



Nine Steps to Sara

Lisa Olsen

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When single mom Sara Darling inherits an estate in the remote English countryside, she jumps at the chance to become Lady of the Manor. With 8 year old son Jack and best friend Joanie in tow, they explore the nearly deserted mansion, isolated from the rest of the world except for the nearby village where everybody seems to know her business. Distracted by the charming chauffeur, Will, soon Sara never wants to leave her newfound home.

But the eerie manor house is hiding more than a ruined garden and plumbing issues, and it's up to Sara to find out what the loyal staff isn't telling. When Sara finds Jack talking to an empty room, she begins to wonder if she made the right decision uprooting her tiny family as the spooky surroundings fuel her imagination.

Especially when she starts to hear the voice talk back.

Is her ancestor's unnatural attachment to Jack borne of concern or something more sinister? When she discovers the truth, will Sara accept the legacy she's inherited, or run for her life?

Nine Steps to Sara Details

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From Reader Review Nine Steps to Sara for online ebook

Gwen Haaland says

Holds the dubious distinction of being one of the worst books I have ever read! I would have abandoned early on if it had not been "assigned" by one of my book clubs. What a joke that it had sounded somewhat interesting in the review.

This novel was so poorly written and conceived that I was actually laughing while reading the very silly dialogue, filled with cliches. The premise was totally not credible! Cartoon-like story with cardboard characters. Earned one star in my book, then just before the (long awaited) ending it nearly earned 1 and a half stars. NEARLY, but not quite. Don't waste your time on this one; take ten steps and run!

AJ Olsen says

I've been eagerly anticipating this book since the author first announced it and it definitely didn't disappoint... First off, who wouldn't want to be in Sara's shoes and inherit a freaking mansion! The characters were great, the ghosts creepy, and the setting was perfect. Just when I thought I knew how it was going to end it completely caught me by surprise! Another great story by Lisa Olsen.

Natalie says

I loved the premise of this book but was immediately put off by the lack of character development and choppy/campy/silly dialogue between them (at times it was hard to get past it was so ridiculous!). I was frustrated with Sara's constant acceptance of everything, including Will, whom she just falls for in a matter of days/weeks with no idea who he is...and she never gave it another thought why someone who has suddenly been given the title as Lady of a manor would be "allowed" happily to "date" a driver/part of her staff (sort of).

At the end, I was left wanting much, much more. What was the significance of the numbers 1 and 9? Who were they and what is their story? And, despite having doubts about Will the book ends with her inviting him back into the house (Ugh!). Will's character seemed to never quite know what side he was on...although I had a feeling early on that he wasn't all what he claimed to be.

Two stars because I think the ghost, Gemma, was the most interesting. Overall: the whole book fell totally flat and the ebook version I read on my Kindle needed some serious editing!

Doug Cornelius says

I should have lowered my expectations. The description sounded interesting, an eerie ghost tale with a plucky heroine and her precocious son. There is a good book idea in there but it fails to come to fruition. There is a reason it is free on the kindle.

The characters are flat and poorly written. The story is not eerie and only mildly interesting. Most of the book is just the characters talking at each other.

Traci says

This book is the one secret dream where the American girl finds out she's really an English noble and goes back to claim her inheritance, which includes a haunted mansion and a hot dude who's scheming. She displays the typical ignorant characteristics where she listens to a bunch of strangers over her friend, cannot see the obvious truth in front of her face and falls for the aforementioned hot dude way too fast with very little reason to. Well, I guess that is understandable; she comes off as rather desperately starved for affection.

I read this because it seemed like a mystery/horror story and I have to say I'm a little let down by that part--I expected more suspense than romance, but I think that what I got was flip-flopped. Most of the book was the main character's interaction with the hot guy with the ghost story kind of tucked in between. I wasn't really in the mood to read a romance, but it wasn't horrible, so I didn't stop reading it.

I would have liked to see the ghost story part of this book to be a little more fleshed out, along with several of the characters. Sara and Will were mostly well developed, but Joanie acted like a brat for no reason and for being so important, Jack seemed to be kind of a prop in the background. I didn't understand most of the servants or what their whole point was to anything--Mrs. Poole kind of surprised me in the end, twice right in a row. I didn't get the whole thing about why the Nine were so important, especially because seven of them were never identified. Since it's in the title, I kind of expected to know!

