



# The Hidden Hours

*Sara Foster*

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**The Hidden Hours** Sara Foster

**Keeping her secret may save her family.**

**But telling it may save her life.**

Arabella Lane, senior executive at a children's publisher, is found dead in the Thames on a frosty winter's morning after the office Christmas party. No one is sure whether she jumped or was pushed. The one person who may know the truth is the newest employee at Parker & Lane – the office temp, Eleanor.

Eleanor has travelled to London to escape the repercussions of her traumatic childhood in outback Australia, but now tragedy seems to follow her wherever she goes. To her horror, she has no memory of the crucial hours leading up to Arabella's death – memory that will either incriminate or absolve her.

As Eleanor desperately tries to remember her missing hours and uncover the events of that fateful night, her own extended family is dragged further into the dark, terrifying terrain of blame, suspicion and guilt.

Caught in a crossfire of accusations, Eleanor fears she can't even trust herself, let alone the people around her. And soon, she'll find herself in a race against time to find out just what happened that night – and discover just how deadly some secrets can be.

## The Hidden Hours Details

Date : Published April 1st 2017 by Simon & Schuster AU

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Author : Sara Foster

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## **From Reader Review The Hidden Hours for online ebook**

### **Veronica ?? says**

I loved Sara Foster's All That is Lost Between Us, a mystery novel centred around relationships. The Hidden Hours has once again highlighted Foster's incredible talent for mystery however this has a psychological thriller slant.

The reader is privy from the beginning that Eleanor was under psychiatric care as a teenager but why this was the case is slowly unfolded throughout the story as it is told in two time frames; then and now. Now- 21 year old Eleanor is living with her Uncle, Aunt and 2 cousins in London. Her paranoia never seems to leave her but when a colleague is found dead the morning after the work Christmas party Eleanor cannot remember a single thing about the night and her paranoia spirals out of control.

This is a gripping story as the two mysteries, what happened to Eleanor in her younger years to make her so anxious and withdrawn and who killed Arabella, slowly unravel and the tension builds like a tightening spring to come to an unexpected explosive climax.

I am now a fully fledged Foster fan and would be happy to read any novel written by her.

With my thanks to Simon & Schuster via Netgalley for my ERC.

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### **Natasha Lester says**

I was lucky enough to read The Hidden Hours in manuscript form and I was hooked from the first page. Sara's strengths as a writer have always been for laying the foundations of a great mystery and then slowly dialling up the tension until you really want to peek at the ending to see if your guess is right, or if there's a twist about to be thrown at you. Eleanor is a character with many facets, at times vulnerable, at times we suspect she might be guilty of something and then at other times we feel frustrated on her behalf as everyone appears to be dragging her into a dangerous game for their own ends. My favourite parts were the flashbacks to Eleanor's childhood in the Australian bush and these scenes were a lovely counterpart to the fingernail biting suspense of the rest of the book. Definitely Sara Foster's best book.

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### **Hannah says**

When I first saw the blurb for The Hidden Hours, I was extremely intrigued. Murder in a publishing house? I didn't know I needed that! However instead of a thrilling cutthroat read that would put me off wanting to enter the industry, what I got instead was a bland, frustrating story that left me feeling unfulfilled.

In theory, The Hidden Hours was a great novel - however its execution was the biggest let down. The story

follows Eleanor, who has moved to London to escape her traumatic childhood. There, she lives with her freelance architect uncle and his publishing industry bigwig wife, who is able to get Eleanor a PA position to one of the directors. Only a couple of weeks after Eleanor starts at Park & Lane, the marketing director, Arabella, is found dead in the Thames. And with the night of Arabella's death a blank in Eleanor's mind, it puts her directly in the crossfire as the mystery unravels, and accusations fly.

It's hard to enjoy a book with a narrator like Eleanor. From the beginning, she's a character that doesn't do an awful lot but mope and whine. Which became old, fast. With this big chunk of her memory missing, rather than buckle up and take an active stance in trying to figure out her movements, she essentially just sat on her bum and complained about it. She blindly follows other peoples questions and manipulations. Basically, she doesn't think for herself and that was what got me. The rest of the character set were about as uninteresting as each other. I never felt connected to any of them, and in the end I couldn't really care who had done the crime. Even the little splash of romance felt mundane.

The Hidden Hours is essentially two stories. There's what's happening in the present, with Arabella's death, and the past, which explains the traumatic childhood that has Eleanor fleeing Australia for the comforts of a new city. This seems to be a trend, I've noticed, in psychological thrillers. Dual narratives, one of which gives an insight into the main character's past - and sadly, this doesn't work for me. The chapters of Eleanor's childhood were long and drawn out, too much information overload that was unnecessary at times, where you're just screaming to yourself, Get to the point already! It made me less sympathetic by the end as well.

One thing I did love, however, was at the start of each chapter, you got to read a a snippet of all the different people connected to Arabella's death - from hotel receptionists, strangers on a bridge, the police...it provided a unique insight into just how many different people were somehow a part of Arabella's death.

Sadly though, I don't think I'd be back for more. I'm craving edge of your seat, don't trust anything, don't read in the middle of the night psychological thrillers and this one missed the mark more than once.

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### **Mandy White says**

Great book! Georgia McGuire does a fantastic Aussie accent too. Really enjoyed the story in this one and will be looking for more of Sara's books

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### **Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says**

\*Review to come.

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### **Li'l Owl says**

Eleanor Brennan has travelled to London to escape the repercussions of her traumatic childhood in outback Australia. She has a job as an office temp at Parker & Lane, a children's publisher. Her mother has arranged for her to stay in a room at the home of her uncle Ian. Despite never having met him it seemed like a good idea at the time. But now she's not so sure. From day one, Eleanor has been wary of Ian's wife, her aunt, Susan. CEO of Parker & Lane, Susan is a stern, no-nonsense, formidable opponent who makes it obvious

that this arrangement wasn't her decision.

Eleanor meets the senior executive of Parker & Lane, Arabella Lane, at the office Christmas party. When she arrives at work the next morning there is an inescapable feeling of apprehension in the air. Caroline Cressman from HR gathers everyone together. It's obvious that she is very distressed and whatever she's about to say is going to be big. The room is absolutely silent.

*"I am so very sorry to tell you all...  
that Arabella Lane has passed away."*

Eleanor is instantly stunned, unable to pull air into her lungs. Her mind is reeling, pitching, and spinning over one thought.

*"This cannot be true, she thinks. It cannot be true"*

Then something else pushes its way into her thoughts. She has no memory after seeing Arabella at the party. Terrified, she searches her memory for the missing events in the hours prior to Arabella's death, but to no avail. No one knows how Arabella went over the railing, falling to her death into the frozen water of the Thames river. Did she jump? Or was she pushed?

During the investigation that follows Eleanor is horrified to learn that she may be the sole witness to the incident. Eleanor's blood runs cold when she becomes a suspect and the without the missing pieces of that hour, she can't defend herself. While suspicions, accusations, and blame run rampant, Eleanor finds herself caught in a nightmare. She's determined to uncover what happened that fateful night but she'll soon find out that some secrets are worth killing for.

The Hidden Hours by Aussi author Sara Foster is a sensational thriller! She has crafted an ingenious storyline with rich characters and a corkscrews worth of twists that will have you glued to the pages. It's a fast paced and compelling novel from the very beginning to the startling conclusion! You will be hard pressed to put it down!

I will be reading more from this talented author.

Highly recommended!

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## **Bianca says**

Thrillers are not a genre I read often, but given how much I enjoyed Sara Foster's previous novel, *All The Is Not Lost Between Us*, I was keen to read this new offering.

I'm happy to report that I wasn't disappointed. This is a psychological thriller, a classic "who's-done it", that kept me reading compulsively.

Our unreliable narrator is twenty-one-year-old, Australian Eleanor, who's moved into her uncle's townhouse in London, to start a new life. She's temping as an administrative assistant in a publishing house, where her aunt, Susan, is a powerful executive.

But something awful has happened. One of the marketing executives, Arabella Lane, was found drowned in the Thames. Her death is suspicious. Eleanor is one of the last people to see her at the previous night's work party. Eleanor though has huge gaps in her memory, as she had drunk with Arabella, who had also slipped drugs into both their glasses.

Eleanor is full of anguish and doubts, as she can't remember much from the night of the party, while memories of something that happened in the past also resurface. Things unravel quickly. She soon realises that all is not well with the marriage of her uncle Ian and Susan. Their kids, thirteen-year-old, sulky, Neave, and the seven-year-old, Savannah, are disconcerted and upset about Arabella's death, who was a family friend.

Eleanor is determined to find out what happened. I will leave at that, as I don't want to give away spoilers.

This is another beautifully written, psychological thriller. Sara Foster does descriptions very well, I could feel the cold seeping into my bones, as I was reading about wintery London.

I also enjoyed the Australian settings, as Eleanor reminisces about what happened in the past.

