



# Asking for Truffle

*Dorothy St. James*

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## Asking for Truffle Dorothy St. James

When Charity Penn receives a letter saying she won a trip to Camellia Beach, South Carolina complete with free cooking lessons at the town's seaside chocolate shop, The Chocolate Box, she's immediately skeptical. She never entered any contest. Her former prep school friend offers to look into the phony prize—only to end up drowned in a vat of chocolate.

Struck with guilt, Penn heads to the southern beach town to investigate why he was killed. But as wary as she is of the locals, she finds herself lured into their eccentric vibe, letting her defenses melt away and even learning the art of crafting delicious chocolates. That is, until delight turns bittersweet as she steps straight into the midst of a deadly plot to destroy the seaside town. Now, only Penn's quick thinking and a mysterious cask of rare chocolate can save the town she's learning to love.

Rich and decadent, *Asking for Truffle*, the first in a new cozy series by Dorothy St. James, is sure to be a delectable read for fans of JoAnna Carl and Joanne Fluke.

## Asking for Truffle Details

Date : Published September 12th 2017 by Crooked Lane Books

ISBN :

Author : Dorothy St. James

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery

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# From Reader Review Asking for Truffle for online ebook

## Elle's Book Blog says

**Release Date:** September 12, 2017

**Genre:** Cozy Mystery

**Actual Rating:** 3 stars

I am going to keep this review short because I don't have too much to say about the book. First and foremost, I think this is a **good** start to the series but I am hoping the books improve as it continues. Otherwise, I won't waste my money as the newer books are pricey for the length. Next, there were a couple of things that bothered me about this book. First, the series name is A Southern Chocolate Shop mystery. Nothing about this book felt southern to me besides the characters saying where they were from. And when I say nothing I mean ZILCH. There wasn't any character slang, there didn't seem to be any southern values, and these characters certainly didn't have the southern charm I look for when reading a book based in the south. Next, the way Penn kept harping on her inheritance (or lack of as her family doesn't want to give it to her) bordered on insanity. How many people could she seriously accuse of wanting to use her for her money?? It was CONSTANT. I got it after the first time- your dad's side of the family (who don't support her) have cash. You don't have to keep saying it. It was over the top and made her seem like an uptight brat. And honestly, it annoyed the heck out of me. Finally, her DOG. Get it some training huh? It bit EVER SINGLE CHARACTER in this book. And she didn't even like it- this was made clear numerous times. GAH! I was losing my mind.

Aside from all that, I did feel like Penn was a true amateur sleuth. She clearly had no clue what she was doing when she was trying to solve the murder of her old friend which made it believable. And the ending was cute too. So it had THAT going for it. Other than all this though, I found this one to be a decent read, not the best, but good despite that crap I mentioned above. Would I read the second story? Only if it goes on sale. I don't want to waste my money on a book that is going to grate on my nerves like this one.

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## Juli says

Charity Penn receives a strange letter in the mail. It states she has won a trip to Camellia, SC to take cooking lessons at the local chocolate shop. Penn knows she didn't enter a contest, and she doesn't know anybody from Camellia. The whole thing seems very strange to her. Penn's friend, Skinny McGee, agrees to stop by the little town and check things out. Her father is wealthy, and although her dealings with his family have never been good, she has frequently been the victim of scams and tricks by people trying to get mits on her father's money. Skinny calls once from the little SC town leaving a message that says that she needs to come down. He has found out who invited her on the trip and why....but before she can contact him, she discovers Skinny has been murdered. His dead body is discovered in the very chocolate shop Penn has been invited to visit. Penn rushes to SC to investigate Skinny's murder, but ends up meeting the two lovely older ladies who run the chocolate shop. She takes the cooking lessons....but soon her sweet visit to Camellia gets even more complicated, troubling....and dangerous.

This book is so much fun to read! From descriptions of chocolate goodies to Stella, the little papillion who bites....just entertaining from beginning to end!! I can't eat chocolate for medical reasons, but I can certainly enjoy reading about it!! Penn's background and feisty, independent personality make her a great MC in this

mystery. The side characters are quirky and interesting. The bad guys are adequately horrible. I found a couple characters that I could enjoy hating...but it took me a bit to figure out which one was a murderer and not just a jerk. The plot is nicely paced, with plenty of surprises. There were a few things I figured out pretty quickly....but plenty that I didn't see coming.

