

Plot Is Your Friend



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What do you need to create a plot? Opposing characters who want something they cannot have. Why can't they have what they want? That's the question your plot has to answer.

In romance we assume the characters want love, but they should also need something that makes your plot unique. The heroine could want the home from which the hero's family evicted hers. Only the hero can sell her that house. The hero has a problem, too. His father has just died and he's left an archaic will that requires the hero to be married for at least a year or he loses the family fortune, including the heroine's family home. The hero, who doesn't want to be married, makes the heroine an offer. If she'll marry him, he'll sign the house over to her. He's the last person she'd actually want so he knows she'll stick to the time limit.

Now you need a turning point. Think of this as a mini-dark moment that forces the hero and heroine to reevaluate their situation. For instance, this new couple must deal with the fact that the heroine's house burns down. The hero expects her to leave him as the house was her only motivation to marry him. She chooses the honorable path, which makes the hero see her in a new light.

Now comes the heart of the story, where the hero and heroine begin to learn what they truly want--each other. Living as a married couple, they start to rely on each other as they've never trusted anyone else. They begin to envision staying together. Then the heroine discovers she's pregnant. Even as she tries to imagine the hero as a loving father, she battles the effects of her own rootless past and her mistrust of the hero's family. While she tries to make herself tell the hero about their baby, the hero discovers she's hidden her pregnancy. This is their dark moment.

The heroine tries to explain, but the hero can't trust her after such betrayal. She's not that surprised. Such shallow love is no more than she expected. Both their worst fears are confirmed, and they can't possibly be together.

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But they must resolve their marriage--and your story needs a resolution. Both face a decision that requires the ultimate risk. The heroine admits she was too frightened to trust her heart and her child to anyone else. He can wreak vengeance like his father before him, or he can dare to make a family with his wife and unborn child.

Like this hero and heroine, dare to trust your instincts. Concentrate less on the technical aspects of a plot, more on the story you're telling. Keep the structure in mind, but look for twists that make your story fresh. The plot is the hanger upon which you drape your beautiful garment.

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.