Besides the great characterisations, I appreciated the story's plausibility. I often struggle to suspend my disbelief with some aspects encountered in thrillers. It was never the case with *The Hidden Hours*, which gets extra brownie points for this.

*The new Sara Foster thriller is a thoroughly enjoyable thriller, which I highly recommend.*

*I've received this novel via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review. Many thanks to the publishers, Simon & Schuster AU, for the opportunity to read and review this novel.*

**Cover:** 5 stars

*This novel also counts towards the Aussie Author Challenge 2017 on [www.bookloverbookreviews.com](http://www.bookloverbookreviews.com)*

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## **Sharon Metcalf says**

Alone and struggling to settle into a new country and a new workplace 21 year old Eleanor attends a work Christmas party but soon wishes she hadn't as she feels isolated and even more alone than before. After taking some much needed time out she finds herself chatting and drinking with Arabella Lane one of the bosses of the company. The following day she has a massive hangover and doesn't remember much of the night before. At work all the staff are gathered and in the most solemn tones an announcement is made - one which will change everything for Eleanor and which will have her wracking her brain for those hidden hours.

I was hungry for every single word of this book, devouring chapter after chapter eagerly. I guess this is what you'd classify as a psychological thriller but since I've never been especially big into that genre I may be wrong. What I know is, I often felt anxious as I was reading. I was second guessing every decision made and I had a healthy dose of paranoia going on, raising suspicions about almost all of the main characters. Until the very end I remained uncertain about who would be revealed as the villain.

The characterisation in the story was terrific. The backstory and slowly revealed history was equally as interesting to me as the whodunnit in the present tense investigation. I felt for the young Eleanor and the way her family had imploded, and for the long lasting impacts of the trauma she experienced.

I haven't read any of Sara Foster's previous works but definitely feel inclined to do so now. Sincere thanks to the author, Simon & Schuster (Australia) Pty Ltd and NetGalley for this digital copy of *The Hidden Hours* in

exchange for an honest review.

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### **Dawn says**

I am a little biased in that I'm lucky enough to be in a writing group with Sara, but this was a fantastic read. Sara does a great job of maintaining a sense of tension and dread throughout the book, making you want to keep reading. I was drawn in to great empathy for the main character and her amnesia, feeling that both she and I were moving through the story together. The settings of London and rural Australia were beautifully drawn and added an extra dimension to the characters' stories. A real page turner with mystery and drama throughout!

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### **Dale Harcombe says**

Eleanor is living with her aunt and uncle in London and working at a children's publishing house. She hopes to put the traumatic events from her childhood in outback Australia from her. But when Arabella Lane, a senior executive from her work is found dead in the Thames after the Christmas party, it appears that Eleanor was one of the last to see her. But why can she remember so little of that evening's events? What she does remember doesn't fill her with confidence. She remembers talking to and sharing a drink with Arabella, but after that is a blank. Who is responsible for Arabella's death?

This story is told in two time frames. One focused on the current events and the other taking the reader back to events from Eleanor's childhood. Everywhere she turns, Eleanor seems to come up against doubts, more lies, suspicions and things that do not add up. How can she uncover the truth? Do the police suspect her? Or will the police solve the mystery before Eleanor understands all the evening's happenings? Why too is her Aunt Susan so cold towards her?

I found this really good read, and the main character complex enough to maintain interest. Of course there are also some thoroughly unlikeable characters. The settings of London and outback Australia are both visual and atmospheric. There is an underlying tension that pervades the novel.

Despite a few red herrings I did feel Arabella's killer was obvious. Still it is an engrossing read that had me happily returning the pages. There is some use of the f word in this one but not taken to excess. I have read a couple of other books by this author and would recommend this one and her others if you like a gripping read.

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### **Nadia King says**

I'm always excited to read a book by a local author and when the opportunity came up to read an ARC of *The Hidden Hours* by Sara Foster I jumped at the chance.

*The Hidden Hours* is a well-paced thriller. Young Australian woman, Eleanor Brennan, is on a working holiday in London. She is lucky enough to stay with her uncle and aunt in Harborne Grove. Her aunt Susan is the CEO of publisher Parker & Lane and lands Eleanor a job temping at the office. On the surface, this should be the start of an exciting adventure for Eleanor but it all goes awfully wrong when publishing executive, Arabella Lane, is found dead and Eleanor was one of the last people to see her.

The story crosses between time and continent. The reader, like Eleanor, is kept in the dark about the extent of Eleanor's involvement in Arabella's last moments. Foster keeps us guessing about motives and characters until the very end.