So if you are expecting a ghost story, I probably wouldn't recommend this book--there are ghosts in it, but they seem secondary to the other plotline. On the other hand, if you're looking for a paranormal romance or rather a romance with a few ghostly elements, and you don't want to read something long, then you might like this.

Michelle says

This book had the potential to be really special. There were some plot points and some characters that I found delightful and charming, but in the end it had some major flaws that I just could not get past.

Sara Darling is living the dream when she discovers that she is now heir to the Darling family estate in England. While the estate is in a bit of disrepair, she is excited to fix things up and make a life in the English countryside with her son. Of course, it doesn't hurt when the handsome and mysterious chauffeur (Will) catches her eye. Then, strange things start happening in the house, and Sara must figure out what is behind them and why she is receiving warnings that her son, Jack, is in danger.

It sets itself up as a ghost story, but the ghost becomes a minor player behind the human bad guys. And the human bad guys seemingly come out of nowhere and ARE NEVER EXPLAINED. The author never explains the connection between the nine and the Darling family. She never explains their motivation. Through the whole story, the relationship between Sara and Will moves at lightning speed. While the author tries to give a reason for this in the plot, I wound up being distracted most of the time and thinking "real people simply do not act like this". This book is half flirting between Will and Sara and half plot. I did enjoy the ghost story, but found the lack of resolution at the end to be too much to overcome.

Jennifer says

I really enjoyed this book! It was an easy read, it is not a spectacular classic novel but it was good. I needed an easy romance and this book delivered!

Debbie says

This was a great book. Lisa Olsen is on my my must read list.

Christina says

Alright. I just finished the book and the only real comment I have is...what is the whole ending, or lack thereof, about? I don't understand the purpose of the Nine, nor do I understand what exactly was going on. No history was offered with respect to the twist.

This book was honestly really about the protagonist and her love interest. Seriously. It was a lot of narrative about the two flirting back and forth and not much else. By the time the story starts unraveling, one starts to feel as if they're in for a large reveal. Well guess what?!? You get NOTHING! After you've spent hours reading this novel, your reward is a big fat piece of NOTHING.

The author can spin a tale, no doubt...but I get the feeling that her purpose was to keep the reader in suspense and that she didn't have an exit strategy. Your reward for reading the book is simply that you were slightly entertained for a bit. That was a complete waste of \$3.99.

If someone happened to get more than I did from the "reveal" at the end, please message me. I would love to know.

Ashley says

I don't know how this book got so many 5 star ratings on Amazon. Maybe I am not the target audience for this book...even though mystery and romance are some of my favorite books to read. Oh well. It was just ok for me.

Suleika Santana -All About Books says

I enjoyed the story although it was a bit slow for me. Good characters and good story line. I was glad the author didn't make Will a villain because I would have been mad for sure. The ghost aspect was interesting and I liked how the conflict was resolved.

Dierdra McGill says

This was so frustrating to read! This should be labeled more as a romance, not a ghost story. I did not know it was possible to make a ghost boring, but Olsen managed quite well.

The uninteresting and undeveloped characters left me bored and rolling my eyes. Speaking of rolling my eyes, "an eye roll was given" just does not flow well. Have you ever heard of show, not tell. This book never brings you into the story at all.

The dialog was just stupid most of the time, I kept wondering who would ever talk this way? Although not liking anyone, at all, in the book didn't help that.

If you are looking for a romance with a little mystery you may like this, the writing is pretty horrible though. If you are looking for a mystery or a ghost story don't bother.

Miriam says

I was a little disappointed with the ending of this novel. I felt like I never really understood who or what was trying to hurt Jack and why.

Mazmum says

If you are reading this expecting a super creepy ghost story, then back away because that isn't what you get.

Yes it does feature an old estate, with its very own ghost but the main part of the story is about Sara who inherits the estate, the alleged curse and everyone around her who comes to help her and protect Jack.

I did find some of the language used strange and a bit off for something written in modern times, almost like the entire estate was stuck in a different era, but I would have expected it to be more of a thing to people coming in from the outside. Indeed my main criticism of this, was the way that Sara was very accepting of everything around her. She came across as truly naive, which was surprising for an older mother with a semi grown child.

Saying that, I still enjoyed the time I spent at the manor reading this tale.

Matt Schiariti says

Sara Darling, divorced, single mother to 8 year old Jack, is about to embark on the journey of a lifetime. She's just inherited a grand mansion in the English countryside, and she's to become the Lady of the Manor. Along with her son and her irreverent best friend, Joanie, they uproot their lives in L.A. and fly straight to England to see just what being royalty is all about. They'll encounter the local village folk who are ecstatic to finally have a proper Darling in the halls of Darling park. As they explore the sprawling estate, they meet all kinds of interesting people, including a stuffy housekeeper, a strange old shop owner, and the charming and handsome handyman, Will. Sara instantly falls in love with the place and never wants to leave. But, even if she wanted to, she couldn't. Part of the inheritance stipulates that she never leave the massive home. To Sara, that's not a problem...until she discovers her son carrying on full conversations in empty rooms and the villagers wanting her to stay in the home as if their lives depend upon it. The more she digs into her

ancestors' history, she'll discover that all is not what it seems with the home and the newly important people in her life.

Frankly, I was expecting more of a haunted house story from this book. The premise is interesting. Big spooky mansion in the English countryside, people that are entirely too eager to please, a ghost ancestor with questionable motivations, strange and ancient structures in the woods. The setup had all the makings of what could have been a very good haunted house story. As it turned out, *Nine Steps to Sara* is almost more of a romance than anything else. Which, honestly, I have no problem with...if that's what I was looking to read.

Are there scary elements to the book? Yes. There is a ghostly, haunted house plot running through the book but unfortunately, that doesn't really kick in until half way through the book. For nearly 50% of the book, there are very few scares and only the slightest hints at the ghostly goings on. It's more about Sara getting used to life as an American, thrust into the roll of English Nobility while she tries to entertain an abrasive best friend that can't live without her internet and cable TV. The latter half of the book does deal with those elements more but still not enough as the budding relationship between Sara and Will (that's not really a spoiler, you knew it was coming) while the mysteries of the home and its past and what's REALLY going on slowly trickle in.

From a character standpoint, I found it to be a mixed bag. I liked Will as the roguish, mystery man who walks a fine line in his flirting with a woman 'above his station' and how he has Sara off her game. The stuffy housekeeper is also fun to see interact with Sara. Since Sara's American, she finds much of English tradition to be 'stuffy' and the housekeeper is constantly keeping herself in check. Joanie is ok. Frankly, she's so high maintenance that I'm surprised Sara didn't smack her at times, but the opposition doesn't play too badly. The main issue with the characters in this book is Sara herself. She wasn't ditsy but she wasn't a super genius (which is fine, I don't mind that at all). I just found her...too accepting of things. 'There's a ghost here? Oh that's fine. Wait, she's telling my son he'll die if stays here? Bah, that's no biggie, we'll stay here'. I just didn't believe it. She was very nonchalant for the better portion of the book after finding out the spirits were trying to tell she and Jack that he was in danger. She was willing to just 'see what happens', even when people she was starting to trust were giving her reasons NOT to trust them. She was frightened at times but not enough for someone who's son was being threatened. Just my opinion. That kind of tainted the character for me throughout.

I like Olsen's writing style, but there are a few things that begin to stand out. Lots of 'eye rolls were given' and 'sheepish smiles' and 'lopsided grins'. While there's nothing wrong with those types of emotion descriptors they tend to jump off the page when they crop up frequently. Once again, this is just an opinion. It may be picking nits, but noticing them constantly took me out of the story at times. Other than those issues, I like the flow of her writing and how she lends description to scenes. The dialogue is generally pretty solid, with each character having their own voice, but sometimes overuse of commas rather than making multiple sentences makes it seem like everyone's speaking in one long winded sentence. Once again, just an opinion.

Ok, enough with the nitpicking. But I had to mention the bad with the good to justify the rating based on my opinions. As always, I never intend to come off as if I'm 'bashing' an author, because I'm not.

In the end, *Nine Steps To Sara* is solid read. I liked it. I didn't really like it and I didn't love it, but I still liked it. I discovered Olsen when I took a chance on *Pretty Witches All In A Row* (which I REALLY liked, you should check it out if you already haven't). I just felt that the potential to be a very moody and atmospheric ghost story was lost in the day to day of the story and Sara herself lacked the urgency and sense of danger of what she was wrapped up in. The ending was satisfying though, so she did a fine job of giving the novel closure. I especially liked the final several sentences of the book.

Not a bad book by any means, *Nine Steps To Sara* warrants a look-see.

