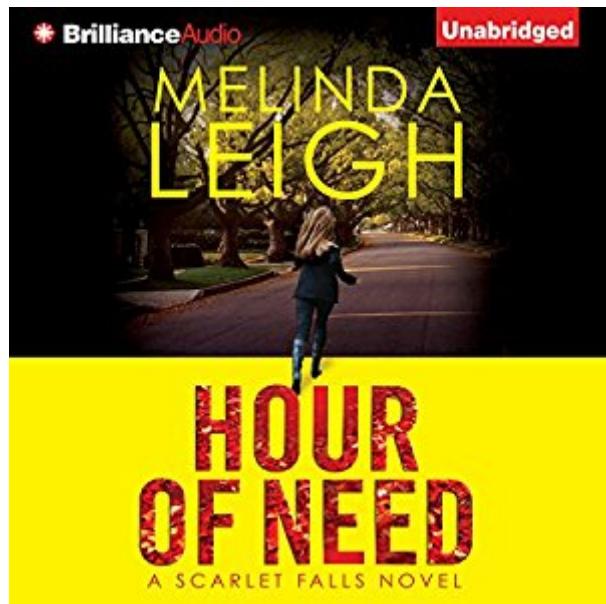


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Hour Of Need: Scarlet Falls, Book 1



Synopsis

While fighting in Afghanistan, Major Grant Barrett receives devastating news: his brother and sister-in-law have been murdered in Scarlet Falls, the sleepy suburb of Grant's youth. Emotionally scarred from war, the career soldier returns home on emergency leave to temporarily care for his orphaned nephew and niece. But when someone tries to kidnap the kids and their teenage babysitter, Grant knows it's not a random act... and neither were the murders. Already devastated by her neighbors' violent deaths, Ellie Ross is shattered by the attempted abduction of her teenage daughter so she desperately turns to Grant for help. As they navigate a deadly search for the truth, they struggle with growing feelings for each other and Grant's impending return to deployment. But time is running out. The killer is growing bolder by the hour, and Ellie and Grant must find him before the children become his next victims. Best-selling author Melinda Leigh delivers another gritty mystery simmering with spine-tingling passion in this first Scarlet Falls novel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was my first foray into Melinda Leigh's writing. Wow! I don't normally read suspense, but now that I've discovered Scarlet Falls, I will be gobbling up all her books. The writing itself is highly readable, the characters are realistic and relate-able, and the plot swept me up immediately. Gritty, violent scenes are interspersed with touching moments of hope and sexual attraction, as Ellie and Grant both re-examine their lives and priorities. Ladies, if you like your heroes alpha with a side of emotional vulnerability, you will adore Grant. I am hoping the other books in this series will give me

some little peeks into how Ellie and Grant are doing in the future. Highly recommend.

Another opening chapter in a book that left me breathless, stunned and in tears. But that shocking opening sets the stage on what I know will be a terrific new series by Melinda Leigh. As the book blurb states, Major Grant Barrett returns home to Scarlet Falls to care for his nephew and niece, left orphaned by the murder of Grant's brother, Lee, and his wife. The move is only considered temporary - Grant is a military man, the military is his life, deployment is his life - until he and his remaining siblings, sister Hannah and brother Mac, get together and figure things out. As Grant navigates how to care for young Carson and baby Faith, Lee and Katie's neighbor, Ellie Ross, pitches in to help. Ellie is a spirited single mom to teen Julia, who babysits the Barrett kids. Beautiful and independent, she captured Grant's eye when he would visit his brother's family. But again, Grant never acted on any attraction as he was going to be deployed and the military is his life. Grant and Ellie are soon drawn together as the mystery surrounding the seemingly random crime - deaths of Lee and Kate Grant are anything but that. Is it related to a case that attorney Lee worked on at the firm where he is an associate (and where Ellie works?) It is a mystery that draws you in and keeps you riveted until the last sentence! The romance between Grant and Ellie is beautifully crafted, although you may guess from my earlier comments, the fact that Grant was a military man, dedicated to the military, was enforced one too many times. And when he finally realized maybe the military wasn't always going to be his center, I felt his self-revelation and the outcome of that felt too rushed. As a result, I almost gave this book a 4-star review instead of 5. But instead, I will shave only one point off the 5th star. Why the 5-star rating? The way Ms. Leigh masterfully outlines the characters of Barrett siblings, is the sign of a superb storyteller. And the graceful way she deals with the scenes with the Colonel - the Barretts' father - and his condition, was realistic. I am not sure how to feel about the Colonel, and I have a feeling that is exactly how Melinda Leigh wants you to feel at this point. Again, the writing of a superb storyteller. As you navigate the twist and turns of the story, the puzzle passages regarding Lindsay begin to fall into place. As with the Colonel's condition, Ms. Leigh realistically but with a deft touch writes of the horrors of bullying. Heart-wrenching, yet when all elements of the story merge together, and justice is achieved for all, it is so well done I was ready to re-read the book. I read this book in one sitting, and I anxiously await the next book in the series!