Flashbacks to Eleanor's difficult past are peppered throughout the story. Although I was intrigued by the murder of Arabella Lane, I found myself more drawn to the story of Eleanor's childhood tragedy.

Eleanor's growing relationship with Art Director, Will Clayton, provides a delightful and surprising element to the story.

I enjoyed *The Hidden Hours* immensely. It was the first book I have read by Sara Foster and I will definitely be on the lookout for her other books.

Many thanks to Simon and Schuster for the opportunity to read and review the ARC.

*The Hidden Hours* will be available at all good bookstores from April 2017.

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### **Carolyn says**

Eleanor has travelled to London wanting to leave her traumatic childhood in outback Australia behind her and have a fresh start. Staying with her mother's brother, she enjoys the company of her two young cousins and lands a job temping at Parker and Lane a publishing house where her aunt works. Hoping to meet some people she goes along to the work Christmas party and finds herself having a few drinks with Arabella Lane, a charismatic senior executive at the company. However, next morning when she wakes she has no memory of the rest of the night and learns that Arabella is dead, having drowned in the Thames. Fighting the memories and demons of her past, Eleanor must try to work out what happened in those lost hours.

Sara Foster relates the events in the present tense, mixed with flashbacks to Eleanor's childhood and the traumatic event that still affects her. This unusual style works well and results in a multi-layered story where everyone has their own version of events that night and no one can be trusted. The suspense builds slowly to culminate in a satisfying ending.

*With thanks to Netgalley and the publisher Simon & Schuster for a copy of the book to read and review*

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### **Leslie says**

This story on the surface is about a mysterious death of a PR manager from a prestigious publishing house in London. But it is really about dysfunctional families. Poor little Eleanor is only on her third week of work at the publishing house her aunt Susan runs when one of the top execs dies unnaturally the night of the Christmas party. This is devastating for Eleanor because not only can't she remember what happened at the party but this traumatic event has loosed all the specters in her mind to take her back to a trauma or 20 from her childhood.

As the plot unfolds Eleanor learns more about her uncle and aunt than she ever wanted to know as well as faces her own demons.

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## Brenda says

Eleanor's memories of her nine year old self, and the traumas that had affected her family life in country Australia, would never leave her. Her mother Gillian urged Eleanor to head to London for a fresh start; to stay with her brother Ian, his wife Susan and their two girls. She hadn't met her uncle before, but felt an affection for him, and loved the girls – but Susan was a high flying business woman, harsh and to Eleanor's mind, a cold woman.

After only being at her temp position for three weeks – the one her aunt had set up for her, as she was an integral part of the children's publishing house – the Christmas party cruising on the Thames was looming and Eleanor wasn't sure she wanted to go. She hadn't made any friends and knew she would feel uncomfortable. But she did go – and it was the beginning of another dark and terrible time in her life, and in the lives of those around her.

For Arabella Lane's body was found in the Thames the following morning – and Eleanor had briefly been in her company at the party the night before. But the worst for Eleanor was – she had no memory of those hours; the police continued to question her. Did they believe her? Her past kept colliding with the present – why couldn't it leave her alone? Why was this happening to her? Would she ever find the inner peace she craved?

*The Hidden Hours* is another gripping psychological thriller by Aussie author Sara Foster which is filled with intensity, emotion and grief. The tragedy which was the young Eleanor's life was written well – past chapters interspersed with the present day and drawing in the incredible trauma of her adult life. Written in present tense, (which always feels strange to me!) it didn't take me long to settle into the rhythm of the story. I thoroughly enjoyed *The Hidden Hours* and highly recommend it.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital copy to read and review.

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## Dani Jade says

I had never heard of Sara Foster before this book but after finishing it, I have now officially added her to my "read more of" list.

Eleanor is a 21 year old woman who has just moved to London from Australia, where she had an extremely traumatic childhood in the outback that she tries not to think about. Hoping for a fresh start in London, she is staying with her uncle Ian and his wife Susan, and working as a temporary assistant at the publishing house where Susan works. She wakes up the morning after the staff Xmas do with an extreme hangover, barely any memories of the night before... and her boss's wife, Arabella Lane's, engagement ring in purse. She heads to work hoping that she didn't embarrass herself and intending to give it back. But when she arrives, she discovers that Arabella Lane is dead, possibly murdered. She has no memory of why she has her ring. And she may be the last person to have seen her alive...

This was a good, twisty and engrossing read which I thoroughly enjoyed.

