



Loving Helen

Michele Paige Holmes

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Revisit the characters from SAVING GRACE in this story of Grace's shy, younger sister.

Eighteen-year-old Helen Thatcher grew up under the protection of her older siblings, Grace and Christopher. Living in their shadows and keeping to herself suited Helen just fine—until she met widower Samuel Preston. Watching Mr. Preston care for his young daughter and seeing his concern extend to her own family, Helen felt her reserve slipping away, as she learned first to trust him and then realized she had fallen in love with him. But instead of returning—or even noticing her affection—Mr. Preston developed his own tender, and unrequited feelings, for Grace.

In the midst of each silently nursing their broken hearts, Helen and Samuel are faced with a daunting task—reuniting Grace with her fiancé, Nicholas Sutherland. Now it is Helen who must look out for her sister and sacrifice her own fragile heart, as she and Samuel pretend to be engaged. Helen finds the role surprisingly easy to play, allowing herself to imagine that Samuel's loving remarks are sincere. As the time for their charade to end draws near Helen must summon her courage and tell Samuel the truth of her feelings, or risk losing him forever.

Loving Helen Details

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From Reader Review Loving Helen for online ebook

Kathy * Bookworm Nation says

4.5

I really enjoyed this one! It had been awhile since I read the first book, but I was quickly sucked back into the story and the characters. This is the second book in the Hearthfire Romance series, I actually think it stands well on its own. I really enjoyed the first book and recommend reading it, but I think this one can be enjoyed on its own as well. Characters from the first book do play a role in the story though so you may enjoy it more if you have read the previous book.

Helen was a likable character. She is more on the quite side, but more because of life experiences than of truly being shy. She has learned the hard way not to trust men, but with their livelihood in the balance she decides she wants to marry to help her family. She has come to admire their neighbor, Samuel Preston. Mr. Preston is still morning the loss of his wife and also happens to be falling in love with Helen's sister Grace. Lots of fun tension and complications in this one. I really liked their brother Christopher and how he looks out for his sisters. There's a good set up for his book, which I believe comes out later this year

Overall, I found it to be an enjoyable story. There were some parts I thought were a little slow, a little too much inner-thought, but that's more of a personal preference. I would easily recommend this series to any regency fan.

Content: Clean

Alisa says

Another great book in this series - I am looking forward to the third book (Christopher's story) coming out later this year...

In Saving Grace, we saw Helen fall in love with Grace's "other suitor," Samuel Preston. In Loving Helen we get their story. When Christopher decides Samuel and Helen must pretend to be engaged to help reunite Nicholas and Grace, Helen doesn't need to pretend. She has been in love with Samuel for quite a while now. But lacking the vibrant personality of his first wife, Elizabeth, she has no reason to believe he will ever return that love.

It was fun watching their relationship develop; I especially enjoyed Helen's relationship with his young daughter, Beth. She was so good and patient with her.

As I was reading this book, I was thinking it would be fun to read Saving Grace and Loving Helen side by side because they take place during the same time period, but are often from different points of view.

And now I can't wait to read Christopher's story next...

Content: Very Clean

Source: Review copy (opinion is 100% my own)

Book Chick (Tori) says

Loving Helen is a companion novel to Saving Grace. Technically it could stand alone, but I really recommend reading Saving Grace first. Loving Helen is actually taking place at the same time as Saving Grace, but you're learning of another story developing within the story of Grace.

I loved having the opportunity to spend more time with the fabulous characters from Saving Grace. I got to know Helen and Christopher, Grace's younger siblings, more this book, as it focused on Helen (hence the title). Helen is super shy, but we learn her reasons for fearing men. I love the story of the red dress. I loved learning more about Samuel's love for his wife and daughter. It's just a nice, clean, sweet story with a few twists I wasn't expecting. 4.5 stars! :)

**I received a copy of this ebook in exchange for an honest review.

Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

This is the second book in the Hearthfire Romance series. I would say that you really need to read "Saving Grace", the first book in the series, before you read this book or you will probably be really lost.