For chocolate fans, there are recipes at the back of the book. :) Mmmmmmmmm. Cook up something yummy in my honor because I can't have any! :)

The cover art is colorful and just awesome! Cozy mysteries always have the best covers!! Stella doesn't look like she would bite, does she? ha ha. It's the little dogs that are always the most feisty (I have two chihuahuas)! :)

All in all, a great start for a new cozy series! I'm definitely going to read the next book! Book 2, Playing with Bonbon Fire, comes out in March 2018! :)

Dorothy St. James also writes the White House Gardener series. To find out more about the author and her books, check out her website: <http://www.dorothystjames.com/>

\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Crooked Lane Books via NetGalley. Opinions expressed are entirely my own.\*\*

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## **Peggy R says**

This a difficult review to write. I knew there were some mixed reviews on this book before I started reading, but I liked the premise well enough to give it a try. I guess my biggest problem with this book was that I really didn't like Charity Penn, the main character. She is stand-offish, prickly and paranoid. One character in the book likened her to a porcupine and I think that was a very apt description. Because of these personality traits I found it difficult to warm up to Penn and like her character. There were some interesting secondary characters that helped to redeem the story. Also, I found it strange that Penn didn't start really start investigating her friends death until after she had been in town for 4 days. That seemed a little unrealistic to me.

The mystery was good. There were plenty of suspects to choose from with varying motives. However, in what was a surprise to me, I figured out the identity of the killer about 1/2 way through the book. For me, this person just stood out too much not to be the culprit.

I'm still on the fence as to whether I will continue with this series or not.

I received an advanced reader copy from the publisher through Netgalley.

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## **Amy says**

Charity Penn, known as "Penn," is living in Madison, Wisconsin with her "Gram," when she receives a mysterious letter that she has won a free trip to Camellia Beach, South Carolina for chocolate making lessons. Gram, a kind woman who raised her but not related to her, and her childhood friend nicknamed

"Skinny" are also suspicious and Skinny says that he will investigate the store when he is travelling in the area next week for a surfing competition. He leaves a cryptic message on Penn's voice mail, purporting to know why the letter was sent, from whom and tells that he wants to give her this information in person. But before she leaves Wisconsin, Penn reads that Skinny has been murdered in a chocolate vat right in the Chocolate Box. She decides to travel there anyways, take the candy lessons, and find his murderer. Upon her arrival, she meets Mabel Mayback, the long-time owner of the chocolate shop and her partner, Bertie, as well as many other of the small town's residents. As she digs deeper into Skinny's death, she finds herself in the middle of another mystery. This seemingly benign beach town holds many dark secrets and Penn's own life may just be ticking away!

I enjoyed the book very much. It had a pleasant pace and I read 3/4 of it in one sitting. The mystery was well-plotted and the many red herrings kept me in suspense until the very end. Penn's character is very likeable and sympathetic. There is no graphic sex, violence or foul language. The author integrated detailed information about the harvesting and sourcing of chocolate and its economic impact on the plantations in South America and West Africa into the plot. She also included a recipe for chili, hot chocolate/hot chocolate shots, and dark chocolate hazelnut truffle. I will definitely be looking forward to reading the next installment in this series.

I received a complimentary copy of this book by the publisher. My review is voluntary and contains my own honest thoughts and opinions.

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## **Linda says**

Seldom have I read a cozy in which I did not like the main character, but I did not like this one. The female protagonist, Penn, has a past that troubles her and bleeds into every aspect of her life. As such, her 'tortured' character is tedious and unappealing throughout the story. She's paranoid about her trust fund; she's forever irresponsible and immature in her decisions, and doesn't even like the cute little dog, Stella, that her ex gifted her.

The plot is partly centered around the Chocolate Box shop and the special chocolate they use. There's a mystical touch about it's origin that's interesting, and I enjoyed the cooking lesson scenes. At 30% of the book, I had Penn's DNA association figured out with the shop's family, and was disappointed it was that early on and that easy to solve.

The supporting characters are mostly part of the chocolate shop owner's family plus a select few friends and townspeople. For seemingly no reason, most are hostile toward Penn as soon as she arrives in their run-down beach community. They never heard of her before nor she of them! I did enjoy Penn's Granny Mae (not a blood relation) who is smart and fun, and I hope will be present in future stories.

I am interested in reading book two because I want to see if the protagonist manages to overcome her insecurities and successfully manage the chocolate shop and meld with the Camellia Beach Community, South Carolina residents as her benefactor, Mabel, intended for her to do.

Recipes included!

I voluntarily reviewed an advance copy from NetGalley and the publisher.

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## Mark Baker says

Charity Penn has been raised to trust no one, so she is immediately suspicious when she receives a letter stating she won a contest for cooking lessons in a chocolate shop in South Carolina – a contest she didn't enter. When her friend goes down to investigate, he calls her teasing good news and then winds up dead in a vat of chocolate. Determined to figure out what happened to her friend, Penn goes to investigate. But can she trust anyone? What is going on?

This book started out slowly, at least mystery wise, since it had the hard job of setting up the series as well as solving the mystery. However, the second half included some good twists and turns as well as payoff for the set up. Penn is an interesting main character since she is pricklier than we normally see in a cozy mystery, but the reasons for her behavior are fully explained and understandable. I'm looking forward to seeing some growth from her as the series progresses, and we already see some of that here.

NOTE: I received an ARC of this book.

Read my full review at Carstairs Considers.

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## NicoleG says

Asking for a Truffle is the first book in the Southern Chocolate Shop Mystery series. The premise is very cozy including a dog and chocolate! What's not to love? Unfortunately, I didn't love it. The main character wasn't immediately likable and it seemed I couldn't get past the quite annoying dog and annoying characters (well, most of them). I loved the whole idea of the "mystery" surrounding the letter that Penn, the main character, got at the beginning of the story but it wasn't carried out in a logical and engaging way. I think the ending was surprising and made sense in the end so even though I didn't love it, I definitely didn't hate it and will probably read the next book in the series.

I voluntarily reviewed this book via NetGalley.

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## Stephen Collins says

With hint of Shakespeare death but using chocolate instead of wine. This Southern American Chocolate dark & rich proper cacao not the disgusting milk chocolate muck but real extra rich.

So is the mystery with really good print which makes it easy to read. A good cover that stands out & few chocolate recipes now all need is box of Lint chocolates

This bit like Miranda James cat books or Unlucky black cat Mysteries there is lot of good Modern American cr books with hint of both Christie & Chandler almost as if were old classic books but its no swearing or no sex so can be read by any age from 7-100 that makes this so good just like Miss Marple or an Albert Campion

Penn cannot cook she burn a boiled egg & then she wins competition that she never entered so her best friend Skinny takes a look & gets killed he is accessed of been drugy Penn is so mad she goes to prove what really happened along with her Papillon dog Stella who's favorite food is toes & fingers given to her by greed ex boyfriend The Cheese King who was after her billions .

This very funny & very easy to read.

About 15ys ago I read a book on the history & making of chocolate it talked about how the early chocolate was only drunk & hot not boiling water was used in special pots it was pored onto the cacao beans from high height to form bubbles & also explained the drying & grinding process in which making chocolate goes through. Dorothy must done lot reading to get her wonderful description of the same process so right that you can smell the bitter dark chocolate been made you can all most taste the truffles she talks about. This book reminds me of Perfume by Patrick Suskin it has same type of power to make taste as well as smell the vision on the pages of the story as dances the tango of taste on your tongue.

This was really top light mystery & it is 100% not last book I be reading by this author.

Best of all this book as great cover that is dead right but says nothing the story so no spoiler. The dog is right, the shop is right & wording is it is a mystery .Second thing that is great is at end of book is the recipes with blank page so look at them but not see the last page of the story.

A taste hot spicey chocolate minced beef & tomato chili that is easy to make not one of these crazy recipes & you can freeze it too if there is too much.Mmmm

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## **Barbara says**

### **2.5 stars**

Charity Penn - an attractive, thirty-something, marketing executive - is a skeptical kind of gal. Her parents, an itinerant fortune teller who briefly hooked up with the young heir to a fortune, abandoned her right after birth. So Charity (who calls herself Penn) was raised by her paternal grandmother Cristobel, who never had a kind word for her. Still, Penn has a hefty trust fund, and always fears people are after her money.

