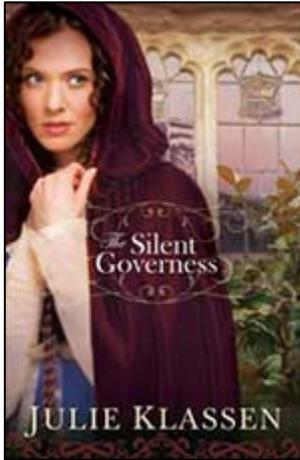


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- January 2010



I'm back!

I hadn't planned on taking such a long hiatus from my column but it happened and I apologize. I missed writing it, although I never quit reading and thinking, 'ah, this book would be good for the column, and yes, that one, too.' So while there is no going back, I will recommend some other authors in this column to make up for all the ones I missed over the past few

months. So many good books to read, so little time.

I received *The Silent Governess* by Julie Klassen for a Christmas gift. I had a quiet Christmas, and rather than watching TV with my husband, Wayne, I read my new book and munched on Christmas goodies.

While books set in England during the Regency period, are not my favorite genre, I reviewed Julie Klassen's *Lady of Milkweed Manor*, her first novel, a couple of years ago and really, really liked it. I love her stories, her heroines, and all the marvelous things I learn due to her meticulous research.

The heroine of *The Silent Governess* is Olivia Keene, who has an unusual attribute: she can add complicated sums in her head, or as she says she sees the numbers in her mind. Not being mathematically inclined myself, this caught my attention.

After being attacked and almost strangled, Olivia overhears a secret. She cannot talk due to a bruised windpipe and so must flee her home. (By this point in the story, I was totally hooked and even my Christmas treats were forgotten.)

Olivia becomes a lowly servant to help with the children of a man with his own secret, being very careful to keep her past to herself. Because she is well educated, she moves into the governess' position, all the while wanting to know what has happened to her parents. Meanwhile the hero keeps trying to discover what Olivia is hiding, and yet maintain his own privacy and keep from falling in love with her.

I did not want to put the book down. I did manage to cook dinner and watch a Christmas special in the evening and finished the book the next day with a sigh of delight. I was so involved in this complex story; I didn't want to come up for air. I love it when authors catch me like that.

If you cannot find *The Silent Governess* in a local bookstore, ask them to order it for you or you can order it directly from the publisher at www.BethanyHouse.com.

Here are a few other authors you might enjoy from a variety of genres: Margaret Brownley, Mary DeMuth, DiAnn Mills, Mindy Stearns Clark, Stephanie Grace Whitson, Kathy Marie Hake, Judith Miller, Tracie Peterson and a new author for adults, Mona Hodgeson, whose children's books are great.

James Scott Bell writes suspense, as does Brandilyn Collins. I could go on and on. Take a look at the Readin' & Writin' archives here on my web site to find other books and authors I've written about in the past.

I hope many of you have either joined or formed book reading groups. Many churches have set them up, so have bookstores and other organizations. All you need is a group of people, who like to read and agree to meet monthly to discuss the book they have chosen together.

Many authors are now putting discussion questions in the back of their books or posting questions on their web sites, which is what I do for reading groups. If someone requests, I also send bookmarks to their group.

Thanks to the reading group I belong to, I have read books that I otherwise might not have. Some I liked, some I didn't and some were a real stretch, but the discussions were always intriguing and often lead to deep thinking and talking. All in all, book groups are an excellent use of time and a great place to make new friends.

Speaking of books, my newest novel, *A Measure of Mercy*, came out in September and is the first book in a new trilogy called Home to Blessing. Astrid Bjorklund stars in this new series about Blessing, ND. Watch for book two, *No Distance Too Far* in April 2010.

Meanwhile, may your new year be full of love and laughter, the desire to learn new things and gratitude for the many blessings we already have. A daily gratitude list is a powerful gift you can give yourself.

Until next time,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine