

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

This book is about two big ideas: wartime medicine—including the art of inventing on the fly—and the complexity of human relationships. In this book, the themes cross over and under and get a little twisted. I hope that's why you liked it.

Though Lane and Zeke are still main characters, Emmie Tesco fights for her time in the spotlight. She has a big story and I loved revealing it to readers. From her upbringing in the East to her unexpected mother, to why she got into the war, to how she ended up in Texas; all good stuff, but the love affair with Slim? That was special. Would you be friends with Emmie? Why not? Would you want Slim for a romantic interest?

Fun for me was writing Lane and Zeke growing closer in their relationship. The piney woods of Texas has a deep connection to golf and the scene at the driving range was particularly fun to write. Don't you love it when women surprise men with their skills? What skill do you have that few know about?

Revealing actual medical advances inside a fictional plot was a stretch and an honor. It's remarkable the developments that allow us to swallow a pill of penicillin, treat malaria, run blood tests, rehabilitate after physical injury, and the treatments for syphilis and other communicable diseases were all actually developed at Harmon General. I interviewed lab professionals to get the details right. If you have worked in a lab, a tip of the hat to you. What do you know of war time cultures for nurses, doctors, and orderlies?

German POWs were in Texas during the war years. This disturbing fact surprises many, but it's no less remarkable how many of those prisoners did not want to be returned to Germany after the war. What would you do if you realized that prisoners of war were living near your family?

In the background of this story is Col. Theo Marks and his complicated motives involving Lane Mercer. Is he in love with her? Is he using her as bait? Who is the Grasshopper?

Well, if you're here, reading these notes you know the answers to those questions. I hope you found the tensions from *The Big Inch* and *Harmon General* credible. I might have sacrificed a lot more backstory for trying to get to the end before readers gave up on a too-long book. Lane and Roy had a complicated history, but that nuance is what fueled where she is in life at this juncture. Would she do it all differently, if she could? If you were given a chance to take mistakes and get a do-over, would you? It's worth talking about.

There is a lot to unpack with this book, not the least of which is the goings on at the Gregg Hotel, the bookstore Between the Line's, Lassiter's Menswear (Did you just love J Lassiter? I did. So much so that his grandson is in my novel, *Sweet Comfort*.) And last, but not least, that house on Oakdale Avenue (which really does exist.) It was like brain candy to recreate what Longview was like in the economic chaos of the war years, coming on the heels of the oil boom. I don't

wish to live in that time period, but it's ironic when I look at the Longview of today how easily it is to imagine the past. What time period would you want to live in and why?

When you know the characters better in *Harmon General* does it make you feel more sympathetic to them? More intrigued? More . . . is there a third novel for these people?

Thank God the pipeline was built, the war was won, medical advances helped men and women return home after military service to resume life, and those that didn't were remembered with love and honor. But, the question has to be asked, if we don't learn from history, are we doomed to repeat the same mistakes? Food for thought.

Thanks,

Kimberly

PS To those who don't like leaving Lane and Emmie at the train station with a mysterious threat not to testify at a court case, I'm with you. I don't like it either. I'm at work on a third installment in the Misfits and Millionaires series, and if you subscribe to my newsletter at kimberlyfish.com you'll be one of the first to hear of its arrival.