So when Penn, who lives in Wisconsin, gets a letter saying she won a trip to Camellia Beach, South Carolina - complete with cooking lessons at a chocolate shop - she's sure it's some kind of scam. Penn asks her friend, Skinny McGee, to look into the matter and - since he's going south anyway - Skinny stops by Camellia Beach to see what's what. Shortly afterward Skinny calls Penn and excitedly says she **MUST** come to Camellia Beach to see something for herself! Not long afterward Skinny is found dead in a vat of chocolate.

Consumed with guilt, Penn accepts her 'prize trip.' She packs up her ill-tempered pooch Stella - who never saw a toe she didn't want to bite - and heads for Camellia Beach. There, Penn stays in a small hotel, meets the local residents, takes cooking lessons at 'The Chocolate Box' confectionary shop, and looks into Skinny's murder.

In less than a week there's another death, things get very complicated, and Penn herself becomes the target of a killer. Not sure who to trust, Penn has to race against time to expose the miscreant before she becomes the next victim.

The book has an intriguing premise and a variety of interesting characters, including: Althea - a woman who runs a crystal shop and has mystical thoughts; Mabel and Bertie - two elderly ladies who run the 'The Chocolate Box' and teach Penn to make heavenly sweets; Harley Dalton - a handsome attorney; Cal Dalton - a surfer who looks like an action hero; Jody - a real estate agent who wants to develop Camellia beach; Troubadour - a hairless cat who looks like a giant rodent; and more.

My biggest problem with the book is Penn, who needs to go to 'detective school' if she's going to be a cozy

mystery sleuth. For example, after arriving in Camellia Beach Penn takes cooking lessons for four full days before she looks into Skinny's death. A real detective (even an amateur) would never do this! And when someone hands Penn an important envelope, she ignores it, thinking she already knows what it contains (she's wrong, of course). How long does it take to look into an envelope? Even in cozies, the gumshoe should be clever and resourceful.

I was also a little put off by Penn's personality. She constantly whines about people being after her money..... and about her cold and distant relatives. These are legitimate issues - and I get it - but I don't need to hear it over and over again.

There are also too many cooking scenes in the story. I enjoyed them - but this is a mystery, not a cookbook. (I do like the recipes at the end of the book.....which sound scrumptious.)

All in all, this isn't a bad book, but it could be better (IMO).

Thanks to Netgalley, the author (Dorothy St. James), and the publisher (Crooked Lane Books) for a copy of the book.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

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## **Sabine says**

Asking for Truffles is the first book in the Southern Chocolate Shop mystery series.

I enjoyed the setting in the chocolate shop, the cooking classes with Mabel and the preparations for the Sweets on the Beach Festival - chocolate, chocolate, chocolate. There is no such a thing as too much chocolate for my taste.

My suspicions regarding the murderer were all over the place and even though I suspected the right person at some point it was still a surprise.

Charity Penn is an interesting main character but her negative attitude towards the people surrounding her is a bit overpowering. It is mentioned commonly that she fears to be conned or has been conned. I hope we will see a lot less of this in future installments.

Stella the naughty little Papillon dog is a hoot and had me laughing a lot.

I requested this book from NetGalley and am thankful that Crooked Lane Books and the author provided me with a copy.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

Dollycas's Thoughts

As soon as I saw this cover pop up on Facebook I knew I needed to read this book! Look at those truffles and the cute puppy.



Ms. St. James starts us out just up the highway from where I am sitting here in Wisconsin, when Charity Penn (Penn) learns she has won a trip to Camellia Beach, South Carolina and The Chocolate Box. Thinking it has to be some kind of scam she doesn't get too excited. Then a friend, Skinny McGee, says he is going to be in the South Carolina area and tells her he will check the place out. After a phone call from Skinny gets cut off and she learns he was found later dead in a vat of chocolate, she has no choice but to venture south to find out what happened. She is not welcomed with open arms by everyone but the ladies at The Chocolate Box are sure happy to see her. But there is something very wrong in Camellia Beach, in addition to the death of her friend, and Penn is not heading back to Madison until she gets to the bottom of it.

