

Summer Glau has recently been filming in Louisiana for the pilot of a TNT drama titled "Scent of the Missing".



The pilot is based on the book by Susannah Charleson and describe the authors adventures with her golden retriever named Puzzles as members of a Texas-based canine search and rescue team.

Susannah Charleson has given us an exclusive interview, she talk about the her work, her implication on the show and Summer Glau's role as Sedona.

1) You have a long history with training dogs : are the dogs on set real SAR dogs or dogs trained as actors? In the second case, are the dogs "paid" like actors registered at the Screen Actors Guild?

Susannah Charleson: The dogs partnering the principal cast (Tricia Helfer, Summer Glau, Eric Winter) are all canine actors. The dogs working with handlers as "extras" in the field scenes are actual SAR dogs. I was one of those handler extras, partnering a beautiful search German Shepherd named Smokey (I think his vest says "Buzz"). The canine actors are part of an animal talent company, who get paid in dog terms, I think -- love and food and attention and excellent care.

2) We know that the pilot is based on your book "Scent of the Missing" but could you explain what is exactly your involvement on the show?

Susannah Charleson: Consulting Producer is the official title, if I remember right. That translates as input on the plot, dialogue, and procedure within the pilot, and on set, technical specifics about what the dogs were doing and needed to do to correctly portray SAR work in all its variations.

3) Are the characters and her dog already a working pair on the pilot or do we see the training to become an SAR dog as in your book?

Susannah Charleson: All the characters in the pilot are already certified, working teams.

4) Tricia's Helfer character name as well as her dog's name has been changed, respectively from Susannah to Ally/Allison and from Puzzle to Rocket. Could you tell us more?

Susannah Charleson: Changes were always likely due to legal reasons. Puzzle and I are still a working team in reality, and it's wise to make sure viewers know the difference between the fictional situations in the drama and the real team working current events in the field, as well as the real flight instructor! As to names, Rocket is, coincidentally, a fun variation on a nickname I had for Puzzle when she was little. She was my "pocket rocket" when she was first training -- she will even come to that, when called, so it doesn't feel like so huge a change to me when I hear it said on the set. I like the name Allison very much. I always thought Susannah would change from the moment we discussed "Sedona" back in June. Sedona and Susannah are just too similar for audiences! And Ally is a great choice -- feminine, but strong and confident at the same time.

5) As a member of a canine search-and-rescue team and Consulting Producer on set, does the pilot fulfill your expectations so far? What's your opinion about the cast and their work so far?

Susannah Charleson: Having worked real situations from which the pilot draws its center, I can say that the production does get right at the heart of the search, both in urgency and in peril. The pilot definitely doesn't make the work look any easier or the solutions to real problems too pat. And I think the actors had to push, push, push through some of it. This wasn't a comfortable shoot for really any of them.

6) The character of Sedona, played by Summer Glau, was not in the book. Would you care to expand on who she is and what she can tell us about the women who are part of SAR?

Susannah Charleson: Sedona is not a character in the book, but in major ways she draws from the spirit of it. There is much it would not be appropriate to disclose right now, but I think once the show airs, anyone who read the book would make the immediate connection between Sedona's situation and the challenges I describe in later chapters.

There are a lot of women in SAR. Certainly in my experience, as many women as men, or close to that. We all come to the field for different reasons, but we do all typically have a drive to serve the community, love dogs, and are willing to ignore our own comfort or push through our own fears to do a job that no other rescue resource can do.

7) What image or anecdote will you keep from your little stay on set of "Scent of the Missing"

Susannah Charleson: Too many to count and some too revealing to disclose yet, but ...

One late evening it was misting on the set as created rain was also falling, and I saw Summer as Sedona standing at the end of a muddy road beside her dog, poised and ready to run. And though she was in place, waiting for a first take on a new scene, the image -- woman and dog at the edge of "go" -- was as real as memory to me. I thought how well they'd captured search work, these actors and directors and crew, how often we stand at the edge of a sector just like that, waiting for word, then running into the dark.

Website for Susannah Charleson's book: scentofthemissing.com