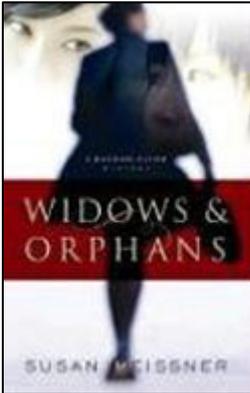


## Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- October 2007



Those of you who've been reading this column for awhile, might have figured out that I like finding new authors, or authors that are new to me, at least.

Going to book conventions is a great way to find new books, and this summer I went to two: ICRS which is the major Christian booksellers' event, and RWA which is Romance Writers of America. I came home with a *lot* of books.

Susan Meissner is one of my finds. I thought *Widow and Orphans* must be her first book, but nope, she's been around awhile. I've ordered some of her others. Perhaps you are like me. When you find a new author you like, you want to read all of their books. If you like legal mysteries, I think you'll want to order all of Susan Meissner's stories.

Rachel Flynn is the main character in this series. Her job of solving murders is hard enough, but when her own brother confesses to being a murderer, that really ups the ante—especially since he's been arrested many times before, though all for good causes.

'What if' is an author's favorite question, and Susan explores 'what if's' well: what if Rachel's brother won't let her represent him? What if he is defending a young girl who has been molested? What if Rachel knows her brother is lying, but cannot prove it?

Susan puts some original twists in the adventure, like a group of wacko artists helping Rachel find the pieces to the puzzle, and a baby who needs to be nursed, whether her mother needs to be in court or not.

*Widows and Orphans* is a good family story that leaves the reader cheering for the good guys and not wanting to eat or sleep until the end. At least that's the way it was for me. I want to know more about Rachel, attorney and sleuth.

So what is the lesson for writers in this story? We could talk about the 'what if' principle which is what drives all stories. Whenever you are stuck or plotting in general, keep asking *what if?* And then write down every idea that comes to you, no matter how crazy it may sound.

For instance, what if Rachel's brother hadn't had a history of confrontations with the police, all in his quest to take care of those who couldn't take care of themselves?

I make 'what if' lists all the time. In the book I'm currently writing, *One Perfect Day*, I'm considering what if my main character wasn't such a driven perfectionist.

What if? Two small words that mean the difference between success and failure in a story.

This also brings up the subject of imagination. Remember when you were told to "quit daydreaming and...?" (You fill in the blank.)

Most people have no idea what an incredible gift they have in their imagination. I have always been able to picture whole scenes in my mind. Now I make my living on the basis of my daydreams. I set them in motion and watch the story unfold. All creative people utilize this inside gift. You can solve problems by relaxing and letting your mind play with the ideas, not just write books, but also paint or make cards or sew or carve wood.

So give yourself some time to imagine, to ask 'what if?' and to listen and watch for the answers. I dare you. Try it today. It's free and fun to boot.

And remember, October is a great month for reading. Why not pick up a copy of *Widows and Orphans* by Susan Meissner, or my latest release, *Breaking Free*, (my favorite novel of the sixty plus I've written); the next time you visit your local bookstore?

Until next time,

*Happy Readin' and Writin' from Lauraine*