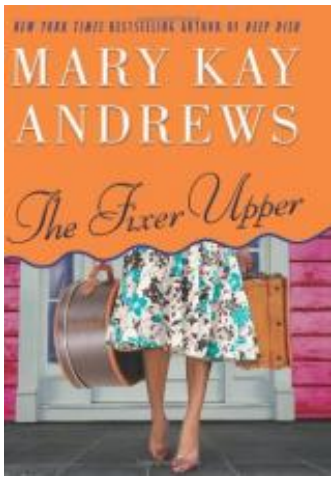
The Fixer Upper

by Mary Kay Andrews



About the Book

After her boss in a high-powered Washington public relations firm is caught in a political scandal, fledgling lobbyist Dempsey Jo Killebrew is left almost broke, unemployed, and homeless. Out of options, she reluctantly accepts her father's offer to help refurbish Birdsong, the old family place he recently inherited in Guthrie, Georgia. All it will take, he tells her, is a little paint and some TLC to turn the fading Victorian mansion into a real-estate cash cow.

But, oh, is Dempsey in for a surprise when she arrives in Guthrie. "Bird Droppings" would more aptly describe the moldering Pepto Bismol?pink dump with duct-taped windows and a driveway full of junk. There's also a murderously grumpy old lady, one of Dempsey's distant relations, who has claimed squatter's rights and isn't moving out. Ever.

Furthermore, everyone in Guthrie seems to know Dempsey's business, from a smooth-talking real-estate agent to a cute lawyer who owns the local newspaper. It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the pesky FBI agents who show up on Dempsey's doorstep, hoping to pry information about her ex-boss from her.

All Dempsey can do is roll up her sleeves and get to work. And before long, what started as a job of necessity somehow becomes a labor of love and, ultimately, a journey that takes her to a place she never expected --- back home again.

Discussion Guide

1. Dempsey is one tough cookie! Strong and independent, she weathers a major life upheaval without much hysteria and lets on to relatively few people what she is going through. What attitudes does she adopt and behaviors does she engage in to help her get through? How would your coping mechanisms compare to Dempsey?s were you to find yourself in a similar situation?

2. Consider the level of support that Dempsey gets from her parents and friends. How do you think your family and

friends would react if you were in a professional and legal predicament like Dempsey?s? When support was offered, how did Dempsey respond?

3. When Dempsey?s father sets her up at Birdsong, do you think his motives are entirely selfless? In what ways --- financially, emotionally, otherwise --- does it benefit him to have Dempsey go to Guthrie? Discuss his motivations. How does the dynamic of their father/daughter relationship compare with your own or with those of your loved ones? What is a ?daddy?s girl?? How can a daddy?s girl grow up to be her own woman?

4. Bobby Livesey plays a huge role in the transformation of Birdsong. In what ways is Bobby also pivotal in Dempsey?s personal transformation?

5. What is your take on Ella Kate?s relationship with Dempsey?s grandmother? How might their relationship be received differently today?

6. What do you think Dempsey saw in Jimmy Maynard initially that allowed her to be open to his flirtations? Why are smart women attracted to bad boys? What is the difference between a bad boy and a truly evil man?

7. Agent Harrell tells Dempsey her mother is a ?bona-fide wack job.? Do you get the impression that deep down Dempsey agrees with this assessment? In what way is Lynda?s presence in Guthrie a help to Dempsey? A hindrance?

8. Several characters in the book appear one way at first, but our perception of them changes over the course of the novel. What events in particular caused you to sympathize with Ella Kate? How does Jimmy Maynard redeem himself in your eyes over the course of the novel? How do Dempsey?s relationship with and opinions of Lynda evolve over the course of her visit? How did yours?

9. Agents Allgood and Harrell at first appear to be out to get Dempsey, but in the end they are rooting her on in her revenge plot. What is the turning point in this relationship? When does Dempsey transform from villain to victim in their eyes? Do you get the impression Dempsey and Allgood could be friends under different circumstances? How are they alike?

10. When we meet Tee Berryhill, he seems like a knight in shining armor and the perfect mate for Dempsey. Why do you think she remains resistant to his advances for so long? What turns her around on him? Have you ever been pursued so relentlessly? If so, how did you respond at first? If not, put yourself in Dempsey?s shoes and discuss how you would react.

11. Do you think Alex Hodder acted maliciously and set out deliberately to frame Dempsey from the start? At any point in the novel were you able to sympathize with Alex on some level in his professional or personal life choices? What figures in present-day political life come to mind when you think of Alex Hodder?

12. What factors contributed to Dempsey?s naiveté in her dealings with Alex Hodder? What warning flags should Dempsey have seen and what caused her to miss them? What do you think Dempsey learns from her ordeal?

13. Have you ever been screwed over by an employer or superior? If so, did it come as a shock and how did you react? Now that you?ve seen how Dempsey took care of her tormentor, how would you get the revenge of your dreams?

14. Discuss the renovation of Birdsong. In what ways is a project of this magnitude appealing to you? What most impressed you about Dempsey?s work on the house? What decorating choices did you admire or disagree with? How is the transformation of Birdsong a metaphor for the changes that occur in Dempsey?s life? How does the experience of fixing up Birdsong prepare Dempsey for what lies ahead?

15. How do you imagine Dempsey?s future life in Guthrie to be? Will she be content? What aspects of living there will pose the biggest challenge for her? Bring the most pleasure? How do you imagine her working relationship with Carter Berryhill to be different from hers with Alex Hodder?

Author Bio

Mary Kay Andrews is the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE BEACH HOUSE COOKBOOK and more than 30 novels, including ROAD TRIP, SUMMERS AT THE SAINT, THE WEEKENDERS, LADIES' NIGHT, SPRING FEVER, SUMMER RENTAL, THE FIXER UPPER, DEEP DISH, BLUE CHRISTMAS, SAVANNAH BREEZE, HISSY FIT, LITTLE BITTY LIES and SAVANNAH BLUES. A former journalist for *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

Critical Praise

"Entirely satisfying, an expert balance of warmth and compassion, terrific supporting characters, a little steamy sex, and just enough suspense to keep you from guessing how it will all go down."

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Publication Date: June 23, 2009
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 432 pages
Publisher: Harper
ISBN-10: 0060837381
ISBN-13: 9780060837389