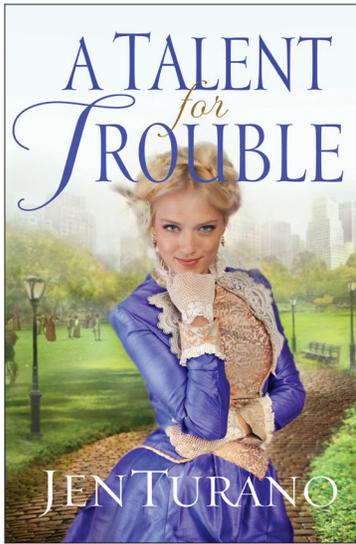




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JEN TURANO



A Talent for Trouble

by Jen Turano

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1. *A Talent for Trouble* is set during the Gilded Age in New York City. What drew you to that time period?

The Gilded Age in America (1870s through the turn of the century) was just such a fascinating period of time that I never considered setting my novel in another age. Industry was growing and changing at an unprecedented rate, as were fortunes. Millionaires were created in a time when most people were living on a few thousand dollars (if that) a year, and the grand mansions these millionaires began to build up and down Fifth Avenue allowed me the perfect setting to fashion a story with a glittering backdrop. The socially elite of New York spent a great majority of their time participating in frivolous events, but there were some who began reaching out to those less fortunate. Felicia Murdock, the heroine in *A Talent for Trouble*, is one of those. She travels to the slums on a regular basis, and the contrast between those slums and the high-end world she lives in was a way to create definite conflict in the story.

2. Mr. Grayson Sumner is an unlikely hero. Why did you create him so flawed?

Throughout my life, I've always enjoyed romances where the hero is less than perfect. I find gentlemen who have a propensity for grumpiness incredibly attractive, which is why I tend to write heroes with that particular trait. It allows their character to develop throughout the story and also allows the heroine to embrace the idea that men aren't without flaws but can still be loved in the end.

3. How did you come up with the initial story idea for *A Talent for Trouble*?

Miss Felicia Murdock first makes an appearance in *A Change of Fortune*, my first book in the LADIES OF DISTINCTION series. From the moment her brother snagged her by the arm and hauled her over to join him in the midst of a ball, embarrassing her most thoroughly in the process, I knew she deserved a story of her own. In *A Change of Fortune* I have Felicia dressed in a horrendous gown at the ball, and when considering her story, I knew I really needed to delve into the reasoning behind her outlandish fashion sense. A gentleman had to be involved with her decision to abandon tasteful clothing, and Felicia's story took off from there—one where she decides to reclaim her true identity but in the process lands herself in a whole lot of trouble.

4. Are any of your characters based on real people?

Felicia is loosely based on a woman I encountered when I managed a department store years ago. She waltzed into the designer salon impeccably dressed but then proceeded to pick out garments that were orange—not a color that most people can pull off and not a color that suited her. When she stepped out of the dressing room in a designer gown of that particular color, I didn't quite know what to say, but it was our job to dissuade clients from choosing styles that didn't exactly look fabulous on them. To my surprise, she was adamant about purchasing the gown. When her gentleman friend suddenly stepped in to check on her progress, it quickly became clear why she was gravitating to orange. The man proclaimed her to look absolutely delightful and went on to thank her for choosing a gown in his favorite color. That incident gave me the inspiration to create

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Felicia. I've always wondered if that woman continued wearing orange, or if she finally realized it wasn't her color and came to the conclusion she really shouldn't change her style simply to please someone else.

5. Is there an underlying message in this book?

The theme of this book is forgiveness. Mr. Grayson Sumner has a rather shady past. He selfishly turned his back on his family without a second thought when he went off to secure himself an adventure after he finished his schooling. That adventure landed him a fortune, but his fortune was obtained through reprehensible means. The journey he takes forces him to accept responsibility for his past actions, but in the process, he learns that forgiveness is possible through God's grace, and his spiritual healing begins.

6. *A Talent for Trouble* has Miss Felicia Murdock involved in many madcap scenarios. Is there a reason your heroines find themselves in such outlandish situations?

My main goal for readers is to give them a story that will make them smile. The world is filled with so many troubling things that I enjoy writing books that allow people an escape from their troubles, if only for a short period of time. Madcap adventures are my way of lightening up the storyline, and I love nothing more than when readers write to me and tell me my quirky tales made them laugh out loud.