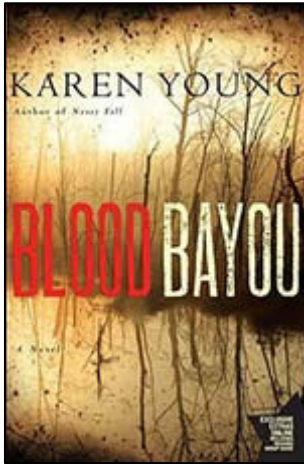


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- March 2010



A trusted friend said, “You have to read Karen Young’s latest book, *Blood Bayou*.”

I had read Karen Young’s novels before but not since she moved into the inspirational market. She wrote about women in crisis, dealing with the myriad problems of today’s women. Putting down one of her novels even then took discipline of

steel.

So I located the novel and stared at the cover. “Blood” was written in big red letters. Then I flipped it over and read the back cover copy. An attorney heroine seeks to return the freedom of those wrongfully accused and are now on death row. Her ex-husband, who was once a high powered attorney, is now a pastor at a church in a small town. A man she freed from prison is once again accused of stabbing another woman. How could I resist?

Talk about getting your characters in trouble right from page one! Karen is a master of this, and of creating characters you cheer for from the very beginning. The emotional intensity of the story leads you on a galloping chase as you hope the character Camille Vermillion discovers the secrets before the killer takes her out, too. No wonder there are more than ten million copies of Karen’s books in print. Adding a faith journey to her characters’ lives sets *Blood Bayou* apart from her earlier books and as Karen says, “Enhances and adds meaningful depth” to her novels.

When I selected this book, I did what so many of us do and what publishers wish everyone would do. I was first attracted by the title and cover, then read the back cover copy and dug into chapter one. In this case, the prologue made my hair stand on end. I did the next hoped-for part; resorted to pizza ordering because I did not want to put this book down to make dinner.

So what is the message for writers in this column? Work towards the package. When you write a book and have a publisher on board, (which is every writer's answer to prayer and pleading), both writer and publisher need to work together to put out a book that has all the components I mentioned above.

The cover must grab your attention from a distance. The back cover copy must pique your interest and lead you into the story, all without giving it away entirely. The first chapter from the opening line must capture you, and the pacing of the novel should keep you turning the pages until you reach an end that leaves you satisfied and yet wanting more.

All of this takes the combined efforts of the writer, (whose most important job is to write the best novel she or he is capable of), and then work as a team member with the editor, the marketing department, and the entire publishing house team. Then stores must be willing to stock the book, and then there must be readers who tell their friends, "You have to read *Blood Bayou*."

I did and I'm telling all of you. I am so looking forward to Karen's next novel, *Missing Max*, which is available spring 2010. I've read the first chapter and I'll be waiting in line for the rest.

Meanwhile, I'm happy to say that my latest novel *No Distance Too Far*, which continues Astrid Bjorklund's story, and is just getting into stores.

Until next time,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine