

~~~A Sugar & Spice Mystery~~~

# GAME OF SCONES



Mary Lee Ashford

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**As co-owner of Sugar and Spice Cookbooks, Sugar Calloway has seen simple confections bring friends together and spark fiery feuds. Except this time, the recipe truly is to die for . . .**

After losing her job as food editor at a glossy magazine, Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway—aka “Sugar” to friends—isn’t sweet on accepting defeat and crawling back to her gossipy southern hometown. So when she has an opportunity to launch a community cookbook business with blue-ribbon baker Dixie Spicer in peaceful St. Ignatius, Iowa, she jumps at the chance to start over from scratch . . .

But as Sugar assembles recipes for the local centennial celebration, it’s not long before she’s up to her oven mitts in explosive threats, too-hot-to-handle scandals, and a dead body belonging to the moody matriarch of the town’s first family. With suspicions running wild, Sugar and Spice must solve the murder before someone innocent takes the heat—and the real culprit gathers enough ingredients to strike again . . .

**\* Includes delicious recipes! \***

## Game of Scones Details

Date : Published December 4th 2018 by Lyrical Underground

ISBN :

Author : Mary Lee Ashford

Format : Kindle Edition 254 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery

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## From Reader Review Game of Scones for online ebook

### K.A. Davis says

GAME OF SCONES is the first book in the brand new Sugar & Spice Mystery series by Mary Lee Ashford! The premise of Sugar & Spice is cleverly based on the names of the protagonist, Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway, aka Sugar, and her friend, Dixie Spicer, aka Spice. Together they own Sugar and Spice Publishing Company, which publishes community cookbooks for fundraisers in St. Ignatius, Iowa. I truly enjoyed the insight the author provides about the details of creating the cookbook for their first client, the St. Ignatius Founder Day Committee fundraiser. The mouthwatering descriptions of the dishes Spice tests for the cookbook will leave the reader drooling, along with some interesting regional dishes mention that had me running to Pinterest to find out exactly what it was.

Ms. Ashford has created some fun, well-developed characters for this new series. Sugar and Spice work well together and have great interaction. I like the potential for romantic developments between Spice and the local sheriff (although something happened between them long ago that has caused a rift). And the handsome food photographer might just be interested in Sugar. The action starts right off the bat with a huge dispute between two elderly committee members, almost a cat fight, over whose scone recipe will be included in the cookbook. After Sugar finds one of the women murdered and Spice's aunt is considered a suspect, they decide to start asking questions to get to the bottom of the mystery. There are plenty of suspects to keep the reader guessing and as the two women sift through the clues, the stakes turn even higher when their fledgling business is vandalized. The exciting reveal has some twists and turns that I didn't see coming and I look forward to future installments in this delicious new series!

So many yummy dishes are described as Spice tests the recipes and styles them for the photographer. Ms. Ashford has a delicious way of helping the reader practically see, smell, and taste the dishes prepared. Fortunately, she includes a few recipes at the back of the book that all sound amazing!

I was provided an advance copy with the hopes I would review. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### Cozy Cat Reviews says

This is book one in the new "Sugar And Spice" Mystery series. I found this quite a enjoyable read and a compelling promising series that I look forward to reading. Thank you to the publisher and to Net Galley for the ARC. My opinions are my own. I was thrilled to find out that author is part of the duo that writes the "Sparkle Abbey" mystery series which is delightful .

Sugar is our protagonist who has sunk everything she has in a new business venture with her partner after moving to a very small charming town in Iowa. She wants to publish community cookbooks and is of the hope that project will prove popular in her small town. The project is unfinished because one of their backers is found murdered, She immediately decides to be the one who jumps in to solve the case to help save her personal investment. When a second death occurs the mystery deepens and Sugar and her partner are on the case.

The characters are all entertaining as is the small town of gossip and innuendo. The plot was likable and the

writing well crafted and had a nice pace without unnecessary details. All the elements of a good cozy series are here. I enjoyed this first in series and look forward to the following books in the series. Sugar is a believable, hard working independent protagonist . This is rare in cozies as usually the protagonist is living off their families trust funds and inheritance. So I appreciated reading about a independent woman who has taken control of her own life. Recipes are at the end of the book and I hope that will continue with the next in series. All in all a very enjoyable mystery and a great start to the series. Cross posted review.

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### **JoAn says**

Game of Scones by Mary Lee Ashford was a delight to read. Ms. Ashford is a "new to me" author but this book had everything that I look for in a cozy mystery.

I enjoyed this setting as it was quite different from the usual small tourist town setting. St. Ignatius, IA is a small rural community that has survived through hardships by working together. I loved both Sugar and Dixie as they both seem to be strong, smart and capable young women who have begun their own business publishing community cookbooks. I found this to a unique career choice that I've never seen in other books.

The plot moves quickly and drew me in from the first chapter. After the death of the town matriarch (who had created plenty of enemies), there were several suspects that had a motive to want the troublesome woman dead. Then a second death occurs and the sheriff has his hands full and Sugar and Dixie keep asking questions. There were also a couple of secondary threads throughout the story that weren't directly related to the murders but did show how small towns thrive on gossip as well as how they come together to help each other.

I enjoyed the book and look forward to more books from this author.

I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book from Lyrical Underground via NetGalley. All of the above opinions are my own.

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### **JPC says**

A nice, easy read about murder-mystery in a small town. Sugar and Dixie get caught up in a murder mystery while producing a community cookbook and try to get to the bottom of the matter themselves.

While not along the lines of my usual reads, it was enjoyable. It's not an on-the-edge-of-your-seat type mystery, but seems like the perfect thing to read bundled up with a scone and coffee of (my personal favorite) hot chocolate. I would have liked a little more character depth, but all in all, I enjoyed it.

\*\* Received an e-copy in advance of its release through a Goodreads giveaway \*\*

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### **RO G'ma says**

3.5 Stars

Game of Scones is the first book in Mary Lee Ashford's Sugar & Spice Mystery series and is an entertaining

read with well-developed characters and an interesting mystery.

Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway (Sugar) lost her job as a senior food editor for a magazine when they downsized, relocated to the small town of St. Ignatius, and started Sugar and Spice Publishing, a community cookbook publishing company for fundraisers in St. Ignatius, Iowa, with her friend, Dixie Spicer. Sugar handles the business end, and Dixie takes care of testing the recipes. Their first project, the St. Ignatius Founders' Day Commemorative Cookbook, hit a snag when two elderly committee members, Elsie Farmer and Bertie Sparks, the owner of Jefferson Street B&B, can't agree on whose scone recipe to put in the cookbook. Elsie threatens to have her family pull their support from the Founders' Day celebration. Sugar discovers Elsie's body in her backyard, clutching a scone, and when Bertie, Dixie's aunt faces arrest for murder, Sugar and Dixie start asking questions to figure out who the murderer is. Bertie is being less than cooperative, and Sheriff Terrance Griffin refuses to remove her from his suspect list. Sugar and Dixie learn the victim wasn't well liked and believe several others have valid motives.

I received an Advance Reader Copy of this book from NetGalley and voluntarily reviewed it.

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### **Anne says**

Game of Scones was a quick, light cozy read, but I found it a bit light on the mystery and detecting aspect. I also found myself wondering how Sugar and Dixie could actually stay in business producing money raising cookbooks for organizations. Granted they're just getting started, but only one client organization with 2 full time salaries, one photographer and one graphics artist to pay? Sorry, sometimes these common sense things pop up and I can't let go.

The killer does something not unusual in a small town, but pretty silly which allowed capture.

So, it was OK and I'd give the next book ago, but not a big thumbs up.

I got my copy from Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Juli says**

I have to admit it was the yummy photo of scones on the cover for this book that led me to read it. The photo looks so good! mmmm. I'm a sucker for culinary cozy mysteries anyway...so I didn't need too hard of a push to read Game of Scones.

Rosetta "Sugar" Calloway recently left behind her career as a senior food editor for a magazine. When profits started declining she was downsized. So, she has relocated to the small town of St. Ignatius and started a cookbook business with her friend, Dixie Spicer. Sugar & Spice Publishing. Now this isn't a Martha Stewart or Paula Deen type cookbook publisher, but one that centers on community cookbooks.....ones with recipes gathered by local organizations, churches, schools, etc. Their first project is the St. Ignatius Founders Day Commemorative Cookbook. Unfortunately, drama has taken over the planning. Elsie Farmer is at war with the owner of the local B&B over which scone recipe will be included in the book, hers or Bertie's. Small town nonsense turns much more serious when Sugar discovers Elsie's dead body on the ground near her

house. The dead woman is found clutching a scone. When Dixie's Aunt Bertie faces arrest for murder, Sugar knows she needs to ferret out the real killer!

I really enjoyed this first book in the Sugar & Spice Mystery series. I grew up in a small town....and live in one now....and the characters, gossip, and little oddities of St. Ignatius made me smile. So much like real life in any small town. From disputes over falling leaves to fights over family recipes.....small town life has its own set of peculiarities. Everyone knows everybody's business. And gossip passes through town at the speed of light. I like the setting for this new series, the characters and the background theme of a small community cookbook publishing business.

All in all, a quick entertaining read. The front cover is engaging....and yummy! There are recipes at the end of the book -- two scone recipes (so you can make a choice between Elsie and Bertie's recipes) and a broccoli dish as well. I will definitely be reading more books in this series!

The second book in this series, *Risky Biscuits*, will publish in July 2019.

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\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Kensington via NetGalley. All opinions expressed are entirely my own.\*\*

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### **The Cozy Review says**

As co-owner of Sugar and Spice Cookbooks, Sugar Calloway has seen simple confections bring friends together and spark fiery feuds. Except this time, the recipe truly is to die for. . . After losing her job as food editor at a glossy magazine, Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway—aka “Sugar” to friends, isn’t sweet on accepting defeat and crawling back to her gossipy southern hometown. When she has an opportunity to launch a community cookbook business with blue-ribbon baker Dixie Spicer in peaceful St. Ignatius, Iowa, she jumps at the chance to start over from scratch.

As Sugar assembles recipes for the local centennial celebration, it’s not long before she’s up to her oven mitts in explosive threats, too-hot-to-handle scandals, and a dead body belonging to the moody matriarch of the town’s first family. With suspicions running wild, Sugar and Spice must solve the murder before someone innocent takes the heat—and the real culprit gathers enough ingredients to strike again.

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Series: A Sugar & Spice Mystery - Book 1

Author: Mary Lee Ashford

Genre: Cozy/Culinary/Business Mystery

Publisher: Lyrical Underground

*Game of Scones* is the debut book in the new “A Sugar & Spice Mystery” series by Mary Lee Ashford. Ms. Ashford is not new to the cozy book industry. She is half of the writing duo of Sparkle Abbey, author of the national best-selling *Pampered Pets* mystery series from Bell Bridge Books (<http://www.bellebooks.com>).

Sugar loves her new home in St. Ignatius, Iowa. Even though having everything she has tied up in a new business venture is stressful, she knows that she and her partner, Dixie can and will be successful. It is just going to take a lot of work, and she has never been afraid of hard work. But when their very first project is in

jeopardy before it's even finished because one of their backers is murdered, she jumps in to solve the case before it puts her in the poor house.

The characters in this book are well developed and highly entertaining. They each have distinctive characteristics that make them instantly loved. Even the murderer and the victim aren't hated by the community or by the reader. The killer, in particular, is a likable character, and some readers will even feel pity for the motive.

The setting is great for this type of story. Small town life can often seem to be one giant gossip fest and knowing everyone who lives there is like having a giant extended family. Like many families, they have the good and bad, but when it comes down to it, they are always there for each other.

The story is fast-paced without skimping on the detail. The writing is intelligent and smooth with easy transitions. The delicious recipes contained in the book are included and will cause the readers mouth to water. The second book in this series comes out in 2019, and readers will grab it up as soon as it hits the bookstore shelves. I highly recommend Game of Scones to anyone who loves a great who-done-it

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### **Carrie says**

Game of Scones by Mary Lee Ashford is the first book of the cozy A Sugar & Spice Mystery series. This series introduces Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway who prefers to just be called Sugar by her friends. After losing her job at a magazine Sugar teamed up with baker Dixie Spicer, the other half of Sugar and Spice, to start a cookbook in the small town of St. Ignatius, Iowa.

Sugar and Dixie came up with the idea of making the cookbook a community effort but as they are gathering recipes for the centennial celebration they find out pleasing everyone is not as easy as it sounds. As much as they knew there were bickering and threats they never expect to find a dead body and have a murder to be solved on their hands.

Yes, it's another small town cozy with quirky characters and lots of culinary delights for the foodies out there, there are even some yummy recipes included in case the book gives readers cravings. This was a solid start to the new series I'd rate at 3.5 stars with decent mystery to solve to clear the aunt of one of the characters of a murder charge. I'll be looking forward to seeing what happens with the characters in the next installment of the series.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

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### **Mark Baker says**

After losing her job at a food magazine, Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway, "Sugar" to friends, opens a new

business with award winning baker Dixie Spicer. Together, the two will shepherd community cookbooks through the publishing process. Their first project is for the centennial of the town where they live, St. Ignatius, Iowa. However, this cookbook has heated up the feud between Elsie, a member of the most prominent family in town, and Bertie, Dixie's aunt. The two are fighting over which of their scone recipes should be included in the book. When Sugar goes to meet with Elsie to attempt to reach a resolution, she finds Elsie's dead body. Bertie is the prime suspect, but she has disappeared. Is she in danger as well, or is she the killer?

This book gets this new series off to a fun start. Sugar and Dixie are a great duo, and they are surrounded by a fun group of family and friends. I enjoyed getting to know them here, and I'm looking forward to getting to know them better in future books. The town is wonderful, with all the hallmarks of a delightful cozy setting, and I enjoyed the fact that it is in Iowa, not some place we typically go for cozies. I did feel the pacing of the mystery was a bit off, but this never lasted for long, and we had a great climax. We get a total of three recipes at the end of the book, including both scone recipes.

NOTE: I received an ARC of this book.

Read my full review at [Carstairs Considers](#).

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### **Kristin Cochran Schadler says**

Very enjoyable read. Enjoyed the small town feel of the setting. Loved all the little side stories. Very enjoyable cast of characters. Didn't see the killer until the end. Excited to read more of this series!

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### **Kathleen says**

“Game of Scones” earns 5/5 Sugar & Spice Scones...Deliciously Fun!

I am always eager to check out first-in-a-series cozy, so when I saw “Scones” and “Mystery” in Mary Lee Ashford’s new book, I was eager to check this out...and I was not disappointed! “Sugar” is Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway and “Spice” is Dixie Spicer, and although they start out creating Sugar & Spice Publishing, a cookbook company, “Mystery” ends up being their game. Sugar and Spice have a unique mission for their company; they publish community cookbooks much like those that charities or local groups would create as a fund-raiser. Their first project will be the St. Ignatius Founder’s Day Commemorative Cookbook, but it turns out to be more murder than meringue!

Culinary-themed cozies are a favorite, and Mary Lee’s book checked all the boxes to be one I’ll continue reading. I really enjoyed all the sweet and savory references and three bonus recipes, but keeping me entertained was the clever mystery challenging my detective skills, quirky characters providing a few giggles, and a satisfying end that made me eager for more. Mary Lee penned well the first-person narrative of Rosetta “Sugar” sharing her inner thoughts and perspective along with laying out the clues, suspects, and motives. And my two favorite words, not “it’s murder,” but “recipes included”! Along with two easy-to-follow scone recipes for Bertie Spark’s Proper English Scones and Elsie Farmer’s Irish Scones, Mary Lee has included Betty Bailey’s Broccoli Gratin. I recommend this book for cozy fans!

"Disclosure: I received an ARC from Net Galley. My review is voluntary with honest insights and comments."

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## **QNPoohBear says**

Thanks to Netgalley for a free advance copy of the book in exchange for my honest review.

Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway aka Sugar left her southern Mama's matchmaking schemes behind and took off for a high falutin' job at a publishing company in the Midwest, where she worked in marketing. Since the publisher went belly up, Sugar now works in partnership with Dixie "Spice" Spicer, the best cook in Jameson County, Iowa to publish community cookbooks. After two local elderly ladies become embroiled in a war over whose scone recipe will be included in the St. Ignatius Founders' Day cookbook, Sugar must summon all her marketing skills to appease the ladies. When she tries to approach Elsie Farmer, wife of a prominent businessman, Sugar is horrified to find Elsie lying dead with a scone in her hand. Worse, the police suspect Elsie's rival, Dixie's aunt Bertie. Dixie is spitting mad. Her Aunt Bertie would never harm a soul and her rivalry with Elsie was just show. The local sheriff isn't convinced. Now Sugar and Spice have a mystery to solve in addition to making preparations for the cookbook, including hiring hunky photographer Max to do the photoshoot. Sugar also has to deal with an elderly landlady who can't let go of her old home and possessions and a cranky neighbor who hates Sugar for no good reason. Good thing she has her cat Ernest to rely on.

This is a cute new mystery. I like the punny title and since I love scones, I knew I had to read this. I enjoyed the story a lot but guessed right away who the murderer was. It seemed obvious to me because that character was a stereotype. I knew it couldn't be too obvious so I wasn't positive but the clues did point in that direction at times. The writing style is fine. It isn't great but it isn't terrible. There are some tedious moments when the characters' actions are described in every minute detail. I liked the small town charm, especially the diner, and got a good sense of community.

There's a lot of crime in this story and I was left unsatisfied when loose ends were not tied up. I had a theory about a certain character but nothing came of it. I also felt there were too many subplots going on, including lengthy details of what it takes to publish a community cookbook. I did appreciate some of the details, having participated in publishing such a cookbook but it made the story unnecessarily long. I liked the hint of romance between Sugar and Max and possibly Dixie and the sheriff. I didn't really care for the subplot about landlady Greer and her possessions. Her son had a right to be concerned because elder abuse is common but I felt that subplot didn't belong in this murder mystery.

Sugar is an enjoyable and relatable protagonist. I certainly understand her desire to leave behind her hometown and go somewhere new. Her sweet personality helps her make friends in the tight knit community and also helps her in her job dealing with the people of St. Ignatius. I was a bit disappointed she is a cat person whereas I prefer dogs. I liked her chemistry with Max. They form a real connection instead of love at first sight or hate at first sight. I love his passion for whatever subject he is photographing at the moment. It shows his dedication to his craft. Dixie is a bit more interesting to read about than Sugar because of her fiery temper and mysterious antipathy towards the sheriff. I also loved that she has a Cairn Terrier mix puppy, Moto. He stole my heart even though he is hardly in the story.

The townspeople consist of ;primarily older women. Greer, Sugar's landlady, a sweet little old lady with a love for murder mysteries and antiques. I feel she imposes too much on Sugar and should have either taken

her treasured possessions or left them with her son. Sugar is a sweetheart to put up with her. Mrs. Pickett, Sugar's neighbor, is a stereotypical cranky old lady. She's nosy and rude in contrast to Sugar's sweet personality. Another rude lady is the murder victim, Elsie Farmer. She sounds like a nasty, controlling woman. Her husband Kenny isn't very likable either. Dixie's Aunt Bertie sounds like a hoot. She's spry enough to run a B&B but a bit secretive. I can see why Dixie loves her, despite the clash with Elsie. Tina Martin runs the local real estate office. I didn't really care for her obsession with looks and her constant chugging of energy drinks. Minnie, Kenny Farmer's personal assistant, is a quiet, mousy little woman who seems afraid of her own shadow. Sheriff Terry is trying his hardest to do his job. He didn't seem incompetent, just a bit frustrated that Dixie keeps hindering his investigation. There's also Disco, real name Dick Fusco, who runs a kitschy shop next to the office of Sugar & Spice Publishing. I didn't like how he was always looking for a handout. He seems like a loser.

