



The Ninth Wife

Amy Stoll

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Bess Gray has just learned that the man she loves, the man who asked for her hand in marriage, has been married eight times before. This funny, touching, and surprising novel follows Bess on her cross-country odyssey to learn about her oft-wed fiancé from the eight ex-spouses who came before.

Stolls, an acclaimed author of Young Adult novels and winner of the Parents' Choice Gold Award brilliantly explores the very grown-up world of male-female relationships and family dynamics in the delightful, unforgettable new masterwork of contemporary women's fiction.

The Ninth Wife Details

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From Reader Review *The Ninth Wife* for online ebook

Abria Mattina says

This book and I never really got along. We learned to co-exist, but that's about it.

Initially, I had a hard time with the prose style. Bess's chapters are particularly wordy and meandering. Introducing new characters takes pages of flashbacks to accomplish. It would have been easier to bear if Bess was a likeable character, since she forms the lens through which other characters and events are portrayed.

At the beginning of the book I had a hard time connecting to Bess or feeling moved by her depression. She has a good life, but can't seem to see it and appreciate it. Instead she's a pathetic, self-pitying, rootless worrywart.

At thirty-five, Bess still craves validation from external sources. She seeks her roots through her job as a folklorist, and she only seems to feel good about herself when others give her positive feedback (flirting, compliments, etc.). I felt like she gained a bit of confidence and self-respect by the end of the novel, but I still wouldn't want to hang out with her in real life.

The introduction of Rory, Bess's significant other, was a breath of fresh air. He's fun, interesting, able to part with the past, and willing to take risks—basically, the total opposite of Bess. That said, he's also very flawed. Much like Bess needs others for validation, Rory feels the need to propose marriage to every woman he experiences an emotional response to (and one he doesn't). He feels validated by being in a relationship and in his mid-forties, can't seem to form his own identity without adding 'husband' to his list of roles.

He explains to Bess, "I like the version of me as someone's husband better than the version of me alone and single. Plain and simple."

The 'someone' in that sentence is very telling. Rory likes the role of husband more than he likes his wives, which explains why he feels the need to put a significant label on every passing attachment or attraction. The woman means less than the label.

Rory and Bess's relationship is fairly predictable. The ending is inevitable within the first hundred pages. Maybe because of this, in places it felt like Stolls was trying to write their romance to be as ridiculous and bumbling as possible just to spice it up. One of the most significant scenes involves an uncomfortable marriage proposal during an episode of diarrhea, seemingly crafted to be as outrageous as possible.

Toward the end of the novel, the plot breaks down into a series of happy coincidences. It means that the book wraps up nicely, but these conclusions are not always believable, particularly the one belonging to Bess's friend and neighbour, Cricket.

I wouldn't reread *The Ninth Wife*, and I probably wouldn't recommend it to a friend. I came away from the book frustrated and feeling like I had learned nothing, which isn't a good feeling after 400+ pages.

Danelle says

We learn much about people by the people in their lives and how they interact with them. This is what I loved about this book. I learned a lot about Bess, the main character, by the people she spent her time with and it's appropriate I came away with this because it is exactly what Bess hopes to do as she seeks out the 8 (yes, 8!) ex-wives of the man she loves and tries to come to terms with becoming wife #9.

And come to terms she does on a cross-country road trip with her elderly Jewish grandparents, her gay neighbor, his shar-pei Stella and a mannequin named Peace. Though her aim is to learn as much as she can about her fiancé and his failed marriages, she also finds herself learning about the people travelling alongside her and, more surprisingly, herself.

Bess is a 30+ single woman living in DC. She's a folklorist and has all but given up on the idea that someone out there is 'the one.' She's not lonely, but she is tired of being alone and with her biological clock ticking, she's becoming more despondent. Then, she meets Rory, a handsome Irish musician, and falls in love. Rory asks her to marry him and then tells her his 'big secret'. To help her come to terms with it, she drives across country to deliver her grandparents to their new retirement community and meets his wives along the way.

The book's look at relationships via the perspectives of the two main characters, Bess and Rory, is original. All of the characters are clear and really well done. The book is well-written and nicely paced (and it's really funny to boot)! Overall, it's an exceptional look at what happens when fantasy meets reality in love (or loves) and marriage (or marriages) and how much our past has to do with our present and our future.

I obtained this ARC copy of this book through the Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

Michelle says

Utterly charming novel about, as the title might indicate, someone's ninth potential wife. This is not a Big Love/Sister Wives/FLDS tome but instead about a thirty-something, single DC woman who falls in love with a dashing, interesting man she later discovers has been married a whopping 8 previous times.

Interspersed with Bess's story are chapters devoted to Rory's take on his life and marriages. These were perfectly executed. Before I started the book my thought was: why would a normal woman even consider dating a guy who'd been married eight times, much less marrying him? The author did an amazing job of making him completely sympathetic (a romantic hero, even) while still highlighting his mistakes and faults. Rory never considered himself blameless in his prior marriages. It was clear to me why Bess fell so hard, clear to me why she considered continuing on in their relationship once she learned the truth. This is not an easy feat and the author pulled it off beautifully.

I also loved the direction the novel took in the second half and found myself, in a word, "delighted" (not a word I use, like, ever) with many of the plot turns. There were also several complex side stories and relationships, which made the overall tale all the richer.

I will admit it took a bit to get into Bess's character, perhaps because I just cannot relate to a folklorist/martial arts hobbyist. Also, I didn't totally get what her job consisted of on a daily basis, which,

while not particularly important, might've fleshed out the character more quickly. I did love the DC setting, a city I lived in for many years and which I consider my second home (I didn't know they still had the "Social Safeway"!)

Eventually Bess did click for me as a character, but I'll admit it took several days to read the first 100 pages and then I read the last 400 in one afternoon.

Also, my only other minor quibble with the book was that a fairly major scene about 10 pages from the end is told after it happened. That bugged me, I felt a little bit cheated. But, otherwise, this was a wonderful, filling, delicious kind of book, perfect if you just want to sit down for a good long while and read. I highly recommend this and predict it will be a big book when it debuts later this year!

Tiffany Skinner says

I'll be honest, I read this book because I liked the cover. Note to self: always remember, don't judge a book by its cover!! This story is for those that really don't believe in the institution of marriage and are happily surprised when it just happens to work out. This book is nothing like the description I read, and is definitely nothing like the sort-of mysterious, somewhat haunting cover. It's about two people who not only don't know what they are doing in life, but don't know what they actually want out of life. There's no mystery whatsoever to speak of, and it's not even really that romantic because there is no chase, no courting. Basically goes like this. Man meets girl. Girl likes man. Skip a few months ahead (she literally skips ahead, no details about these two actually getting into the relationship). Girl is suddenly sleeping with man without really knowing anything about him, and likewise him with her. And that's the book. Yeah, there is this truth that he's been married 8 times, but it's really no mystery. Over half of his marriages are mistakes from the beginning and it's easy for anyone to see that. Really, save yourself the time and read something better!

Darcy Odden says

Would you marry a man who has been married eight times before? I wouldn't. Unless that man were Irish musician Rory and I were Bess Gray, a mid-30s folklorist.

Bess meets Rory at a party she throws for singles. Well, actually it's her birthday party, but she doesn't tell the invitees about that.

Bess and Rory fall in love, and then he tells her he's been married eight times before. Rory explains all the marriages - from his first love, Maggie, with whom he emigrates from Ireland to the United States, to his eighth wife, Gloria, who has left him.

Bess is very close to her Jewish grandparents, who decide to move to Arizona. But since her grandfather is afraid of flying, Bess and her friend Cricket drive her grandparents to Tucson. And as long as she's in the vicinity of some of Rory's ex-wives, Bess decides to meet them so she can question them about Rory.

I can't imagine it would be often that you'd meet a guy who has been married eight times. And even though you loved him, could you count on that love to last? That's where Bess finds herself. I don't blame her for wanting to check out Rory's ex-wives, I'd probably want to check them out also.

Ultimately, "The Ninth Wife" is a compelling read about families and forgiveness.

Note: The book was provided through Goodreads.

Suzanne says

Love the cover.

Annica says

I actually couldn't finish the book. Unless you're single and DESPERATE I wouldn't recommend this book. Bess' tedious relationship with her gay neighbour is described ad nauseum and there are too many events that range from unlikely to unbelievable.

How about your long-lost ex-boyfriend turning up, uninvited to your 35th birthday party with his current, highly pregnant girlfriend whose water promptly breaks in your bed whilst the ex-boyfriend disappears without a trace??????

ILoveBooks says

I really liked the concept behind the book, there were many lessons to be learned through reading. The characters were all fun to read about, some got a little grating, others I enjoyed the whole time. The main character was incredibly likeable and I enjoyed many of the previous eight wives.

Kim says

I am so excited to win this book through a First Reads giveaway! The cover is interesting and the synopsis of the book is interesting. I can't imagine.....can't wait to read it!

Naomi says

I have to be totally honest with the reader of this review..when I first grabbed this book and started to read it, I didn't think I was going to make it through..I remember telling someone "Ugg..it is a typical women's lit book that I am going to have to suffer through! Really what dumb twit is going to think about being someone's 9th wife!" Somewhere about 75 pages in the characters snapped into place and I found myself drawn into this book and ALL its' characters..I would read it first in the morning to find out what happened to the characters in my allotted reading for the day and would even sneak in extra reading time...So, ending statement ..I loved this book! To boot, this is the author's first adult audience book. Final GR rating **4.5/5 Stars**

Jean says

The Ninth Wife is a little overwhelming at first because it is a long book and because there are two characters telling the story. Each chapter I had to figure out who was talking and adjust but after awhile when you get to know the characters it becomes easier. This is a BIG storyline with many details so many times I would only read a chapter or two and let it sink in before continuing, but I never really wanted to put it down. Bess and Rory are both characters that you fall in love with as well as Bess's friend Cricket. There is never a dull moment in this story and it makes you realize that there is no perfect relationship and often times things in life don't go as planned and if you just take one day at a time you will eventually figure it out, it doesn't matter how long it takes. Thank you goodreads, once again the giveaway was amazing! :-)) I recommend this book to everyone! :-))

Sheila says

With her biological clock madly ticking away, folklorist Bess Grey finds herself single and childless on her 35th birthday. Then she meets Rory McSomethingorother, who is gorgeous and Irish and plays the banjo. They fall in love. He proposes. Here's the thing: he's been married 8 times before. Bess sets out on a cross-country journey to help her grandparents relocate and does some soul-searching (and ex-wife searching) along the way.

Top Ten Reasons I Did Not Like This Book:

1. Bess and Rory exchange the most awkward, least witty banter I've ever encountered.
2. The very premise of the book is beyond ridiculous. But - having said that, I really do believe that in the right hands, with the right execution, it could've been good. It could've been edgy and interesting instead of a bit of contrived fluff.
3. The scene where Rory hovers outside the bathroom door for like, half an hour, talking to Bess while she's suffering from a bout of diarrhea and then *proposes marriage* and then OPENS THE DOOR AND GOES INSIDE while she's still sitting - it's just...just...dude. Seriously, Stolls?
4. Bess has one of those jobs where she gets paid a whole lotta dinero for doing, apparently, nothing. Really. I don't think she goes to work once, in over 400 pages. A folklorist. Hrm.
5. Bess is boring. Rory is boring. Her supporting cast is boring *and* stereotypical (Cricket, her Gay Friend, is Liberace, Gabrielle, her Black Friend, does a lot of smart-talking head-bobbing). The only characters I had the slightest bit of interest in were her grandparents, and that was only because they had a surprisingly dark thread running through their relationship. Oh, yeah, and Gerald. He caught my attention too.
6. The last 1/4 of the book is spent on goose-chases and voicemail messages. Stalling, stalling, stalling.
7. That whole thing with her grandfather's "collection" of mannequins is just plain bizarre. Even more so is how his fascination with a particular mannequin prompts Bess to wonder if he "had been a swinger", because that mannequin is black. That connection makes no sense to me.

8. I forget what 8 was for.

9. Stolls has an ass fetish. Seriously. Every five pages or so she mentions someone's ass.

10. 10 is for everything, everything, everything, everything. Hah - just kidding. I didn't really have 10, just 8. My thanks to The Violent Femmes, for "Kiss Off". Really. Thanks, guys. I always did love that song.

One star. Thanks for nothing, Ames.

Theresa says

I loved this book!! The pages really flew by. It kept my interest, obviously the topic is intriguing, that you fall in love with a man who has been married EIGHT times! Between hearing Rory's side of the marriages, Bess tracking down some of the wives and her traveling cross country with a good friend and her grandparents who have a tumultuous relationship, it was hard to put the book down. Loved it.

Heaven is a bookstore says

Review coming to my blog (heavenisabookstore.blogspot.com) when this book publishes, May 5, 2011.

Up until halfway through the book, I found myself a little bored, a little distracted and trying to figure out where this book was going and if there would be any kind of climax.

Contrary to the title's thought process, it isn't about a plural marriage. It's actually about a man who has been married eight times and comes across his ninth wife who is wondering how and why anyone would be married that many times. On top of that, she wants to know why they would want to be married again.

I followed Rory's story and many times I would think, Dude (yes, that word) is this guy dense or what? And then I would find the author actually wrote that in the next paragraph - which made me fond of the book and of Rory's character. I liked that he knew he was making a mistake. He knew that he was fallible. It was probably his fourth wife that I started to realize what a true romantic Rory really is (even though this was stated a few times already, in the book, I didn't believe it). He really wanted to love someone for life and be loved for life. He just never found the person who would do that with/for him. I found this sad and yet, the fact that he kept trying, kept believing, made me like Rory that much more. His mistakes then turned into hope.

