

**Icebergs that can creep in and sink a story's emotional impact:**

1. Plot too contrived or coincidental.
2. Logic gaps.
3. Characters who are not properly motivated or sympathetic (this does not mean they have to be perfect or act gallantly in every situation—provided they have the right motivation for not doing so).
4. Writing that is overly dramatic or uses too many superlatives.
5. Relying on the physical instead of any deeper emotion. If you really want your story to resonate, pull on those emotions that are universal and deep.
6. Passive writing that keeps the readers at a distance.
7. Lack of sufficient conflict or unchanging conflict.
8. Flat dialogue that doesn't sound natural to the ear (too stilted or formal for the situation, etc.)
9. Starting in the wrong place or doing a backstory dump at the beginning.
10. Saying too much or saying too little.
11. Pacing that is too slow.
12. Improper mix of narrative vs. dialogue.
13. Leaving nothing at stake.
14. The "Old bait 'em and switch."
15. Inaccurate research.
16. Unnecessary retelling of information.
17. Making everything so obvious the reader doesn't need to participate—so they don't.
18. Improper use of POV.

*NYTimes Bestselling Author Brenda Novak has three novels coming out this summer—THE PERFECT COUPLE, THE PERFECT LIAR and THE PERFECT MURDER, all part of her popular Last Stand Series. She also runs an annual on-line auction for diabetes research every May at [www.brendanovak.com](http://www.brendanovak.com). To date, she's raised over \$750,000. Brenda considers herself lucky to be a mother of five and married to the love of her life.*

