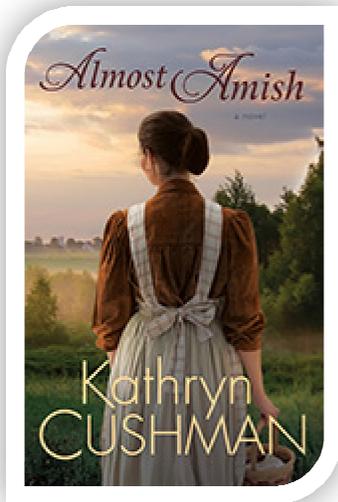


## Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- August, 2012

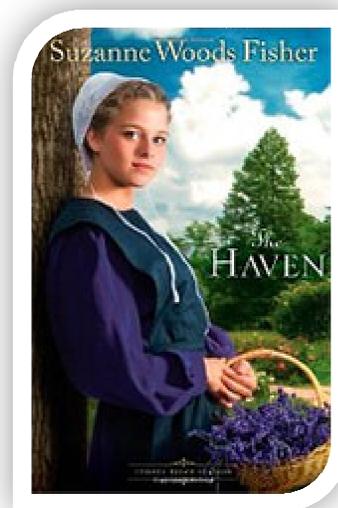
Many people have asked me about Amish novels, and I have always answered, "Not a favorite of mine, rarely read them." So now it is time to eat my words, at least for a couple of titles. Why did I read them? Because they were sent to my house, I liked the authors, and my assistant said, "Try this one." Probably various other reasons too, but those three will hold for now.



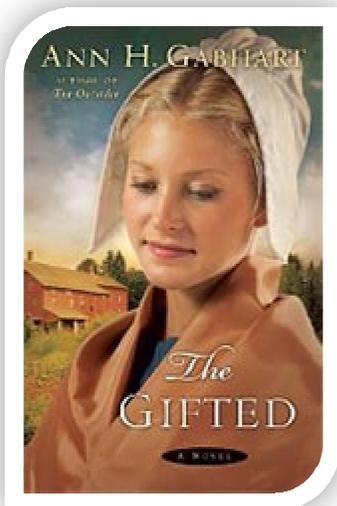
Sooo, I started with *Almost Amish* by Kathryn Cushman. I had read her books in the past, did a short book tour with her a few years ago, and the story's premise was intriguing. Two sisters and their kids agree to spend a summer in an Amish community and learn to live the simple life, and it's all to be filmed as a reality TV show.

I had an idea what "simplify" meant, obviously better than those two families did. No electricity, no phones, no automobiles, cook on a woodstove, put in a garden, and the list goes on. To sweeten the pot, the children in the families are all teenagers. Kathryn did a super job with the story, making sure I cared about the characters right away from the first chapter. After all, haven't we all dreamed of simplifying our lives at one time or another? Perhaps just not overnight.

The second book is *The Haven* by Suzanne Woods Fisher. I've seen her name on plenty of bestseller lists and might have read one of hers in the past. This one intrigued me because a young man comes to an Amish farm to watch over a nest of Peregrine falcons. As much as I enjoy birds—and since I once saw a Peregrine in our back yard when we lived in the San Francisco bay area—I figured I'd give the book a try.



Again, it seemed out of the norm for a typically Amish novel. I learned all about Peregrines and was involved in the story from the opening line: "It never failed to amaze Sadie Lapp how the most ordinary day could be catapulted into the extraordinary in a blink of an eye." I know I've had days like that, how about you?



The third and final book for today is *The Gifted*, by Ann Gabhart, which is one I've planned to read ever since I read Ann's novel, *Angel Sister*. I loved that book and told lots of people that they needed to read it and even included a review here in my column.

Now Ann usually writes about Shakers, not Amish, but they both believe in the older, simpler ways of life. The main character, Jessamine Brady, labors under a curious nature about as big as mine. And does it ever get her in trouble. I can relate to that.

I was carried away by this story of a young woman, who hopes the father she never knew is still alive and that someday he will come back for her. He left her with his mother after his wife died. But after her Grannie dies, Jessamine is taken in by the Shaker community, where everything in the world beyond the village is suspect, but all the love and peace one needs can be found in work and worship in the village. For most people. But what about the one who is different? And don't we all have our own quirks? Ann's Shaker series is getting rave reviews, so pick up a copy and see what you think.

In my writing life, I'm nearing the end of *Wake the Dawn*, a contemporary novel set on the northern border of Minnesota. In *Wake the Dawn*, a border patrol officer—who lost his wife and child two years earlier—finds a baby left in the woods just before a horrendous storm breaks. Will Ben be able to keep the baby he names Dawn, and get his life back on track?

In bookstores you can now find *Whispers in the Wind*, book two in the *Wild West Wind* series about Cassie Lockwood's search for a real home, and alongside it *Reunion*, my contemporary novel about family secrets and the destruction that can be caused by them. Also watch for *The Great Cat Caper*, book two in the *S.A.V.E. Squad* series for young readers, in September.

I'm enjoying the summer at home, as I learn to walk with this new hip after my hip replacement surgery, and reading more, too. Catch me on Facebook or check out my Coming Soon page for all the upcoming news.

Until next time,

*Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine*