



A Batter of Life and Death

Ellie Alexander

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Welcome to Torte-a small-town family bakeshop where the coffee is hot, the muffins are fresh, and the cakes are definitely to die for...

It's autumn in Ashland, Oregon-'tis the season for a spiced hot apple cider with a serving (or two) of Torte's famous peach cobbler. It's also the perfect time for Jules Capshaw to promote her family's beloved bake shop by competing in The Pastry Channel's reality show, *Take the Cake*. The prize is \$25,000. But as Jules quickly learns, some people would kill for that kind of dough. *Literally*.

Then, just as Jules dusts off her Bavarian Chocolate Cake recipe and cinches up her apron, the corpse of a fellow contestant is discovered-*death by buttercream*. What began as a fun, tasteful televised adventure has morphed into something of a true-crime detective show for Jules and everybody else on set. Who could have killed Chef Marco, and why? Can Jules sift out the killer before someone else gets burned?

A Batter of Life and Death Details

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From Reader Review A Batter of Life and Death for online ebook

Lisa Ks Book Reviews says

5 eggs, 5 cups of sugar, 5 cups of flour, but 10 stars for A BATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

I couldn't wait to get my hands on this book. It was one I was most looking forward to this year. It was worth the wait! I loved every minute of it! I gushed, and raved about the first book in this series, MEET YOUR BAKER, so I won't get all gushy this time...but I will rave! A BATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH is one of my top three favorite book of 2015!

There is not one thing I don't like about author Ellie Alexander's writing. Her words transport me into her story. I can hear every sound, and smell every smell. I honestly feel as though I have walked the streets of Ashland, Oregon. Just like I have sat at a table in Torte and shared pastry and coffee with Jules and her mother. I ached to get into the kitchen with them and help them bake their amazing confections! Okay, I started gushing, didn't I? ;-)

A BATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH focused on a reality cooking show. My sister and I watch them all, so it was fun to feel part of one and see how they may run behind the scenes. But you know, without murder on the set. But murder this book did have. For lead character Jules, finding a dead body may not have been fun, but the way the body was found was delightfully sweet for mystery fans such as myself.

A truly wonderful whodunit, the one thing this story had more of than delicious food...suspects. Seriously, I simply couldn't even narrow it down, but author Alexander leads us through the investigation like the pro she is and total caught me off guard with the killer.

Make sure to check out the Bakeshop Mystery series! You're going to love it!

Wonderful recipes and an excerpt from book three, ON THIN ICING, can be found at the back of the book!

Sapphyria says

The reality show circuit has come to Ashland, Oregon in the form of Take the Cake. The Pastry Channel has pulled together 5 pastry chefs from around the country in a competition to wow audiences and judges. The winner will receive \$25,000.00 and it seems that no one is above murder in order to win that amount of money. When Jules finds one of the chefs, an obnoxious man named Chef Marco, dead in the stage area of the show, she can't believe it's happening again. Finding a dead body in Book 1, Meet Your Baker, was bad enough but find another one has her freaked out.

Who would be bold enough to murder a famous chef during the filming of Take the Cake?

Jules is determined to figure it out before anyone else is harmed.

A Batter of Life and Death is a wonderful second book in the Bakeshop Mystery series by Ellie Alexander. The author wove many other stories into the book; the situation with Jules and her ex, running the pastry

shop with her mom, and dealing with the reality show being in town. Each thread makes sense as you move along in the book, some intersecting with the murder and others just additional everyday life. The book was descriptive and was able to immerse myself into the town of Ashland and the lives of its residents.

The author did a great job building the world surrounding Jules. The characters are developed, interesting, and written realistically. The story is fast paced and I was engaged from the start. The author continues to build up an emotional connection with Jules and her a cast of characters are realistic and believable - so real that I felt like I was part of the book.

I enjoyed trying to unravel the murder mystery. Ellie Alexander did a great job keeping everything under wraps and revealing things methodically and at the right time. The possibilities of who committed the murder seemed endless until the final reveal, causing every hint to fall perfectly into place.

Paperback review copy courtesy of author at no cost in exchange for an honest review.

Jonathan says

A second in a series I can see that I'm going to love; *A Batter of Life and Death* was a wonderful book that I enjoyed.

The characters are wonderful; they're three-dimensional, not obnoxious, and realistic, which are all things that I look for in characters. The MC, Jules is strong and independent without being annoying. There's kind of a love triangle going on, but it works because one corner of the triangle is literally hundreds of miles away. However, I still with Jules would sever ties with him, instead of dragging it out.

The mystery was wonderful. Jules investigated without the "in your face" attitude many MCs have and the mystery wrapped up nicely. There were sufficient clues to point you to the killer, but even with them I didn't guess the real killer.

Overall a wonderful book. I'll be continuing this series!

Carla Johnson-Hicks says

This is the second book in the "Bakeshop Mysteries". Juliet (Jules) Montague Capshaw is settling back into life in her hometown of Ashland, Oregon after leaving her husband Carlos for a year break. The summer tourist season is coming to an end and Jules is trying to find ways to bring money into the family bakery, Torte, during the off season. She has found an exciting opportunity of letting a bake show "Take The Cake" use the bakery kitchen while they are in town filming. Jules was in for a surprise when she found out that one of the contestants had backed out and that she would be persuaded to be a contestant herself. Of course, the \$25,000.00 prize was a great incentive as well as the opportunity to showcase her hometown on television. The unexpected happens when on the first day of filming, Jules finds another contestant dead on the set face down in butter cream frosting.

Thomas, the local police detective (and Jules' ex-boyfriend) along with "the Professor" the police chief both warn Juliet to stay away from any involvement in investigating what happened to the chef. Even though she

found him, Jules does not want to get involved, especially when she remembers what happened last time she did. Unfortunately, it just seems as though circumstances keep putting her in the center of the mystery. As Jules tries to get her baking done for both the show and the bakery in the cramped kitchen, deals with her emotions involving both Carlos and Thomas and tries to keep her staff from hating one another, the mystery unfolds around her and once again, she finds herself in danger.

The characters in this series are wonderful. They are extremely realistic, warm and caring to one another. They are not obnoxious, except perhaps Richard Lord, and have their ups and downs that they need to deal with. Jules, the main character, is strong and independent without being annoying. Some cozies have the main character in your face, actively seeking out the culprit and doing things they should not be doing. Jules is kind, helpful and just seems to be in the right place at the right time. People confide in her because of her caring nature.

I am very much enjoying this series. The recipes at the back are an added treat. They are not too complicated and seem like they would be very good to try. I recommend this book anyone who enjoys a well-written cozy mystery with lots of food.

Tina at A COZY GIRL READS AND WRITES Blog says

A Perfect mixture of delicious treats and baker extraordinaire, Jules searching for a killer

Imagine , delicious cakes, pies, cookies and tortes. Then imagine a cold blooded murder. A Batter of Life and death was a perfect mixture of delicious treats and baker extraordinaire, Jules searching for a killer. If I could give this culinary delight of a mystery more than five stars I would.

Juliet Capshaw is grudgingly competing in Take the Cake, a televised pastry competition from the Pastry Channel.

Winning the grand prize of \$25,000 could do to upgrade some of the kitchen equipment in her bakery, Torte that she runs along with her mother, Helen. Jules finds fellow baker and competitor, Chef Marco dead and berried in his own buttercream. Jules is soon discouraged that another murder has fallen on her beloved town of Ashland and another murderer is lurking her sleepy little town but that doesn't stop her from wanting to become involved in the investigation along with detective, Thomas who happens to be her high school sweetheart whom she has conflicting feelings for.

As Jules is sharing Torte's kitchen with her fellow competitors baking their delicious treats for the competition, she discovers that more than one of them is carrying secrets even some of the players on the set and Jules wonders if these secrets in fact have anything to do with the murder. It seems Take the Cake is not what it's cracked up to be and Jules must put all her eggs in one basket before she gets beat by a killer.

I love when a cozy mystery series theme is the main center of the plot, like Jule's life inside the bakery is what this reader can't get enough of and A Batter of Life and death is perfect for any baker, anyone with a sweet tooth and mystery lover. This has become one of my favorite series. I have made it a point to read

every single book in order. This series and the characters I hope will touch your heart like they have touched mine and have you thinking long about them after the book is over.

Diane ~Firefly~ says

Good story. I am liking this series. Jules is interesting and once the love triangle gets dropped I'll be much happier, as will she. Her investigations are subtle and the townspeople interesting. This time there is a TV cooking competition in town and it seems all the chefs have secrets.

Selah Pike says

Again, an eminently readable story that combines some of my favorite things: fun characters, a cute small town, Shakespearean references, a *baking competition*

And again, the killer is revealed almost by magic! Cringe.

Jenna says

Once again, Ellie Alexander has baked up an irresistible treat of a story. Juliet (Jules) Capshaw is just settling back into life in her hometown of Ashland, Oregon. The summer tourist season has come to an end and Jules has enrolled her family bakery, Torte, in an exciting opportunity: a reality baking show filming right in town. Jules has volunteered space at Torte for one of the five competing bakers; what she didn't expect, was that she would be approached to be one of those contestants herself--or that one would turn up dead before filming even begins.

Police detective (and Jules' ex-boyfriend) Thomas warns Juliet away from any involvement in figuring out what happened to the chef. Even though she found him, Jules has absolutely no desire to be involved in any way, shape, or form. But it just seems as though circumstances keep putting her in the center of the mystery. As Jules tries to navigate the world of working with Hollywood producers and television personalities, she is also trying to figure out her feelings for her estranged husband and her ex-flame, Thomas.

A Batter of Life and Death is a delicious treat of a read; a well-balanced mix of mystery and warmth, sprinkled with flavors of romance, humor, and family, all topped off with a hearty serving of mouth-watering recipes. Best to be enjoyed with your favorite cup of coffee and a tasty treat - trust me, it'll help to have something to snack on as you read about all the great-sounding treats Jules bakes up!

Once Upon a Romance Reviews says

Sexual Content: None

Language (Profanity/Slang) Content: None

Violent Content: Minimal

Who doesn't love a baking competition? Jules found herself as a contestant due to the unfortunate murder of a diva chef. She would have been happy simply contracting space out her kitchen to a contestant, but what fun would that have been for the reader? This made it a whole lot easier for her to >*not* get involved in the investigation.

Even though we know what happened to Jules the last time she tracked down a murder, we as readers want to tag along and be a part of the sleuthing, hoping for the best.

I really enjoy the setting of Ashland and Torte itself, as well as the characters of Torte and the town. The thoughts I mulled over while reading are 1) Is there enough chemistry between Jules and Thomas to sustain a relationship? I'll wait and see. 2) I'd like to see the on-hold situation with her estranged husband, Carlos, be resolved. Even with all of the drama of the competition and chaos in the kitchen, and of course the murder to be solved, it is prevalent in the story. A bit distracting moving nothing forward. Of course there are those who would say it's only the 2nd book in the series. To that I'd say, the setting and supporting characters are well established and able to carry the series forward behind Jules. All my own opinion, of course.

Having said that, you might think I'm not overly fond of this series. On the contrary, I thoroughly enjoyed the creative plots of *Meet Your Baker* and *A Batter of Life and Death*. Ellie Alexander has a (hopefully) long running series at her fingertips.

-- CONNIE

Judy says

I like Jules Capshaw. She's different from my other baking main characters.. I like her relationship with her mom and her over all demeanor. So far she's just at the wrong place at the right time but her approach to solving the mystery is apt and natural and not irritating. My only concern if any, is Jules may end up hurting every bone in her body with every ending...which might make this series a short one. Easy breezy reading, no cats and a very off target love triangle.. On to book 3!

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

A fun cozy mystery tailor-made for people like me who are as addicted to baking shows as they are to eating baked treats. The mystery was pretty good too.

Reviewed for Affaire de Coeur Magazine for the July 2015 issue. <http://affairedecoeur.com>.

Cheryl says

I have read later books in the series and wish I had been able to read them in order. While this was good as a stand along story, you know things that are going to happen. Jules is going to compete in the Pastry Channel's reality show. One of the contestants is found dead in the buttercream. Jules was told not to find the murderer but she can't help herself. she is also trying to decide what to do about her marriage and her former job on a cruise ship.

Heidi says

Four stars: A delightfully sweet and cozy mystery.

Jules is adjusting to life in her hometown, Ashland, Oregon, after years of living on a cruise ship. After an unexpected end to her marriage, Jules has settled into working at her family bakery. She is content with baking and finding a way to heal, but there are bills to pay. When an opportunity to appear on a baking show is presented to Jules, she can't resist as Torte could use the money to update their ovens, plus it would be an added boost to sales during the winter months. What Jules doesn't expect is for one of the contests to be murdered during the first days of shooting. Jules once again finds herself in the middle of another murder investigation. Who would to murder Chef Marco?

What I Liked:

*There is something so relaxing about reading a good cozy mystery, especially one set in the cozy confines of a bakery, and a small town. I adore the town of Ashland, Oregon, and I love reading about all the sweet treats that are served in the Torte bakery. If you enjoy a cozy mystery packed full of decadent food descriptions, this is a read for you. I found it to be a pleasant read, perfect for when you need something light and cozy.

*This book is packed full of all things sweet. I love reading about all the treats that Jules and the gang bake up in Torte. There are cookies, cakes, breads, pies and puddings and even some savory dishes as well. Best of all, many of the treats featured in the book have recipes at the end. I can't wait to try the Amaretto Dream Cookies as well as the Banana Pudding and Pumpkin Latte. If you are a reader who likes recipes and reading about food, this is a wonderful read.

*For all of you who like vegan food, there is even a nod to all things vegan with a vegan baker. The book also includes a recipe for vegan butter.

*Normally in a cozy mystery, the murder mystery is the driving plot of the book, but that wasn't the case with this book. Yes, there is a murder investigation, but I found it to be the story line that I was interested in the least. I was more engaged in the every day ongoings of the bakery. I also liked the baking competition as well as meeting the contestants. There are some interesting story lines that I thought were more engaging than the murder, and I was pleased by all the additional engaging story lines.

*The murder mystery is one of the main plots, and there were plenty of suspects and lots of strange behavior that had me guessing as to who the culprit was. I liked that there were several red herrings before the killer was unmasked.

*Cozy mysteries are also known for romances and lots of times the romance is thick with tension and trouble and there tends to be love triangles. Surprisingly, this series is still without a romance. Jules is currently separated from her husband, and she hasn't resolved her feelings one way or another regarding him. Meanwhile, being back in Ashland, there are still some sparks between Jules and her one time boyfriend, but at this point, there is nothing but hints as far as a romance. I am perfectly happy without a romance, and when one does solidify, I hope that it is without drama and that this series remains love triangle free. One can hope.

*I like the strong cast of characters in this series. They are realistic and flawed. Especially this time out with the added contestants from the bake show. It took awhile to warm up to them, but I did in the end. All of the characters have their secrets and troubles, and I like that I am always guessing when it comes to the characters. The characters who work at Torte are pleasant, and I like the way they all look out for one another. I am also loving the mother daughter relationship in this series. The characters along with the bakery make this series shine.

*I was actually surprised at the turn of events in this one, I won't go into too many details here to avoid spoilers, but I was a little shocked with the way the game show and everything turned out in a good way. That leaves a lot of possibilities still for the gang at Torte. I am interested to see where things are headed from here.

This is the type of read that I crave. It is relaxing cozy, and there is something so deliciously wonderful when reading on all things food. I love all the detail and description when it comes to the food and the bakery and even the town. Ms. Alexander makes the town of Ashland and the Torte bakery leap off the pages. I can practically smell the treats. This is a book you can grab when you need something soothing to read after a long day.

*I appreciate that all the major story lines are wrapped up at the end of the book. Yes, there are ongoing threads regarding Jules and her future and the bakery, but as far as the story lines involving the murder and the bake show, they are all resolved at the end. No nagging story threads or cliffhanger.

And The Not So Much:

*I felt that the murder mystery in this installment was weak. I actually found that I wasn't invested in the whole murder mystery, which isn't an issue as I was engaged with the bakery and the contestant on the bake show. The killer is unmasked in a typical scene with the heroine in a battle of wits, fighting for her life as the villain does the whole this is why I did it and how I am going to get away with it speech. You know how it goes.

*Once the motives for the killing were revealed, I thought they were a bit ridiculous and not very realistic. Just a personal opinion, but then again, this is a cozy, so you can expect a not so plausible murder mystery.

*I was left wondering what the deal was between Stephanie and Sterling. Not a big part of the story, but it is brought up over and over, and I was never clear as to why they were bickering.

Batter of Life and Death is the second book in the Bakeshop Mysteries. I am already a fan of this delightfully, delicious little series set in a cozy, small town in Southern Oregon. If you like a pleasant cozy mystery with lots of decadent food and some top notch recipes, this is definitely a series to try. It is terrific for when you need a palate cleanser, or something light and easy. This has fast become one of my favorite cozy series. A must for any hard core cozy mystery connoisseur. I am eagerly awaiting book three.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own, and I was not compensated for this review.

Posted@Rainy Day Ramblings.

JoAnne McMaster (Any Good Book) says

Jules Capshaw left her cruise ship job to go home and work with her mother at the family pastry shop, *Torte*. She's also separated from her husband, who kept a secret from her during their marriage that she thought she'd never be able to forgive, which is the main reason she returned home.

When a reality film crew comes to town, they're going to film their cooking show in Ashland, but unfortunately, one of the celebrity chefs is murdered and she's pretty much railroaded to take his place. While she's not happy about the situation, she has another train of thought and that is the fact that Torte will

get some publicity from the show, so she agrees.

But it's not long after that her shop is vandalized, and it's obvious the person who killed Chef Marco might not be done with the job. Can Jules discover the killer - even as Thomas has warned her away from the crime - before someone else is killed, maybe even her...

Well, I should have known there would be problems with this book when I read that while the chefs were staying in a hotel, the film crew would be staying in the theater. Really? Are the crew sleeping on cots on the stage? Or is there an accompanying inn with the same name attached? Nothing is mentioned aside from this fact.

Next, all the chefs are cooking at various kitchens around town instead of a central one, which makes no sense at all. With this arrangement, no one is watching them bake; therefore, there are no witnesses as to whether or not they're using the ingredients they said they were, or if they baked their own products or not. Television cooking shows have the chefs actually cook while they're filming, so the audience can watch the action, as it were; not bring in a dish and say they made it. What is this, a potluck? Unbelievable.

Then, when Jules finds Chef Marco's body, she says as how she just witnessed a murder. Um, no. She found a dead body, she definitely did not witness a murder. These are two very different things (and I don't know why the editor wouldn't catch this gaffe). If she'd witnessed the murder, chances are the book would be over very quickly since she would have seen the killer.

The producer of the show brings Richard Lord in as one of the chefs...except Richard isn't a chef, and he doesn't even make his own food. So why? This alone doesn't make any sense. Let's just say the idiotic viewers of this show (because they'd have to be to believe this nonsense) would Google the man and discover he wasn't a chef. Wouldn't that hurt the credibility - and viewership - of the production? Any producer who would allow him onto the show should be fired. Not to mention that cooking shows are as much about the chefs as they are the food - people watch to see tempers flare, tension rise, etc., and if they're all cooking off stage, none of that would occur. You're otherwise basically watching people pick up a prize for 'best of,' and who really cares?

Jules also won't tell the other female chefs to clean up after themselves - they're obviously pigs (but Jules and her crew are clean as a whistle) yet keeps complaining and saying she'll tell Phillip about it. Again, um, no. She owns Torte, *she* needs to tell them they can't cook there anymore if they aren't going to clean up after themselves. If they don't want to do it, kick them out.

At the last, I should have known better when the book began with, *'They say that time heals a broken heart.'* Through the entire book she's wondering about her feelings for Thomas, and anyone can see he has feelings for her, yet from what I gather about later books in the series, she's also still wondering about her feelings for Carlos. Carlos just needs to go. He wasn't that interesting to begin with, and Jules obviously wants to stay at *Torte*. What kind of marriage would that be? For someone who's supposed to be savvy and intelligent, she's screwed up in the romance department.

(view spoiler)

It's not just that I hate wishy-washy women; I also hate the fact that readers are 'teased' with scenarios that never come to pass; and all of the things I've stated above that don't make sense make me wonder if future books also have details that are nonsense. For this I couldn't give it above two stars.

Amanda McGill says

A cute cozy mystery.

Jules is still helping out her mother in their bakery, Torte. A reality series bake off is being filmed in their tiny town and Jules ends up being selected as a part of the show! Things on the show start off rocky when one of the mean spirited, drunk contestants is found murdered. Is another contestant to blame?

I like Jules and her relationship with her mother and her ex-boyfriend, detective Thomas. The mystery was good and there were lots of secrets that the cast and crew were hiding. Many questions from the first book still weren't answered, so I'm hoping they will come soon!
