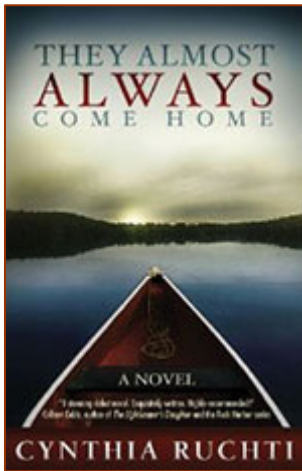


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- July 2010



Do you ever dream of portaging and canoeing in the boundary waters of Northern Minnesota and into Canada? Camping in true rustic style, only having whatever supplies you can carry in? Fishing in pristine waters and eating the fruits of your labors?

Well, I don't. The mosquitoes can carry off a forty pound dog and drain a human of blood within three days! So when a friend said she read the best book and told me the topic, I smiled sweetly and nodded, knowing I was going to take a pass on this one.

Then she walked me through the process of downloading my first FREE book on my new Kindle. So I started reading *They Almost Always Come Home*, just to be polite, you know? The author is Cynthia Ruchti, and even though Kindle's tap-the-bar-to-turn-the-page was uncomfortable at first, the story would not let me go.

Libby knows her marriage is in trouble, and when her husband does not return from a wilderness camping/canoeing trip, she is sure he has just disappeared to get out of their relationship. Even so Libby, her father-in-law and her best friend head in the direction they know he must have gone to try and find him. If he wants to be found. Clues are discovered that say they are on the right track, until...

This story has more twists and turns than a pot of spaghetti and I seriously doubted I could trust this author for a happy ending. The deeper the trouble for those characters, the more I feared I would have to take on a case of serious author dislike.

And no, I will not tell more. You have to read it. But you will not be sorry.

One of the hardest concepts to accomplish for beginning writers (and those who've been at it a long time), is creating tension that keeps readers turning the pages and rooting for the characters like Cynthia Ruchti did. I can speak from experience here, that's for sure. So, I am going to share with you one of my favorite tension techniques. I call it The Rule of Ten.

Take out paper and pencil; yes use the old-style writing tools, not a computer, and number from one to ten on the side of the page. You will also need a watch with a second hand or a timer.

At the top of the page, write your question. For example, *what obstacles can keep my character from getting what she wants?* Set your timer and start writing down every idea, no matter how crazy, that pops into your head. You have two minutes to come up with ten ideas. The first three or four are easy. By seven or eight, the clock is ticking away and you scribble down anything, the crazier the better. You have to have ten! The timer buzzes, you experience relief.

Next, go over your list and check the ones that just might work. The time constraints will help break loose your creativity. Then you can choose one of those items and do the

same thing over again. I use this for other parts of my life too, when I need some new ideas. The Rule of Ten is a great exercise for a group to use also.

Until next time, I wish you happy summer reading, no matter what techno-device you use. There are more all the time, but I don't believe they will ever totally usurp the pleasure of a book with real pages, the smell of ink and paper. A book which can be given to a friend, with the words, "You just gotta read this."

Until next time,

*Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine (who is hard at work on the next book in the Home to Blessing series... Watch for **A Heart for Home** in March, 2011)*