



Playing for Keeps

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Olivia Lawson is peeved when ex-ace pitcher turned soap opera star Noah Falcon roars back into Cricket Creek, Kentucky, after all these years, to take the lead opposite her in the community theater's summer play. Noah's beloved hometown is having major financial woes and needs his status to turn this small-town play into a big-time hit. But Noah has bigger plans for this small town. And this time he's determined to show Olivia he's not just playing around-he's playing for keeps.

Playing for Keeps Details

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From Reader Review Playing for Keeps for online ebook

Linda says

I saw a later book in this series and though it looked interesting, I resist starting in the middle. So I started with the first book introducing us to the little town of Cricket Creek. Author Luann McLane is from Kentucky and this must be her idealized yet realistic vision of a small town. The charming little town has endless lures and a growing encroachment by chains as we see throughout America.

Into this comes Nick Falcon, former baseball superstar and soap opera actor comes back to his hometown in need of a life jolt. He's set to star in a local community theater production written by a local girl who grew up being an observer. It'll also star Olivia Lawson, English teacher and hometown girl who long ago had a tutoring job for Nick and a crush on him.

We have two couples in our main orbit and several others who I imagine will be the subject of other novels.

Pam says

The author of this sweet southern romance is new to me, and so far I've found her writing style entertaining and engaging. The story is funny and lighthearted and is filled with an interesting group of characters that I found easy to like. I'm not talking just about Olivia and Noah but all the other people living in the town too. That's really the whole secondary point of the story--working to save the town. It's a wonderful community full of people that care about each other, which the author's done a great job of expressing. Working the town's problem into the romance is handled well, giving the story a big dose of realism which I appreciated. It's really well balanced and I never felt the plot became maudlin or oppressive.

Olivia and Noah are very different. They actually bicker--a lot, at least at first. Olivia can be sweet but she's very judgmental, a huge character flaw I got tired of. Noah's a much nicer individual and liked him much more. As the story grows we learn why she acts like she did and it makes sense but her actions because of a childhood trauma gets old. She and Noah make a cute couple and have some baggage to overcome but never fear the author creatively tweaks their lives and gets them together in a believable manner.

The secondary romance between Jason and Madison is nice and there are also some light moments near the end with Olivia's father and a lady friend I also enjoyed. It's just a nice mix of people, in a nice town that I found easy to care for. I'm curious as what's going to happen in the next book. There's a potential romance brewing on the horizon with another couple.

Geri says

This story is where my love for all books by LuAnn McLane began. I love Cricket Creek. What a great little town where people help each other. Olivia is a teacher and also devotes a great deal of her time to the local community theater. Her friend is putting on a play and Olivia wants to do everything she can to help make it

a success. When her friend hires a guy that didn't even realize she was alive in high school, she isn't happy. Noah is someone who made good becoming a baseball star and currently a big soap opera star. They play the leads of the play and their rehearsing draws them closer. However, they both have ideas of what they think the other is like and the rest of the story delightfully tells the tale. I loved Olivia and Noah and I felt like I knew them. I enjoy stories set in the South because it just seems as though stories have more heart. It has a perfect amount of heat and romance. This is a terrific start to the Cricket Creek series and there are lots of characters with potential for their own stories.

Pauline Frost says

A small town not going down without a fight. A well written and perfectly paced story about family and friends pulling together. The story pulls you in from the start and keeps your interest until the end.

Ruby Lee says

By the end, I loved the characters but at the beginning they seemed flat and too simple. It felt like she wanted to rush the set-up of the book to get us into the relationship. By luck, I was able to finally love the characters and the town it is set in, but around page 80, I almost quit. After a rough 30 pages, I finally began to buy into the storyline but the ending was also abrupt. Overall, it was a nice read but nothing incredible. Part of me is curious about book 2 but part of me has already forgotten it and moved on.

