

Make Your Dark Moment Work



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Does your dark moment work? Does it fit your story, but more--does it showcase the conflict you've built between your hero and heroine? Does it prove that this man and woman cannot possibly make a life together?

If you aren't dumbfounded as to how you're going to rescue your beloved hero and heroine, maybe your dark moment is a little gray, terribly opaque--but it's not dark.

Most of us start a story with an idea of the conflict that keeps our hero and heroine from immediately falling into their happily ever after. A lot of writers need to know their dark moment and resolution before they can write the first word. Not me. Often, I have a dark moment, but it isn't the one I use after I spend nearly three hundred pages learning the deepest truths about my hero and heroine.

Let's go back to the beginning. How do you force your dark moment to do its job? Whether you plan your stories or fly into the mist, you have to remember your conflict. As your characters reveal themselves through action, you're going to build scenes that demonstrate their conflict. With each scene, evaluate whether you're increasing the stakes for this hero and heroine.

For instance, they might share a child, but not custody. You might be writing a secret baby story with a hero who never knew his five-year-old son existed. The first argument might be whether the child is allowed to have ice cream after dinner. The dark moment argument questions why the child's mother and father don't trust or love each other enough to stay together and make a family for their son.

Between the beginning and the end, you have to explain why the father never knew about his son, why the mother finally revealed his existence, what they could do to make the child happy. But the final issue in a romance with a secret baby is how this man will ever trust this woman enough to commit his heart to her, and whether the heroine can not only give her heart but share her life and her son's with the man who gave her mighty good reason to conceal their child.

The initial answer to the dark moment question is a resounding--yet convincing "no." A no that doesn't look as if it could ever become a yes--a no that is dictated by the intensity of the internal conflict you've gradually increased to unbearable pitch between your hero and heroine.

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The trick, now that you've built your conflict into an insurmountable dark moment, is to find a resolution that makes you and your reader turn back to page one. Everyone wants to take the best rides twice.

Anna Adams most recent release was *Maggie's Guardian*, a September 2002 Harlequin Superromance. She's currently working on a trilogy for Superromance, *The Calvert Cousins*. Look for the first cousin in *The Secret Father*, out in September 2003.