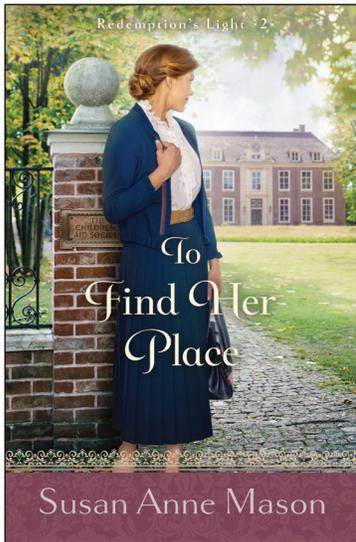




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH SUSAN ANNE MASON



To Find Her Place

REDEMPTION'S LIGHT #2
by Susan Anne Mason

Trade Paper ISBN: 978-0-7642-3520-7

\$15.99; 384 pp.

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4934-3149-6

Release Date: June 2021

1. Tell us a little about your heroine, Jane Linder, and how the title relates to her journey.

Without giving too much away, I can tell you that Jane is a social worker at the Toronto Children's Aid Society, and her mission is to find homes for as many children as possible. She is also a wounded soul, bravely reinventing her life when her dreams for the future have been dashed. When the story opens, she is working as the acting directress at the Toronto agency. She hopes to earn the position permanently in order to bring about some needed policy changes within the organization. Her plans are threatened, however, with the arrival of Garrett Wilder, the man the board has hired to study the agency's internal procedures and who clearly wants the position for himself.

The title of the book is appropriate for Jane because ever since her dream of having a family fell apart, she has had to figure out what her life will look like now. She decides to throw her energy into her career, but when a new option is presented to her, she will have to sift through all the variables to determine her true place in the world, the place God has in mind for her.

2. The majority of the book centers around the Toronto Children's Aid Society. Was it difficult to find information on this agency and what it looked like during the 1940's?

Not really. I was lucky enough to find a book called *A Legacy of Hope: A History of the Toronto Children's Aid Society*, detailing its history from its conception in 1875 until 1998. This was a huge help in giving me an idea how the agency developed over the years and how it functioned as a whole. Because of this wonderful resource, I was able to give a more realistic portrayal of the institution, while mixing in my fictional elements and characters.

3. You seem to have touched on several women's issues of the times in your story. Can you comment a bit about this?

The interesting thing is that I didn't purposely set out to highlight the social issues of the day, but that's how it turned out. Jane Linder struggles with many of the same issues in 1944 that women still face today, the main one being women vying for positions that are normally held by men and the prejudice they face along the way. Also associated with this issue is the struggle of having a career versus having a family. Jane is forced at one point in the story to choose one or the other option for her life.

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Another controversial topic is the stigma of being a divorced woman. Jane hides the fact that her husband has left her because she fears that if her employers learn she is divorced, it might negatively impact her chances for promotion. Divorcées often had unsavory reputations. For instance, they were thought to be sexually aggressive and manipulative, or at the very least, untrustworthy. Thankfully, my hero, Garrett, is an open-minded man, ahead of his time, who doesn't hold this against her and respects her intelligence and competence in the workplace.

4. Your book is set right in the heart of the second World War. How does the war affect your characters?

Even though the war is a merely a backdrop to my story, the book does touch on the effects of the war on both my main characters and their families. Garrett has returned home after being injured in battle. The nature of his injury changes the trajectory of his future and forces him to change careers. His brother-in-law is also away fighting, and his parents take in his sister and her children while he's gone.

Jane and her widowed mother are struggling to make do while Jane's brother is fighting overseas. Without his salary and his physical help around the house, they are barely managing.

Even the Children's Aid Society was negatively affected by the war, given that fewer people were willing to take in foster children. With men away, mothers were forced to pick up the slack in both the home and in the workplace, leaving no time for volunteering at the agency or for taking in foster children. So, the war definitely colors the overall feel of the book.

5. Garrett Wilder's family orchard plays a prominent role in the story. Tell us where the idea of including an orchard came from.

With pleasure! The scenes in the orchard on the Wilder farm are some of my favorite scenes in this book. When I decided that Garrett's family would be farmers, I started remembering the nearby orchards we used to visit as kids. We loved the trips to the country to pick apples in the fall and berries in the summer. It was such fun to include this part of my childhood in Jane and Garrett's story, especially since these orchards are now closed. It was my way of keeping the memory alive. I hope you enjoy the farm scenes as much as I did!