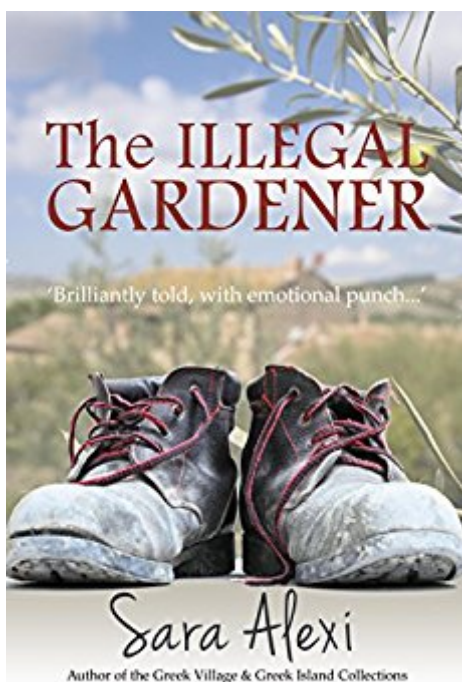


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The Illegal Gardener (The Greek Village Series Book 1)



Synopsis

The ultimate holiday read!!The Illegal Gardener is a moving, poignant story about life's rare encounters which knock us off our path, and elevate our very existence.Driven by a need for some control in her life, Juliet sells up on impulse and buys a run down farmhouse in a tiny Greek village, leaving her English life behind. Her boys have grown and she has finally divorced her bullying husband. This is her time now.Whilst making her new home habitable, Juliet discovers she needs a sturdy helping hand with the unruly and neglected garden. Unwilling to share her newfound independence with anyone, but unable to do all the work by herself, she reluctantly enlists casual labour.Aaman has travelled to Greece from Pakistan illegally. Desperate to find a way out of poverty, his challenge is to find work and raise money for the harvester his village urgently need to survive.What he imagined would be a heroic journey in reality is fraught with danger and corruption. Aaman finds himself in Greece, and with each passing day loses a little more of himself as he survives his new life as an immigrant worker; illegal, displaced, unwanted and with no value. Hungry and stranded, how will he ever make it back home to Pakistan?In what begins as an uncomfortable exchange, Juliet hires Aaman to be her gardener, but resents the intrusion even though she needs the help. Aaman needs the work and money but resents the humiliation.In spite of themselves, as the summer progresses, they get to know one another and discover they have something in common. Pieces of their lives they have kept hidden even from themselves are exposed, with each helping the other to face their painful past.Will Juliet and Amaan finally let each other in? And what will be the outcome of this improbable conjoining of two lost souls?

Book Information

File Size: 1562 KB

Print Length: 290 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Oneiro Press; 1 edition (December 1, 2013)

Publication Date: December 1, 2013

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B008LMT78U

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #9,401 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #1 in Books > Travel > Europe > Greece > General #15 in Kindle Store > Whispersync for Voice > Travel #67 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel

Customer Reviews

A dear Goodreads friend recommended this book to me; otherwise, I would have never noticed it. It turned out to be a wonderful novel. The Illegal Gardener is number one in a series of 19 books focused on the population of a small village in Greece. This was a different story for me, and is so elegantly told by author Sara Alexi. It is totally character driven, focusing on the relationship between a British Greek-English translator named Juliet and Aaman, her illegal Pakistani houseboy, 16 years her junior. These two, initially separated by class, come to respect and deeply care for one another. Despite their obvious differences, they find a lot of common ground. This is not a romance novel, but a subtle telling of what becomes a profound friendship, which almost certainly will last a lifetime. There is surprising depth to the story. Issues addressed include: fate being tied to a person's mother's birthplace; the oppression of class differences; the struggle, indignities and lack of opportunity faced by those wishing to start over in a different land; and how a little help for an unfortunate individual can result in a total turnaround of life circumstances. Ms. Alexi is an accomplished writer. Her prose is beautiful, but certainly not overdone. She magically transports the reader into the setting, giving one a real flavor of Greek life and landscape. The scenes involving living conditions of the poor and gritty detention centers are just as vivid. I felt I was there. It is clear to me the author also did a tremendous amount of research into the various themes of the story. Everything about the novel felt very realistic. The book lost a star from me as it took a while to draw me in. Initially, I did not like Juliet—she was off putting. As the story progressed, she began to see her flaws and I could finally root for her. There is no real mystery, but there were tense moments in the narrative. Even if there had been no major tension at all, the relationship between Juliet and Aaman easily propelled the tale for me. I do not want to fail to mention that I loved the running side commentary about the little cat family that adopted Juliet. I highly recommend The Illegal Gardener to readers looking for a moving character-driven novel about the unlikely development of a powerful relationship. I am definitely interested in reading more of this fine series.

Sara Alexi's well-wrought prose transports one to sunny Greece as she develops the serendipitous friendship between Juliet, a well-educated Englishwoman, and Aaman, an impoverished illegal immigrant from a small village in Pakistan. Juliet needs help with the labor of transforming the neglected house she has purchased as a haven to regain her confidence in herself and others after ending a suffocating marriage. She finds that help in hard-working Aaman, who is desperately trying to earn enough money to return home and help with the purchase of the harvester needed for his village to survive. As they work together, a mutual trust, respect and deep caring develops and grows as each helps the other to achieve their goals. I was sorry to leave the charming Greek village and these intriguing protagonists as the book ended, and I look forward to reading the next book in Alexi's "The Greek Village Collection".

Explore the intricate relationship between an expatriate and an undocumented person living extremely different life styles in Greece. A wealthy translator, buys a house, fulfilling her life's dream, after a failed miserable marriage of twenty five years. She hires an illegal immigrant to help transform a neglected garden, full of rubbish. The ensuing story is one of epic proportions. As the story progresses both lives change dramatically for the better. Enjoy reading about the difference one person can make in the lives of others, and grow becoming a better person themselves. It is difficult to decide which character benefited more. A truly beautiful story, well written, and delightful educational reading. Thankfully still a good tale for all ages.

Something captured my attention when reading the reviews of this book, although it is not my typical read. I'm delighted to have spent a pleasant day experiencing Juliet's Greek village. The author evokes the smells, the heat, the sights, the feel of the nearly abandoned house that Juliet now calls home. Juliet is seen by the reader by her actions rather than her description. She moves from a somewhat thoughtless ex-pat to a caring and cared for individual. Aaman is who is responsible for this growth. His trials as an illegal immigrant in Greece, looking for a way to improve his village's life in Pakistan, are vividly told. Any book that brings smiles, a few chuckles, and tears has my vote. I discovered that there are 19 books in this series! I question whether the quality of this writing can be sustained, but I plan to try at least one more title.

Incredible writing! Such a compassionate, empathetic, but far from saccharine creator of characters to meet, come to know, and come to love. Gradually, with everyday occurrences from waking and

eating, or not, each character reveals their thoughts and emotions, while their conversations build knowledge of their histories, goals, losses, and dreams. The book is a page turner. Like a relatively new friend or lover, we want to know more and care about what is happening to them. The rural Greek village life adds spice to a story of mythical proportions while the suffering of an undocumented worker whose poverty creates an unimaginable daily burden is remarkably universal harkening to the situation for undocumented immigrants in the rural USA today. The British woman seeking a new life after divorce is universal while specific and different from such American characters. Months after reading this with memory holes from a recent concussion, I remember this book and the people living there as clearly as the characters in "Little Women" back in middle school, remember their quirks and foibles, and hold them in my heart. A good author will hand you an alternative life to live filled with strangers who become intimates and remain a part of who you are forever, and Sara Alexi does exactly that.

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