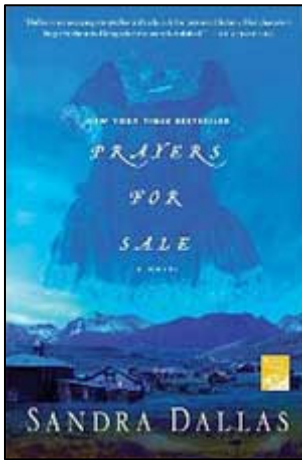


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- April 2010



Spring is here. It hasn't snowed for almost a week now. The purple and red tulips are blooming, along with the Candytuft in drifts of white. Forsythia's golden boughs have captured bits of sun and everything is sprouting new growth.

I do love spring, if you haven't guessed that by now. Add in painting, visiting friends on Facebook, baking and gardening, ah, there are so many wonderful things to do, see, touch, taste and hear. Like the birds outside my window, singing in the peach trees, dressed in florescent pink. The orioles will be here any day now. I'm waiting for that first flash of orange and Mister O's call so I can hang the feeders up. Usually the coming of spring cuts back on my reading time since I love to be outside, but I'll manage both.

The book for this month leaped to my attention because I've read others by Sandra Dallas, including *Tall Grass and Tulips*, which left me wanting to read more books by her. The brilliant cover in shades of blue captured my attention immediately, as did the title *Prayers for Sale*. What kind of situation had this author dreamed up now?

I flipped the book over and the endorsements reminded me of Dallas' gift for regional dialects and her love of history. This particular book is set in the 1940's, although reading it made me think of an earlier period. The setting is a mining camp in Colorado, and the characters are pure Sandra Dallas. And wouldn't a sign that read "Prayers for Sale" capture your attention?

Thanks to that sign, a young woman knocks on the door of an older woman's house and asks about it. A friendship develops, and bit by bit the secrets that bind them are exposed, giving the story all the twists and surprises which make a wonderful read. I felt like I was right there with them through the seasons, waiting to see what would happen next, hoping that some of the possibilities would not become realities.

I don't review every book I read, there's not enough room, so I am always asking, "What can writers learn from this book?"

Sandra Dallas is a master at learning local dialects and incorporating them into her stories. I kept wondering how she knew all the figures of speech, the vernacular of the period and the place. These were mountain folk with their own peculiar way of speaking.

I wanted to e-mail her and ask how she did it, but the researcher in me says she knew people who talked like this, read letters and newspapers of the time, along with anything else she could get her hands on. Perhaps some recordings of family histories would have been helpful, or maybe this was her own background and family. While the usual rule for dialect is to use it sparingly, Dallas' characters spoke that way all throughout the book. This is a good case of a good rule being broken with great success.

I love it when books make me ask lots of questions, when they teach me about people different than my family, when I close the book with a sigh, sad that it is over. I hope you are finding books like that to read and enjoy. May all you writers out there translate the things you know into good stories for the rest of us to read!

Speaking of local dialects, and books to enjoy, my latest novel about the Bjorklund family in North Dakota, *No Distance Too Far*, is now on bookstore shelves. I'd love to hear what you think of it.

Until next time,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine