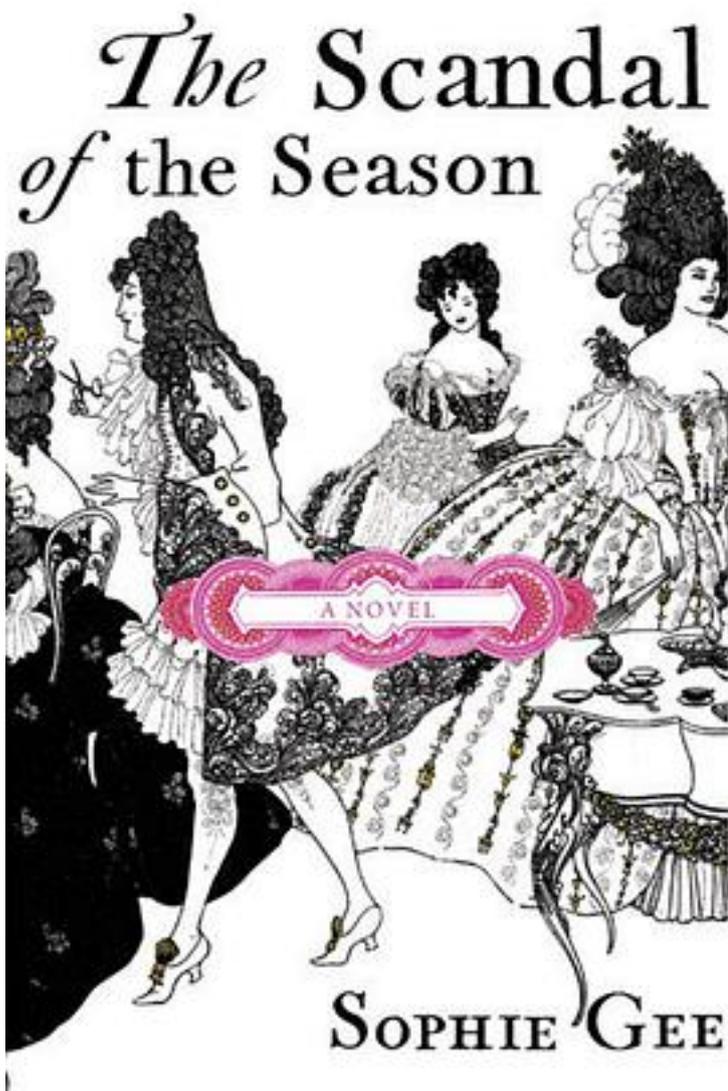


The Scandal of the Season



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著者: Sophie Gee (author)

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Amazon.com Review

This witty novel feels nothing like a debut; its seasoning is due to Sophie Gee's erudition--she is an assistant professor in the Department of English at Princeton--and her sophisticated approach to the story she has to tell. It is 1711 in London, when beautiful wealthy people spend their time at masquerade balls, levées, assignations and evening performances in the endless pursuit of pleasure, gossip, political and social advantage.

Alexander Pope is a poet of some repute who leaves his country home to spend "the season" in London. He is a Catholic and, as such, is aware of the Jacobite plot to return James VII of Scotland and the House of Stuart to the throne of England, which has been usurped by Mary and William of Orange, Protestants who have instituted harsh rules against Catholics. This is one thread of the plot, as Alexander, the canny observer, puts two and two together and deduces who is involved with whom. Three families have long been associated with the Jacobites: the Fermors, the Carylls, and the Petres.

More to the point is the intrigue between Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre. The beautiful and haughty Arabella attracts Lord Petre instantly and they spend no time consummating their attraction--with everyone privy to it. Naturally, the expectation is that they will marry, even though Arabella is not wealthy enough to be a really good match. Alas, Lord Petre is prevailed upon by his family to give up Arabella and his doomed Jacobite intentions, marry another and save the family name. Further, he must make a public display of terminating the affair with Arabella.

All of this leads to Alexander Pope writing "The Rape of the Lock," in which a lock of "Belinda's" hair is cut--in public! In language and cadences reserved for 16th century novels, Gee has created a delightful and plausible romp through the practices, plots, romances, posturing and superficiality of Pope's time. It is known that his epic poem was concerned with the three families aforementioned; the rest might also be true, but almost three hundred years later what really matters is how much fun this is to read! --Valerie Ryan

From Publishers Weekly

Hunchbacked satirist poet Alexander Pope finds inspiration in the foibles of 18th-century London's young, rich and arrogant in Gee's shrewd debut, an erudite period piece filled with outrageous flirtation, social maneuvering and contests of wit. The low-born Pope is permitted entry to London's upper echelons after some of his poems gain a gilded readership, and his literary ambitions and adventures in the city with childhood friends Martha and Teresa Blount are offset by the passionate but clandestine romance between the beautiful Arabella Fermor (who happens to be related to the Blounts), and the haughty Lord Petre, whose involvement in a plot to assassinate the queen lands him in a tight spot. The stories intersect when Pope immortalizes the lovers' high-class intrigue in a scalding poem. The novel is sprinkled with literary cameos and jokes English lit majors will appreciate, while crackling verbal one-upmanship and crude double entendres should keep the hoi polloi turning pages. Gee's take on the Paris Hilton-like figures who pranced through London 300 years ago manages to be simultaneously tabloid bawdy and academy proper.

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