The book contains two scone recipes. Aunt Bertie's seems to be adapted from Mary Berry's scone recipe and Elsie's Irish scones are similar to the Scottish ones I make. I hope to try them both!

I enjoyed this first book in this new series. I would recommend this book to cozy mystery fans.

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### **Hildegart says**

This book has not been published at the time of this review, so I am being lenient about all the grammatical errors in the book (normally I would deduct a star for the numerous errors that are found throughout the book). Hopefully these errors will be fixed in the very near future.

As for the story, I was wishing there was more mystery to it. Twenty percent of the way through and it still felt like it was a story about putting a cookbook together. The making of the cookbook was the entree while the mystery was more like an appetizer sample that finally took front stage at the very end. I also wish the cat and dog were in more scenes (they felt like afterthoughts-- oh, there's Dixie's dog, let's give it a dog treat and not mention it for another several chapters, or here's my cat, he wants food). Give me more. If they are characters, let them purr or growl at some point. Give them more personality.

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Kristina says**

Game of Scones by Mary Lee Ashford takes us to St. Ignatius, Iowa. After the publishing company Rosetta Sugarbaker Calloway aka Sugar worked for downsized, she moved to St. Ignatius, Iowa. Sugar joined her friend, Dixie Spicer to open Sugar and Spice Publishing to produce community cookbooks. Their first project is the St. Ignatius Founders' Day Commemorative Cookbook which is due to the printer in six weeks. Unfortunately, a scone war has broken out between Elsie Farmer and Bertie Sparks. Only one scone recipe is needed for the book, but neither women is about to back down. The next day Sugar heads over to Elsie's house to talk to her about the scone situation. When no one answers her knock, Sugar heads around to the back yard. She notices someone disappearing through the bushes and finds Elsie dead on the ground with a scone in her hand. Elsie was poisoned, and the evidence leads straight to Dixie's Aunt Bertie who has disappeared. Someone is setting up Bertie to take the fall which angers Dixie. Sugar and Dixie start sifting through the clues and suspects. Can they serve up the killer before he strikes again? While investigating the

murder, the pair need to continue working on the cookbook. Dixie cooks up the recipes from the upcoming cookbook for handsome photographer, Max Windsor to snap. Sugar is also dealing with a cranky neighbor and her elderly landlady who seems to need something she stowed in her attic daily (lonely for company at the senior living facility). Will Sugar and Dixie get the cookbook completed in time while trying to crack the whodunit?

Game of Scones is a lighthearted cozy mystery with a charming small town and a variety of quirky characters. I did feel like the book could have used a little reworking. Sometimes the story moved along and other times it dragged from the amount of detail especially on how a cookbook is published (you have to wonder how Dixie and Sugar stay in business with only one client). There were a couple of subplots in addition to the main mystery. There is the cantankerous neighbor who seems to nitpick (I had a grandmother like that). Greer, Sugar's landlady, who has moved into the local senior living facility. She left a number of her possessions in the attic of her home that she has rented to Sugar and calls Sugar frequently for a miscellaneous knickknack. Then Greer's son gets it in his head that Sugar is taking advantage of his mother. There is a hint of romance between Max and Sugar plus Dixie and Sheriff Griffin. Numerous townspeople are introduced in Game of Scones. All the characters felt superficial and flat. I wanted more character development to bring our main characters to life. I did like the description of St. Ignatius. The mystery is straightforward with the guilty party easily identified. There are a limited number of suspects and little investigating. The story follows Sugar on her day-to-day activities and her interactions with the people she encounters. Though Game of Scones is not set in the South, it reminds me of a certain authors Southern cozy mysteries. I am giving Game of Scones 3 out of 5 stars. There are two scone recipes at the end of the book. Game of Scones contains a great deal of cooking and eating along with a cat, a dog, nosy townspeople, plenty of gossip, a mysterious aunt, a make-up maven, flirting, and thorny whodunit.

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