Christine~justloveyourbooks.com blog~ says

Playing For Keeps by Luann McLane was a sweet, romantic small town oriented story. I have always been a huge fan of the Small Town book series'. I just love getting reacquainted with characters from the previous books in a series. That being said, it's one of my favorite types to read. This was the first book I read by this author and I was not disappointed. I loved the main and secondary characters, and the small town setting. This story introduces us to the town of Cricket Creek Kentucky, a small town in danger of falling to hard times. The H/h in this story, Noah and Olivia introduce us to this town and its adorable inhabitants. As this first in the series introduces us to all the town has to offer (which isn't much right now) the next books in the series will give us more love and town growth. There are 10 books in this series so far. Also what I enjoyed in this book was the two other small, but no less important, love stories featuring Jason and Madison as well as Owen and Myra going on simultaneously. Totally looking forward to read on!

Leah says

I liked the cover and the setting but not the characters and the story. There is a happy ending, though.

Amalie Berlin says

Really enjoyed this book. Fantastic characters and much loved trope (unrequited love/secret crush years later), and a lovely down home feel to it.

Meg says

This is a cute, quick read. While it is not amazing and had some flaws, it was sweet and worth reading as long as you aren't expecting a masterpiece. I will continue to read the series.

I like the concept of the star jock and the nerdy bibliophile getting together. The hero, Noah Falcon, despite his fame and arrogance, has enough humility and vulnerability to make him a likeable character. I really liked Olivia as well. From the beginning, Noah makes it clear that his hometown supporting him has been the best part of his life. The only thing is that the thoughts of Noah and Olivia didn't seem as mature as they should be for their age. I think that sometimes has a tendency to happen with romances that have a base in a high school past.

The relationships in the story progressed at different speeds, some were too fast, some were sprung on the audience all of a sudden, which added variety.

There were a few things that I really didn't like about the book. The first was some of the dialogue. There was a lot of exposition and explanations put into dialogue. Now I know that you want to use dialogue a lot of times rather than straight exposition but when characters are having monologues about the downturn of the economy and the town, and the past, and their ambitions, well it gets monotonous. It really subtracted from the characters and story. The other issue with the dialogue was that there were times when everyone seemed like thirteen years old. When the author broke down the syllables on words and names ('No-ah' instead of just 'Noah') was really annoying. While I get that sometimes people outside of teenagers speak that way, the amount of times that it was written in there was bothersome.

The other issue that I had with the writing was that some of the actions and scenes were repetitive. People slapping their thigh either in laughter or in an 'Aha moment,' etc. The love scenes were similar. If it was one character with repetitive actions, it would have been fine because it would have been a character trait, but when every man has the same actions in the story it makes it seem that they are all copies with different ages or hair color.

Jan says

Great for young adults.

Marta says

Why don't I live in Cricket Creek? Maybe I wouldn't be happy, but McLane's fictitious Kentucky town seems just right to me: warm hearted, colorfully flawed yet good people are the citizens of traditional small town with a pretty river flowing by. Many of these folks are trying to help figure out how to keep their struggling town alive and with fresh business coming in.

Enter Noah, home town hero, former pro baseball player who has his own reasons for returning, and

whomay become the answer to economic revival. He'll stay if Olivia gives him the green light. This book is the first in a series, and Noah is the first of a cast of very studly yet quite personable love interests. Most, I think, are ball players, but there is a builder thrown in there too. The very successful melding of community, occupation, love interest and friendships reminds me of Debbie Macomber's novels but with more fully drawn love scenes.

Shawna says

3 ½-4 stars – Contemporary Romance

This is a sweet, charming southern small-town contemporary romance about a former Major League baseball pitcher who returns to his quaint hometown of Cricket Creek, Kentucky following the untimely death of his soap opera career to star in the community theater's summer play and learns that you truly can go home again.

Noah Falcon just wants to spend time in his hometown soaking up his southern roots and honing his acting skills to make a big comeback and doesn't plan on staying in Cricket Creek permanently. Cricket Creek High School teacher Olivia Lawson remembers Noah from their own high school days when he was the popular jock and she the class geek, and she doesn't want a famous playboy athlete with an ego like Noah not taking his acting in the play seriously, especially since she's his co-lead. But as they spend time together rehearsing, Olivia realizes that Noah is much more than she thought, and Noah falls hard for Olivia and charming Cricket Creek.

There's also a fun and sexy secondary romance between young lovers, playwright Madison and construction worker Jason, which adds nicely to the story, as well as a sweet side romance between Olivia's father Owen and Madison's aunt Myra that proves it's never too late to find love. The author also spends a lot of time focusing on the struggles of the town and local businesses that have been hit hard by the economy and how the community pulls together in tough times.

There's nothing overly remarkable about it, but *Playing for Keeps* is a sweet, feel good read with a heartwarming ending that will leave a satisfied smile on your face. It's a nice way to spend an afternoon. I'll definitely check out the next book in the series, *Catch of the Day*, about local Wine and Diner owner and chef Jessica Robinson and ex-Major League baseball player Ty McKenna when it comes out in Jan'2012.

Book Binge says

This book was one of those really fast reads that didn't take much to get into. It was cute and fluffy and perfect for one of those lazy days where you don't want to do anything but read and you don't want to read anything intense or deep.

This book follows Noah Falcon and Olivia Lawson as they bicker and fight their way to their happy ending. Noah is the town celebrity, having moved away from the small town of Cricket Creek to play baseball and

do some acting on a soap opera. Now that his baseball career is done and his stint on the soap opera, Noah has come back to Cricket Creek to get some more acting experience by playing the lead male role in the town's play.

Olivia Lawson rolls her eyes every time Noah's name is mentioned around town and when he comes back, she's not that impressed. She thinks he's hot (she's not blind) but outside of that, there isn't anything about Noah Falcon that she wants to deal with. She used to tutor him in high school and his ego was more than she wanted to hang out with.

McLane does a good job of keeping the story interesting by adding charming characters that I came to love and the story was easy to follow along with which I appreciated. There were times when I wanted to bean Olivia in the nose for being such a little whiny brat but Noah Falcon brought it all back to the love for me because I really enjoyed his character.

This is the first book in a new series by McLane and I'm mighty interested to see where the rest of this series goes. This book is cute and fluffy and I'm anxious for the next book in the series. I enjoyed the secondary romance between Jason and Madison. As much as I enjoyed the book, there was a time or two when it was all too easy for me to put the book down to read something else or go and do something else but I'm glad that I stuck with it because it ended up being a cute story.

This story is filled with a great mix of characters that you will come to care for and the town of Cricket Creek will work its way right into your heart. I'm really looking forward to more.

Grade: 3 out of 5

This review was originally posted on Book Binge by Rowena.

Kimberly says

7/23/17 - \$2.99 on Kindle

Bookaholics says

Playing for Keeps by Luann McLane
March 1st, 2011
4 stars

After his baseball career ended and his part in a soap opera pattered out, Noah Falcon returned back to Cricket Creek to play the lead in the community theater's summer play. There he bumps into the prim and proper Olivia Wilson. She quickly attracts his attention but he can't remember, has he seen her before?

Back in high school, everyone had a crush on the handsome Noah Falcon. Even his English tutor, Olivia, was not immune to his charms! But now that he is back will he really see the real Olivia?

Sparks fly in the light-hearted and breezy romance. It will definitely keep you entertained for hours! The

chemistry between Noah and Olivia was so powerful that you can't help but cheer for them. It is wonderful to read as Olivia transformed into a more relaxed character that charms the socks off Noah. The guy who was (and still is) every girl's dream! I also enjoyed the second romance between Olivia's good friend Madison and Jason. It made this book a double-treat to read!

Fun and cute, *Playing for Keeps* is an easy, sweet read.

Reviewed by Pauline from the Bookaholics Romance Club
