

Snaring a Synopsis



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Snaring, you ask? The synopsis is wild game to a writer--dangerous, unpredictable, possibly out of season. You have an idea. You'd like to propose it to an editor or agent. You can write chapters till you hit "The End," but you can't send those pages in until you've trapped your story in a synopsis that sells the whole package.

With thanks to every writer who's ever taught me, there are five turning points I search for when I'm writing a romance synopsis. They include the moment the hero and heroine meet, their first kiss, the first time they make love, the dark moment, and the resolution. Those are the details. But a synopsis for a romance needs more than details. It needs emotion.

Open the synopsis as you would any story you'd tell. "There was this guy and girl...." Who are they? Briefly sketch the characteristics that bring them into conflict and the traits that make them perfect for each other. Next, talk about their first meeting, but tell it in terms of the emotional impact it has on each of them. He makes her realize she's been so focused on career she's lost the ability to make a family life. She makes him ask himself if he's useless buried in this small town with a family that seems to leech large chunks out of his soul.

What emotional moment brings them to their first kiss? Is it a chance they take? Or a temptation they can't resist?

From the first kiss to the first time they make love, what alters between them? What brings them to the moment when they can trust their most intimate secrets to each other? Or perhaps the love scene is an answer to conflict. The heroine has been disappointed in love, and she's afraid to commit, but the hero, injured in some past relationship, needs her healing touch, and she's willing to give of herself.

And if the love scene works, and all seems on the verge of happily ever after, what unresolved piece of conflict arises out of your characters' burgeoning relationship to nearly destroy them? This should be some innate trait that makes absolute commitment utterly impossible until they deal with their own demons.

What changes are they willing to make to bring resolution to each other? When you know these emotional details, you'll have a synopsis for a romantic novel. Try to step inside your characters as you describe their motivations. Feel their joy and pain, their fear that they won't win each other.

Even in your synopsis, you want to show that your story has enough impact to make readers believe your hero and heroine are the only two people in the world for each other,

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but their conflict is so deep and so personal they must change irrevocably to find their happy ending.

Best of luck with your proposal!

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.