I enjoyed the cross over from the first book. We saw some of the same events from "Saving Grace" except they came from Helen's point of view. Helen is very different from her sister, Grace. She is reserved but has a keen way of seeing other people and knowing their hearts. Helen's heart is gentle, soft and full of compassion. She would do anything to help her sister who protected her and cared for her when she was younger.

Mr. Preston is the man Helen loves. Unfortunately, Mr. Preston fancies himself in love with Grace. Not much worse than being in love with a man who is in love with your sister. Poor Helen. When she has the chance to play pretend at loving Mr. Preston, it isn't so pretend for Helen. Her heart breaks almost every day.

This was an enjoyable, sweet and gentle romance. Helen and Mr. Preston are both kind and easy to like. It was nice to see another side to the first story and get to know Helen better. Her journey from the shadows is a good one. I'm excited to read the next book about Christopher. It's going to be a fun one!

Melanie says

This is the second book in this series and I wouldn't consider it a stand alone read. I think it will be more enjoyable if you read Saving Grace first. This story takes place at the same time and we learn what was happening with Helen. Helen wants Samuel Preston to notice her as a woman but he tends to see her more as a nanny for his daughter, Beth. She also overhears his conversations with others and realizes that he's in love with someone else.

When Grace and Nicholas are in danger of breaking up, her brother Christopher approaches Helen and

Samuel with a plan for them to pretend they are engaged. Helen is excited about this plan but Samuel's heart doesn't seem to be in it so she's a bit discouraged.

I loved Samuel in the first book and now I love him even more! Helen was likable in the first book, too, but she was in the background so I enjoyed getting to know her better. Their relationship developed over time and there were obstacles to overcome. I also enjoyed their interactions with Samuel's daughter, Beth, and thought she added lots of fun to their story!

I was torn for a while while reading *Saving Grace*. I loved both Nicholas and Samuel and, while I felt Grace wound up with the right man for her, I wanted Samuel to be happy, too. In this book, I loved getting the "rest of the story." There was a lot going on behind the scenes in the first book and this book fills in the blanks. When I read *Saving Grace*, I did feel like there was a lot missing with Grace's family so I'm glad there was a book about Helen. We also got to see a little more of Christopher and he's a fun character, so I'm looking forward to reading his story next!

I received a copy of this book to review. My opinion is 100% my own.

Mel's Shelves

Melissa says

This is a sequel to *Saving Grace* a book that I really enjoyed. This is a very interesting sequel and honestly I didn't like how it was done. I felt like I knew way too much which made the book drag. They set this book up to run at the exact time the first book was going on. You know exactly what is going to happen and you already know the story line. I was not very happy with the leading lady who was a bit of a whiner threw the first half of the book. I will be reading the third book about the brother. He was the funnest part of reading this book. I really do love the authors style I just think this was a poor story to tell, but I did enjoy it starting about halfway threw:}

Julie says

4.5 stars.

This is the second book in the *Hearthfire Romance* series and is a companion novel to the first one, *Saving Grace*. This is definitely not a stand-alone book and in order for it to make the most sense, you really have to read *Saving Grace* first since this one takes place at the same time.

That said, I really enjoyed the romance between the main characters in *Loving Helen*. There were just enough misunderstandings to build the tension and the addition of Helen's relationship with Beth really showed off the real Helen---the one who's not jumpy and afraid. I loved that Helen is fleshed out as a real character who has overcome so much in her life to bring her to this point and that Mr. Preston doesn't feel an insta-love for her. It made it very realistic, even through their faux-engagement when those tender feelings are beginning to take root. I loved Mr. Preston in the first book and loved him even more in this one. This is

a clean romance, of course, but I have to say there is one "kissing scene" that was totally sigh-worthy. Since I don't want to give away any spoilers, however, I'll stop there. I also thought the author did a great job with the secondary characters and really made the entire cast relatable and believable. I'm excited to read the third book in the series!