I really enjoyed this story. Penn reminds me a little bit of myself, we both have the "waiting for the other shoe to drop" mentality. She has kind of closed herself off due to her upbringing making her very independent but hard for people to get to know. She is clearly an individual that has a deep hurt that has affected her for a long time. Still she hops on a plane to a place unknown to her to find out why her friend was killed. Everyone in the town was sketchy from police chief, to the local lawyer, and even the ladies at the chocolate shop were hiding something. Her skeptical nature serves her well in this town. I appreciated the character development throughout the story while still allowing room for the characters to continue to grow over the course of the series.

The plot itself has several twists giving several viable suspects but I was on the right track early on. I always say, first books in a cozy mystery series are a heavy lift because the author not only has to introduce the main character and the people around them but give us a mystery that clicks with the readers and engages them to come back for future books. The author did that here with an extra twist in the plot away from the murder/s. Something that the reader is unsure about until almost the very end of the story. While the murder was solved she left other questions I need answered. I am definitely excited for the next installment.

Learning about the cacao beans, where they come from and how to work with them was super interesting too. The candy descriptions had me drooling and craving chocolate.

Oh and just a little heads up – that cute little puppy on the cover is a feisty little creature known to bite even her owner. ? She also has to deal with another animal in this story and when it was introduced I could have fallen out of my chair laughing.

This series is off to a great start and I am excited to see what happens next.

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## **Jonathan says**

Good with only one shortcoming.

Full review coming to More Mysteries Please on August 28!

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## **Betty says**

The first in a new series about chocolate, a cozy mystery. The characters are developed in depth and will appeal to you. The background is a small island off the coast of South Carolina. Penn is notified that she has won a series of cooking lessons. She has never entered a contest and sends a friend to look into the matter.

The friend calls her and tells her to come and see what he has found. She will be surprised by it. The next morning the friend is found dead in a vat of chocolate. Penn and her feisty dog Stella arrived on the island to find the murderer. Yes, there is even a Sphinx cat. The ups and downs of the narrative will hold your attention until the book ends. I thought I knew the answer but I missed it. I highly recommend this book. Looking forward to the next one. Candy Recipes included.

Disclosure: I received a free copy from Crooked Lane Books through NetGalley for an honest review. I would like to thank them for this opportunity to read and review the book. The opinions expressed are my own.

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### **Stacie Amelotte says**

Asking for Truffle, book #1 of A Southern Chocolate Shop Mystery is one of my favorite new series for 2017. The author skillfully weaves so many mysteries and layers into the story. For me, it felt like a combination Nancy Drew meets Willie Wonka with a splash of Cinderella. Once I started reading, I couldn't book this book down.

I love the unique characters and situations in this book. The setting of this story, a quaint beach town that is in need of some refurbishing but is still full of folks who love their community is the perfect location. The quirky array of locals make wonderful additions to the series and give the author plenty of options on how to develop each one as the books progress. The main character in this story is Charity Penn, aka just Penn. An heiress/black sheep of the family, she has never really had a place to call home and is in search of just such a place. When she winds up in Camelia Beach and starts learning how to make chocolates from Mabel she starts wondering the real reason why Mable wanted her to come to Camelia Beach.

The chocolate shop is intriguing. It sounds like it could use some TLC, but I love that the "magical" chocolate speaks for itself and draws the customers back time and time again. Penn's temperamental Papillon, Stella, is a hilarious sidekick. I thought the writing in this story was superb. The plot was excellent with many twists and turns that kept me guessing. There are other questions that arise in addition to who the killer is and the way that part of the story plays out was charming and in a way surprising. The reveal of the killer was a total shocker. All of the talk about chocolate and the recipes included will have your sweet tooth wanting more. I can't wait for the next book to be released!

A huge thank you to the author, Crooked Lane, and NetGalley for the opportunity to voluntarily read and review an advance readers copy. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### **Kelly says**

**\*\*I voluntarily read this ARC\*\***

I tried really, really hard to love this book. The premise was great, but it failed to live up to its potential. My biggest issue was that the murderer was so obvious from fairly early on, which left me frustrated at the main character for the majority of the book. My other issue is the that main character was annoying. She was so naive, yet she kept insisting she had learned from her mistakes - as she made the exact same mistakes she

claimed she had learned from. There were some enjoyable characters, and a wonderful heartwarming scene towards the end.

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