



Don't Let the Plot Get in the Way of the Story!

with Kimberley Young and Joanne Grant

The Pitfalls of Plotting

Clichéd beginnings

We've seen them all before (and so have you)! But your cliché can be turned into a familiar yet fresh start to a story that encourages readers to keep turning the pages.

A successful writer can use convention for its best purpose - by tweaking it, altering it, knowing how it works, twisting it, turning it on its head or ruthlessly using it to throw the reader headlong into the romance.

If you understand convention and how to use it, you'll have the editor hooked too.

Clichéd openings don't work when:

- X** they are plot-driven
- X** they focus too much on detail
- X** they are used solely for dramatic effect
- X** there is not enough sense of character



Top Tips:

- Plot is all about character, character, character!
- Choose your set-up carefully – if it is a conventional one make sure you are bringing unique elements through character and voice
- Understand why the convention works before you twist it
- Make sure your characters are driving the plot
- Use the plot to squeeze all the emotional juice out of your characters!
- Characters must be well motivated
- Don't use clichéd characters
- Never EVER let the plot get in the way of the romance – change the plot, not your characters!
- The reader is interested in *reaction* not just action
- Know what plot needs to be on the page
- The black moment should never be a plot device or there just for dramatic effect
- Be wary of using secondary characters to move along your plot
- Prologues and Epilogues – use with care
- Choose a plot that is suitable for the series you are targeting
- Your reader will believe in any plot *if* they believe in your characters
- The characters are going on a journey - think of the plot as the road not the destination!



Meet the editors

Kimberley Young is Senior Editor of Harlequin Romance and currently acquires across all the UK series. She has worked at the company for over nine years but was first introduced to the delights of Harlequin Mills & Boon romances under her Nan's kitchen table and has never looked back.

Editor **Joanne Grant** has worked at Harlequin Mills & Boon for just over six years. She joined the company shortly after completing her MA in American Literature and as an avid reader of Harlequin Mills & Boon romances it was like a dream come true! Joanne works on the Harlequin Presents team, but like all the UK editors, she acquires across every series.