This is the first Melinda Leigh book I have read --nor will it be the last. Real people with real-life

problems that fit today's events. A married couple is murdered, a teenage girl is bullied, and a family has to pull together to survive sorrow and threats. Well-realized characters and just enough suspense and action had the pages turning fast. The stream of consciousness of the individual characters provided great insight and had me rooting for them. There is some sexual content but minor and does not impede the developing story or take it over. There is violence described as murder occurs and also events in war are described. Again, the descriptors are just enough to get the idea across without needless graphic images. It appears the author believes the reader can picture some of this without all the gore. Thank you. Overall, an engaging mystery with likable characters (except the bad people, of course).

This was my first Melinda Leigh book and it was delightful to know such a gifted author. I was already hooked by the story from the very beginning when a shocking event happened. Lee and Kate, who had just been described as ordinary people, parents of a 4-month-old baby girl and a 6-year-old boy, are shot to death right after leaving the restaurant where they had been diligently celebrating their anniversary, in a moment that seemed to be turbulent in their marriage. When I thought I was being coaxed into the difficulties and lies of a couple in some kind of crisis, I was involved in a different atmosphere, skillfully created by the author, in which I then wanted to know who had killed people I already cared about. From then on, through an outstanding writing style, we get to know several well-built characters, smoothly and purposefully introduced to us in a multilayered plot that showed a perfect balance between romance and suspense, which intensely held my attention until the last page. The center of the narrative is the murder whose investigation introduces all the characters. The mystery around it is very well built and the solution is so craftily hidden that it makes us keep on trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together until the very end. If after the startling solution of the suspense we rewind the story back to the beginning, we can see the clues leading up to the unexpected and intelligent elucidation. The gradual unfoldment of events is masterfully tied through to the end, with flawless development and no loose ends. The romantic aspect of the book establishes a solid foundation for the mystery because it has a lively plot with realistic and lovable characters, whose background we get to know gradually, and of whom we become fond since they are well developed and psychologically deep. Even the supporting characters have their spark, and not only make great sense in the story but also play a significant role in the dynamics. They all touch us deeply, either because we care about them or because they are so puzzling that we can't stop trying to figure out their actions. We feel captivated by each developing conflict because the author harmoniously integrates the characters in a consistent

unity, which is a positive foundation to establish the connection with the reader. Furthermore the author brings to light two topics really worth thinking over, bullying and PTSD, which are centrally plotted and, although not fully explored and with no pretension to deplete the subject, are very well dealt with by being displayed from a thought-provoking perspective. It is a heartwarming book and the author is brilliant at creating a gripping thriller along with a believable moving romance. I think she masters not only the art of writing but the one of talking very close to the reader through her sensitive and high quality work. Melinda Leigh artfully ties everything in the plot, leaving no loose ends for us to question in the rewarding unfolding of the mystery, and the only thing she leaves open is our positive expectation for the following book in the upcoming series.

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