happened and ask Judge Pruitt for a mistrial. There was no way he could see his father now anyway. Peter knew he would probably have to stay in the hospital waiting room for hours before the doctors could tell him anything. Peter stepped out of the conference room into the hall. It was empty. Everyone had followed the medics to the elevator. Peter walked away from the crowd and left the offices by a back door that opened near the men's room. He was trembling and flushed. He went to the rest room sink and splashed cold water on his face. Then, he leaned forward and looked at himself in the mirror. His brown, blow-dried hair was a mess, his shirt was rumpled and his tie had been wrenched to one side. Peter took out a pocket comb and wet it. When his hair looked presentable, he tucked in his shirt and straightened his tie. Peter examined himself again. He saw a man whose genetic inheritance from his mother had softened the sharp features his father had contributed. Peter had his father's intense blue eyes, but he also had his mother's smooth, high cheekbones. His nose was straight instead of craggy and his lips were thinner than Richard Hale's. At five feet ten, one hundred and sixty pounds, he was slender and wiry with none of the bulk or height of his father. Peter straightened up. He felt back in control of himself and the situation. There was nothing he could do for his father now. Richard would be unconscious or drugged for hours. Peter decided that he would quickly explain what happened to the judge before going to the hospital. Certainly, Pruitt would grant a mistrial under the circumstances. No judge would require the trial to go on when the lead counsel had been stricken with a heart attack. Peter took the elevator to the lobby. The courthouse was only a few blocks away. As he rushed toward it, an unsettling thought suddenly occurred to him. Mrs. Elliot was suffering terribly. He could see how hard it was for her to sit through her trial, both physically and emotionally. If a mistrial was declared, Mrs. Elliot would have to suffer through a second trial. In a second trial, the defense would have transcripts of Mrs. Elliot's witnesses and would know all of their strategy. Delay always helped the defendant when the plaintiff had a strong case. And the plaintiff's case was almost finished. Only two short witnesses remained. Peter paused inside the courthouse doors. Lawyers, litigants, policemen and clerks swirled around him, the noise from dozens of conversations formed a constant din, but he was oblivious to the crowd. Was his father thinking clearly when he told Peter to ask for a mistrial? He had been in unbearable pain. Did his father really want to abort the case when it was going so well? Would Richard even remember his order when he recovered from the trauma of his coronary? Peter was certain that following his father's wishes was not in Mrs. Elliot's best interest, but the thought of disobeying Richard Hale's command terrified him. Peter realized that he was trembling. He took a deep breath and willed himself to calm down. A lawyer's first duty was to his client. Why, then, had his father told him to ask for a mistrial? It took a moment for the answer to dawn on Peter. Richard Hale had no confidence in Peter's ability to take over the case. Peter's fear gave way to a sense of outrage. He squared his shoulders and strode across the lobby toward the elevators. By the time the elevator doors opened, Peter was ready to go to court. He would show his father just how good he was. He would win Elliot. Then, he would place the multimillion-dollar judgment in front of Richard Hale, irrefutable proof that he was ready, willing and able to step up to the big time.

Revue de presse Praise for *The Burning Man* and Phillip Margolin: "Margolin specializes in characters who make your skin crawl." *People* "Margolin's perfectly crafted plot provides plenty of chills" *Chicago Tribune* "[Margolin] weaves disparate subplots and surprise twists into a terrific whodunit." *San Francisco Chronicle* "Intricate plotting and warp-speed suspense. The man knows how to write a legal thriller." *Publishers Weekly*