Julie Carpenter says

Fair warning that if you haven't read the first book and don't want spoilers, I might have a few references throughout that could be spoilerish to some. I always try not to but there might be a couple spots in my review where it is necessary. It won't be any big reveal but little references, so proceed with caution if you are like me and don't like spoilers. ;-)

Well, when I started this one I was struggling a little bit to get into it. I think that anybody reading straight from Saving Grace to Loving Helen might feel that way. Loving Helen opens with Samuel Preston having already brought Grace's family and trusted servants to live at his guesthouse. It actually starts on the day of Elizabeth, Preston's deceased wife's birthday. Of course this is everything happening from Helen's point of view so there are recap moments and scenes where Helen secretly comes upon Preston and Grace's conversations from book one. So a good portion of the beginning, after just having read Saving Grace, felt like I had already read it. Yes it is different because we see a lot more of Preston and his daughter Beth, and we really get to delve into Helen's thoughts and learn who she really is. All we know are little snippets from the first book that Helen is very shy and has anxiety attacks when around angry people or large crowds.

Grace and Helen are very different and that has Helen wishing several times throughout the book that she could be more like her sister. That if only she could be more strong willed and not afraid to speak up for what she wants then her life could truly be lived as if it were her dream come true. I really liked the opening scene where Helen shows quite a bit of gumption/backbone and steps up for something that she truly wants and believes will help her family. Helen is very loving and kind. She is also very perceptive of those around her and can see through to their hearts and is able to empathize with their joys and sorrows.

Helen is said to be very shy but I loved watching her interactions in any relationship that she has in the book. With their groomsman, their maid, Preston, Beth, Christopher and eventually with Grace. These two sisters may be very different but at the same time they are very similar. They have seen horror and sorrow yet through it all have worked so closely to save their family for years that they love deeply and would sacrifice anything to save each other.

If you have read Saving Grace, you know that Helen and Preston end up together at the end, so this is really their story and it is beautiful and sweet. Two loving and tender souls who have seen much sorrow yet don't allow it to bring them down, are able to bring joy and healing to the each other's lives. There are of course plenty of ups and downs. No love story would be complete without a little angst and misunderstandings and frustrations and sorrow between our two MCs.

Sometimes I was a little frustrated with Helen and Preston because of the misunderstandings but both acted certain ways back and forth that made the other unsure what their feelings were. But I will say the ending was so fun! Not only does it tie up Helen and Preston's relationship but it continues to delve a little bit further into Grace's. *sigh* I really liked Grace and Nicholas' story.

The very last thing that I am going to add is about Christopher. Oh my heavens, can I just say how much I

was hoping we would see more of him. There were only a few small glimpses of him in book one and for more than the first half that was about all we were given in this book. Then, the author gives us a fun little treat in regards to Christopher's character. Not giving anything away here but I couldn't help laughing after I read a scene. It was one of those double take moments...my head whiplashed back to the couple paragraphs and I had to read them again, just to make sure I read it right the first time. YESSSSSSSS I did! Ha! Then to have Preston chuckling about it a scene later. I loved it. Honestly it's really nothing big but it was perfect and I loved it! I'm really excited to read his story now. I'm really hoping though that we start fresh for him and not in the middle of either of his sisters' stories or I might have a hard time once again getting into it. Not that it is hard to get into but I think these are like any books of a group/series, the author gives a refresher since it's been some time in between one book to the next being released. Since I don't have to wait in between books for the next one to be published the recap is not what I want to be reading, give me the meat of the next story with all the nummy sides. Hopefully that makes sense.

Content: Clean and sweet with some tender kisses.

My own personal copy

Happy Reading!!!

Katie W says

Loving Helen is a companion book to Saving Grace and I highly recommend reading Saving Grace first. The events that take place parallel each other, but are a completely different perspective and therefore, a completely different story, but a reader will be lost without reading the first book.

I adore Helen! She's the younger sister of Grace and Christopher and is shy. She enjoys keeping to herself, but when she meets young Beth, she can't help but fall in love with her...and with her father, Samuel. Helen is reserved, yet she's so much fun; she's quiet, but she has such great ideas; she knows what she wants, yet she is willing to sacrifice everything for her sister's happiness. Helen spans both ends of the spectrum, depending on her setting and there's so much to her personality.

Samuel is a great father and as a widower, he's hesitant to jump into love again. When a charade is called for, he's completely on board and enjoys every minute of it. He's very kind and has a way of drawing a person out. He's very easy to fall for.

I love a story where there is a pretend relationship, especially one with sparks. This story was very romantic and I could feel the anticipation, but it was completely clean. I can't wait to read Christopher's story!

Content: Clean!

I received a copy in exchange for an honest review

Kathy says

I enjoyed this book. Great story but do not start here like I did.

The characters from the first book are ever present in this one and most details of their story were revealed so starting here was a mistake. I went back to read the first book after I finished this one.

Helen and Samuel are a good fit for each other and I enjoyed watching their love develop.

Content: Clean

Cheesecake says

Helen and Samuel. This is the second in the series and the stories are very intertwined, so you might want to read them in order. I, however, was more intrigued with this story. Helen is the youngest of three siblings who have had some very tough years growing up. This story starts partway through the first book but from Helen and Samuel's POVs. The first book is about Grace and Nicholas, the brother of Samuel's dead wife, who lives next door. Nicholas is a bit of an overbearing ass. Samuel is a quieter, kinder man and much more Helen's speed. Things in her past have scarred her self confidence and made her afraid of men. But Samuel doesn't scare her. Samuel however, sees her older sister as a more suitable match. That is, if she weren't falling in love with Nicholas. Basically Samuel takes Helen's presence as his guest for granted as he secretly pursues Grace. (view spoiler). He knows, however that Grace doesn't see him that way. It becomes clear that his friendship with Grace is ruining her relationship with Nicholas. So Samuel and Helen conspire to pretend to have developed an affection for each other to ease Nicholas's jealousy. The pretending is of course not pretending by then. There is also the looming threat of a couple of scummy lords that want Helen for themselves.

So basically, the crux of the story is, can Helen gain Samuel's affection and can Samuel get his head out of his *ss before he's dug too deep a hole for himself?

I really enjoyed this story and loved the writing. It flows well and the characters developed nicely as they got to know each other better. There is no sex but allusions to it after marriage. I didn't miss it though. I often get bored with long drawn out sex scenes. I want the romance and that is definitely present! I did find it odd that Samuel is a doctor who never seemed to do any doctoring...

I did wish that Helen could have gotten a more dramatic gesture of love before the wedding. (view spoiler) I also wish that the story had been more about just the two of them. I got sick of hearing about Grace and Nicholas and Samuel's dead wife. They weren't present in the story often but they were talked about a LOT. There is a nice little epilogue that somewhat assuaged my disappointment, but I still felt kinda letdown. Still, I look forward to reading more from this author in future. I felt like she almost had it perfect or at least 4 stars if the romantic buildup hadn't fizzled at the end.

Chrissy says

So sweet. In the middle, I would have rated it 4 stars, but the last half kept me so invested and the end was so sweet that I had to give it 5 stars.

While you don't have to read the first book, "Saving Grace," before this one, I think it makes it more fun and I recommend it. This book is happening during the first book, and reading this one first will give away all that happens in the first book.

Olivia-Savannah Roach says

This review can originally be found on Olivia's Catastrophe: <http://olivia-savannah.blogspot.nl/20...>

Another great historical fiction romance from Michele Holmes. Can she ever go wrong?

