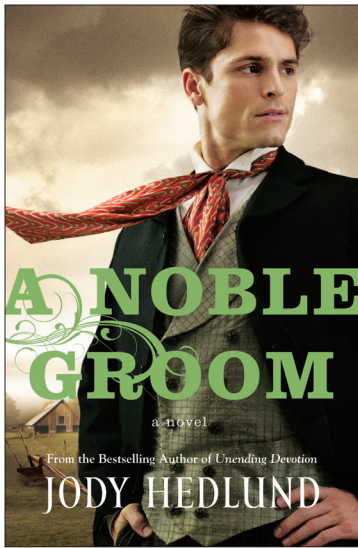




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JODI HEDLUND



A Noble Groom

by Jody Hedlund

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1. Why did you write *A Noble Groom*?

A Noble Groom is the story of a German immigrant farming community in central Michigan during the 1880s. I was drawn to write this novel for a number of reasons. One is that I live in central Michigan and am fascinated by the history of the area. Since there have been so few novels set in Michigan, I'm delighted to pioneer the way into bringing my state's history to life for today's readers.

Another reason I chose to focus on this immigrant community is because of my own German roots. My father's family emigrated from Germany and eventually many of them became farmers.

2. How did you develop the initial story idea and plot?

In my research I ran across a group of German immigrants that settled in the Thumb area of Michigan. This particular group had emigrated from Saxony Germany to Sanilac County, Michigan, and formed Colonial Saxonia. As miners they had originally intended to settle in the Upper Peninsula and mine there, but due to reports on the severity of the weather in the northern part of Michigan, they decided to settle instead farther south, in Forestville.

The land around Forestville had once been a former logging community and was covered with a tangle of dead trees, stumps, and fast-growing brush. The soil was rich for farming, but it would take hard work to make it ready. In writing *A Noble Groom*, I wanted to bring to life this era and the difficulty these immigrants faced in settling in a strange land.

3. What is the underlying theme or message of the novel? Is this what you set out to write?

There are actually several underlying themes woven throughout the story, including persevering through difficult times, not running away from your problems, and learning to let go of bitterness and forgive.

Another particularly strong theme is something that the heroine grapples with—feeling unimportant to God. As a German wife and mother living in a male-dominated society, she has always believed that God is too busy for her. She thinks God has more important matters and people to concern Himself with than a poor, lonely widow. In the end, she begins to understand the true nature of God's love and its extent to "the least of these."

4. What is the take-away message you want readers to receive after reading your book?

I pray readers will find the story of the immigrants inspiring as they persevere through their own challenges. It's my hope that the courage of the immigrants will give readers fresh determination and hope.

Most of all, I want them to know God does indeed care for them. Even when He seems busy with more important people and matters, I hope readers will have a new awakening of His nearness, especially during their darkest moments of pain.

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5. Most authors put a little of themselves into their stories. What did you put of yourself into this one? (personality traits, life events/jobs, settings, characters based on people you know, likes/dislikes, etc.)

While I was growing up, I spent many summers and holidays visiting the farm where my dad spent his boyhood. I was surrounded by the aura of the old-time farm with the homegrown food, hand-made noodles, the sour pickles and roasted goose. I tried to capture some of the feel of that lifestyle and struggle to survive, and also the male domination I saw at the gatherings I was a part of. I remember the loudness of the laughter and talking, the sweat, and the shared camaraderie. I had uncles and cousins who'd lost fingers due to farming accidents, but who kept going day in and day out, year after year. They weathered the ups and downs and were some of the most loyal, kind, hardworking people I've ever met.

6. Why is this novel relevant today?

The love story in the book is particularly relevant to today's climate of loveless, hopeless marriages. So many people have given up the belief in happily-ever-afters and have instead resigned themselves to unhappy marriages and even divorce. This story offers hope that God still cares about marriages. He still cares about helping couples move beyond just going through the motions of surviving together to having fulfilling and loving relationships. No, marriages aren't perfect, but my wish is that *A Noble Groom* will inspire readers to cling to the hope that happily-ever-afters aren't just the stuff of fairy tales.