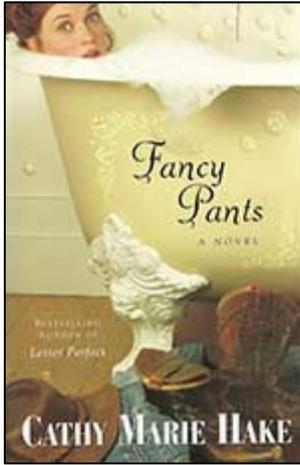


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- May 2008



As I write this, my calendar reads April 15. Everyone needs a bit of humor on a day like today, so I am looking forward to introducing you to an author who writes comedy. Her name is Cathy Marie Hake, her genre is historical fiction/inspirational romance, and each of her books has made me laugh.

In *Fancy Pants*, a young woman decides the only way to flee an arranged marriage to a man of dubious reputation is to change herself from Lady Sydney Hathwell into 'Syd', soon dubbed "Fancy Pants" by the tough cowboy who manages her uncle's ranch out west. The western uncle is reported not to care much for young females, thus Syd's need for deception, at least until she can meet him in person and explain why she is on the lam.

But her uncle is not at the ranch. He's off looking for a cure for crippling arthritis. In his absence, his ranch manager decides he must turn this young fop into a real man. Having no other recourse, Lady Hathwell, with more nerve and guts than sense, picks up the challenge. Her own pride forces her to continue the guise far longer than she planned. Can she find the family she longs for? Or will the man she is fleeing from find her first?

Witty, audacious, pure grit are all words to describe this intriguing heroine who plays out the role of city mouse who comes to the country; one of my favorite themes in a novel.

Hake lands her characters in trouble and confrontations that make a reader laugh and read faster to find out how these believable and loveable people can work out their difficulties.

Writing humor is not an easy thing, which is strange considering how funny humans are, all the crazy situations we get into, and the convoluted way we try to solve things. The problem is that what is funny to one person might not be funny to another. So the author must tread a fine line and have a good sense of when to stop before the humor becomes overdone.

Knowing your audience is another necessity, along with really understanding your characters and putting them into situations that lead to laughter.

Most people think that if someone can tell a story and get a laugh, they should be able to write funny stories too, but that's not necessarily true. Erma Bombeck was a case in reverse. Her writing led to laughter but she was not a funny speaker.

So what advice can I give to writers? If you want to write with humor, find and read authors whose writing makes you laugh. Figure out what your type of humor is (slapstick, play-on-words or whatever) and write one scene at a time, using what makes you laugh.

However, humor in fiction goes back to an even a more basic principle. You need to create engaging characters and then put them into situations that will be funny to a wide readership. Read children's books, aloud is best, and figure out what those authors did.

I believe that the best books are the ones that make you laugh or at least chuckle, even a smile is adequate, and a few pages later you are wiping your eyes.

I hope you enjoy reading *Fancy Pants* and go on to read more of Cathy Marie Hake's books. Maybe if you want a good laugh you should read more kid's books, too. And remember to *let* yourself laugh. Laughter is more healing than many medicines. Like getting enough hugs, we need to find more to laugh about. Life is too precious to spend in serious mode.

So until next time,

Happy Readin' and Writin' and check out your local bookstore for more books to make you laugh.