

Thank you for wanting to spend more time talking and thinking about the novel, *Comfort Plans*.

This book grew out of my fascination with immigrants who settled into the Texas Hill Country, particularly those who chose a little bend in the Guadalupe River, put down roots, and pronounced the area “gemutlichkeit.” (That’s German for comfortable, and the genesis for the town we all know of today as, Comfort, Texas.)

That curiosity led me to various museums, bookstores, and archives to piece together a picture of the native Mexicans and Indians, as well as the German who flocked to the area based on the salesmanship of a German prince who promised away entire sections of land for which he did not own. This novel does not intend to educate about those tumultuous days in Texas history, but I do reveal a slice of life for two of those immigrants: Colin and Laki. These two misfits have a story and it’s revealed in letters tucked between the chapters in this book. Other readers have asked about the particulars of Colin and Laki, and I’ll just say I created them from my imagination. One day, for subscribers to my newsletter, I will probably create a novella of Colin and Laki’s history, reasons for being in Comfort, and their after story, but I think you get the picture of their struggles from the letters.

A bricks and mortar character in the book is the Ralston’s German farmhouse. The iconic limestone architecture of German ranchers has long fascinated me, and I’ve daydreamed about restoring one for my own pleasures. Sadly, my finances and my imagination are not on the same wavelength. So, next best thing is to write about characters for whom money is no object and let them do what I would do, if opportunity existed. Hope you enjoyed that tour of the house’s evolution and the characters of Beau and Colette.

Beau and Colette emerged after watching several episodes of HGTV’s *Fixer Upper*. Not that I modeled them on any one person, but that show helped me understand the rhythm for renovations and some of the challenges and wins of tackling old houses. Mr. Sheridan, Colette’s grandfather, walks a path that may seem familiar to those who know the backstory to the original San Antonio River project and a famous architect who had an office tower overlooking the finished river. I took liberties with details to create my world, but I did try to pay homage to some of the visionaries from the past.

To help you explore the history behind the story, here are some discussion questions for you to consider:

What did you learn about the diversity of those who settled in the Texas Hill Country in the 1800s? What more would you like to know about the area and the people who staked out what we see today?

Families are complicated, and no less so for the diversity of cultures brought into the mix. Were you curious to learn more about the French/Alsatian influence? How have cultures maintained their distinctions in the San Antonio area?

Colette Sheridan has a noisy family, but can feel so alone and overlooked—even with all those cousins. How do you recommend someone go about fitting in to a family that has a big footprint?

Can you relate to someone who has come inches away from accomplishing a goal, and then quits? What would you tell someone today if they asked your advice about getting all the degrees?

Colette's grandfather hatched an elaborate plan to catch a criminal, putting relationships at risk. Is that a plan you would advise, if someone suggested concocting such a scheme?

Thanks again,
Kimberly