This one was a bit of a contrast to book one, but can still be read as a standalone if you want to do so. In the previous book we got to see Helen as a shy girl who can't stand up for herself as Grace's sister. I couldn't imagine the girls to be more different. But now that the story is focused on her, I was surprised by how much we didn't know about her. She is a lot more confident than you could imagine her to be, and if she is nervous or frightened she has a very good reason to be which I can't reveal in fear of spoiling the novel. But I liked how this book showed so much character development.

At first I was a little bit confused with trying to place this novel. It doesn't quite start where the previous book ended. In fact, it's showing the other half of the story. And seeing as Helen isn't near Grace at all for the first book it isn't simply a retelling of the story from another point of view. It's a unique story which is closely connected to the previous one. And you start to see that many things happened in the previous novel for reasons you wouldn't have been able to imagine.

Another character that we didn't get to see much of in the previous novel is Christopher – who will be the lead for the next story. I liked his character fairly enough although he did seem to be overly manipulative sometimes and that bothered me. I wonder if that take on him will bother me in the next book or not...

As for the historical element to this romance it isn't too strong, but it is evidently there in the balls they go to, the clothing they wear and the way they treat each other. But it isn't like the romance relies on events that happen in the time period, so I wouldn't say it is a large factor to the story.

The themes running through this one were pretty important to. Samuel had previously been married but she had died, and left him with a daughter. I have to admire him for trying to grow up his daughter in the right way but struggling as he is still grieving himself for the loss of a wife and love. And the element of family is strong in this one too. I loved it.

Can't wait for the sequel to come out. We already have a cover as well, which makes me happy! Eagerly awaiting it.

Sherri says

Loved It!!!

I loved this book!!!! Helen and Samuels story is so so Sweet!!! I just loved it!! Loved it! Loved it!! Loved it!!!! So great! Just read it! But make sure to read Saving Grace first!

Kim says

The only reason I gave this one 4 stars was that the author blew my mind with the first one in the series

Saving Grace, so it unfortunately was a hard act to follow. Saving Grace was after all my second favorite regency romance in 2014 after Prelude for a Lord by Camille Elliot.

Loving Helen is a clean secular traditional regency romance companion novel to Saving Grace. The two novels occur at the same time with the same cast of characters. We get to see all the events that happened out of the reader's sight in the neighboring estate and other locales to Grace's siblings (Helen and Christopher) and Grace's other suitor for marriage, Dr. Samuel Preston. Reading this companion novel solved a lot of questions I had while reading the first novel, especially the why and whats of creating a HEA for said mentioned Dr. Mr. Dreamy Perfect Samuel (as I labeled him in my review of the first novel), whom lost Grace fairly quickly to the hero of the first novel.

I admit I had issues with picturing Helen as a future romantic heroine in the first novel and I was wondering how the author was going to convince me in the companion novel. Even though Helen went through the same unbelievably horrific childhood of neglect and depravity from their father as her siblings, it seemed though that Grace and Christopher sheltered and protected her as much as could be possible considering. She seemed fragile, not much of a survivor, and vapid in the first novel. THEN YOU FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HELEN and you understand why her siblings did some of the things they did. Helen is fleshed out as a character more in the companion novel and you realize her courage is just not as obvious as her sister, Grace.

The siblings' grandfather the duke best describes the Helen you first don't notice: *"There is a magic in the ruby that few know of. Outwardly, it is remarkable, a stunning blood-red stone and one of the hardest gems, able to withstand great pressure, much as you have, my dear Helen. But it is the inner fire of the ruby that allows this protection and where its real value lies. Seen only by a few who pause to examine it closely, the ruby's center emits a light of its own, bringing much joy and happiness to those who take the time to appreciate its value. You have that inner fire. It burns strong. Use it wisely. Take courage from it."*

Sensuality content: kisses only

Source: Review copy in exchange for my 100% honest opinion.
