



**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH SARAH LOUDIN THOMAS**

**1. As you finish the APPALACHIAN BLESSINGS series, were there any threads you particularly wanted to wrap up?**

The mystery that’s lingered since *Miracle in a Dry Season* is the identity of Sadie’s father. My favorite part of writing this latest novel, *A Tapestry of Secrets*, was going back to the 1940s and revealing that secret by telling Perla’s story. Anyone who’s read the previous books knows she had a child out of wedlock, but how that unfolded was never discussed. So many readers wanted to know about little Sadie and what happened to her later in life. Not only will they learn how her life unfolded, but they’ll also learn who her father was—something Sadie herself is conflicted about discovering. Even as I was writing the story, part of me wanted to save Perla from all that pain, but at the same time I knew she’d argue that every moment of her life had value. And yes, my characters do argue with me at times.

**2. What type of research do you do for your books?**

I took the advice to “write what you know” seriously, so the people, the places, and the feel of my stories are something I’ve been steeped in my whole life. I guess you could say looking and listening has been my most important research tool. Beyond that, I think the thing I’ve researched the most is disease and illness. In the first book I needed to know about cancer treatments in the 1950s. For book two, I learned about Type 1 diabetes. And in this latest book I researched strokes pretty extensively. WebMD and I have gotten to be pals.

**3. It seems miracles are a theme throughout your novels. What’s the miracle in *A Tapestry of Secrets*?**

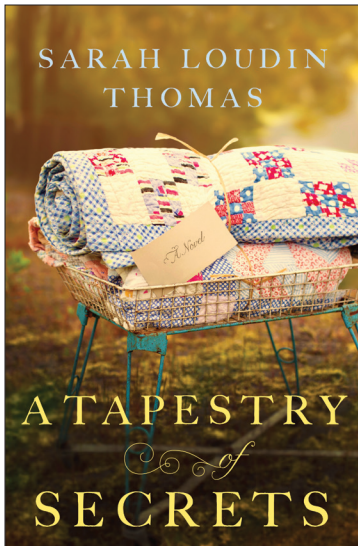
In each book there’s a character with a miraculous gift. Perla could feed as many as were hungry, Mayfair seemed to heal people, and in *A Tapestry of Secrets* my heroine Ella has something like the gift of tongues. She can understand people she loves on a deeper level. So when Perla (her grandmother) has a stroke and is unable to speak or write, it’s Ella who can understand her. The miracle is more subtle, but communication is so much the bedrock of any relationship. I think we’ve all experienced the frustration of not being understood. Ironically, what my characters need most is not to understand each other, but to understand themselves.

**4. Will you miss your characters now that the series is drawing to a close?**

I’ve already started hanging out with a whole new cast of characters, so I haven’t really had time to miss the Phillips clan and all their friends. Plus, I feel like I can step back in and pick up their stories any time I want to. Although the series is wrapping up, that doesn’t mean I won’t go back to Wise and tell, say, the rest of Sadie’s story. I don’t so much miss my characters as I sometimes wish they really were flesh and bone. What a treat it would be to go have tea with the Talbot sisters or sit in the shade of a sugar maple listening to Frank tell tales of his overseas adventures. And honestly, it’s those secondary characters I’d like to visit most—I think I have more to learn from them.

**5. What’s next for you?**

I’m heading south in my fourth novel! While the story starts in a coal mine in West Virginia in 1954, my hero quickly heads for South Carolina where he’ll arrive just in time for love, healing, and Hurricane Hazel. I lived near the coast of South Carolina for ten years—my first job was with the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce—and I’ve long marveled at what a turning point Hurricane Hazel was for the area. Before Hazel it was a small, family community. Afterward it began growing into the massive tourist destination it is today. One significant event can change your world forever. Now that’s a theme worth digging into!



**A Tapestry of Secrets**

by Sarah Loudin Thomas

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