Bess, is his proposed to (possible) ninth wife. She has had an interesting life. She was raised by her grandparents who fight all the time and it drives her nuts. Her grandmother constantly tells her grandfather what to do and her grandfather has a secret in the basement that is too good to reveal here. (sorry, you have to read it) I simply love the part (and maybe this is why and when I became entranced with this book) when Bess decides to go and meet these previous wives and ask them why. Why did they marry Rory, why did they break up. I love her guts to even embark on this journey, let alone her continuing and following up with it and not chickening out. I could see many women thinking this is a great idea, but then thinking it's crazy,

yet if you want to marry someone wouldn't you go to the ends of the earth to find out if it's good?

These are some of my favorite excerpts -

"I don't want to go home," she says, quietly, not meeting his eyes. She crosses the room and sits on the bed. He closes the door and sits by her. He waits for her to speak. She lies down on the bed in a fetal position, slides a pillow under her head and holds her stomach. "You are a story teller. Tell me the story of your married life."

"Are you sure you want to hear it?" He touches her leg. She doesn't recoil.

People say I don't have to rush into marriage. But the way I see it, why prolong? Dao and I waited more than three years and she still left me. And it's true. Gloria left me after a short marriage, but there were reasons I'm aware of then, even from the first moment. I still imagine myself with a woman I can grow old with. I want to be able to look back on my life and see how much we shared. It's what my parents had and I think I've always been searching for that. But already more than half my life is over. That's a sobering thought.

At first I kept thinking that Bess should run as fast as she could away from this man, Rory. He was a mess and didn't seem to be able to communicate outside of his music. He was very much a child, but as his story unfolds I see the vulnerability he only offers up if you stay and listen to his life. I realize the need and want of love. It was a beautiful thing and before I knew it, I was hoping for them to get married.

Though this book got off to a slow start, I really took this book to heart. It has quite a few things one can learn and instill in a relationship, even if a few are about what not to do. I felt for each of these characters for so many different reasons, but above all I wanted them all to be in love and happy in the end. The Ninth Wife is a prime example of how do I rate a book on a scale when it meets so many other criterion that is unmeasurable?

Michelle says

Posted on Book Chelle.

Reality is that there is no perfect love story. It's not as simple as boy meets girl, they fall in love, and happily ever after. Sometimes, relationships and families aren't like what you see on tv, in the movies, or what you read in books. Amy Stoll told a great story of love, forgiveness, and finding out what it means to open your heart.

Bess is 35 and single. She takes karate classes to strengthen her inner self, her physical self, and hopes to obtain confidence that her instructor talks about. She is a folklorist, in love with the history and past that she longs to have. She was raised by her grandparents, lives in front of a man named Cricket and a dog named Stella, and is best friends with a very outspoken individual. She has lived her life convinced that she is not worthy of the great love that everyone seems to have experience. Stolls has written in her a way that you cannot help but feel for her.

Rory is 45 and also single. But in Rory's case, he came from Ireland and has lived all over the United States. He has had almost every job from data entry to strumming keys as a musician. He has vices, addictions, and a heart so big, you cannot help but love him. Unlike Bess, he has felt love in his life. He has felt it at least 8

times, with his 8 wives. He is compassionate, but with a great fault. He acts on what his heart feels, and whether the outcome is positive or negative, he owns up to it. And when Rory meets Bess, he wants to make her the ninth wife.

To me, this book just wasn't just about the tale of the wives, or even just about Bess and Rory. To me, this story was about the love and relationships between husband and wife, lovers, friends, family. Stolls encompasses the different levels of love between two people. She tells the stories of Rory's wives and the positives and negatives about each type of love. She tells the story of Bess, her lack of love and how she witnesses the downside of what love can do, whether it be her parents, her grandparents, or her dear friends. Stolls writes about love and these relationships in such a way that you can't help but picture yourself in one of those scenarios.

At first, I couldn't stand behind the principle of nine wives. I couldn't understand how I could grow to like a character that has gone through so much and has done so much to different women. But I am a victim of judging too early. Stolls, through Bess and Rory, has made me realize how powerful love can be. It can break you down into the depths of darkness, and it can also bring you alive in such a way that you feel you are unstoppable.

The Ninth Wife is a fantastic read. The writing style of Amy Stolls makes this story easy to relate and the characters lovable. I would suggest this to anyone who has ever felt or wanted to feel love.
