

Melt

Helen Hardt

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Blush-inducing and audacious, Melt will spark continued interest in this romance series.

Melt, the fourth audiobook in Helen Hardt's Steel Brothers series, is a strictly-for-adults, raunchy romance between two unlikely people.

Narrator Alexander Cendese, who sounds like Gerard Butler after a double bourbon, handles Hardt's material well. The story is dense, front-loaded with dialogue and enough backstory to synopsise previous material.

Jonah Steel is dealing with a heavy load of survivor's guilt after his younger brother was kidnapped and tormented. His cure comes on the couch of a beautiful, reserved therapist named Melanie Carmichael, who has a few regrets of her own.

Melanie's guilt comes from a professional failure: a former patient who committed suicide after confessing her love to Melanie. Melanie and Jonah's guilt isolates them and soon they're both desperate for connection. They break the doctor-patient relationship boundaries in blush-worthy sex scenes that are both intimate and naughty.

However, Hardt keeps things sweet, and emphasizes Melanie's pleasure in being swept away: "It wasn't a kiss of passion. It was a kiss of urgency: of need."

This is a straightforward romance, with plenty of flashing dark eyes, running hands, throbbing, moaning, and gasping. Hardt is great at setting the scene, from bars and hotel rooms to the Steel family's home, though Melanie remains the main attraction. Teri Clark Linden reads Melanie's chapters—they alternate with Jonah's, for a nice his-and-hers perspective plot—in a clear, feminine voice.

Melt doesn't break new ground in the genre, but it is a nice addition to the Steel Brothers series and will keep the wheels rolling for audiobook number five. "All I cared about was doing a little carbo loading so I could get her back in the sack," Jonah says. Now that's good therapy.

CLAIRE FOSTER (Audio 2017)

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