

THE four things that will turn your love story into a memorable one

Or how other authors have been playing with your heart strings for years!

What? You thought I was going to ignore the month of love entirely?

Think of all the great love stories*...they all have four things in common. Four things that make the love story compelling, memorable, *relatable*.

**Please note: I said "love stories" so this includes ALL love stories not only those in romance novels, but also those that are "B" stories, and tragic stories.*

- **The One**

While at school, I used to work my weekends at a Swiss bakery. On Sunday morning, in amongst the joggers, the golf club convenors and the frantic mothers picking up baked goods, Melissa, another schoolgirl, and I, would talk about the movies we'd watched that week. I've still never seen *The Butcher's Wife*, but I can remember her telling me about 'split aparts'. Melissa leaned up against the glass counters, perilously close to the danish tray, and explained in detail, how our souls had been split apart.

"Like that." She demonstrated, splitting a bread roll in two. "And then we're doomed to spend the rest of our lives searching for our other half."

"How do you know when you've found the other half?"

"You just do," she answered. "They *know* you."

I digested this (and no doubt a doughnut or three as well). "And what if you don't find your other half?"

"How tragic. How rude." She flounced off to help a runner sweating over the rye bread.

It stuck though. Of course it would. The original thought is attributed to Plato. *Plato* came up with the notion of split aparts. So what chance did seventeen-year-old me have? To be fair, most people believe in THE ONE. That there's one magical unicorn person who will complete you...if they're a bird, you're a bird... they like you very much. Just as you are...

In a romance story, there has to be that moment when they recognise that this IS soulmate love. That they've found their other half. That their split apart is asking to join back up. That this is IT.

"He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same."

Wuthering Heights, Emily Bronte

Powerful stuff you ignore at your peril.

- **Forbidden Fruit**

Don't we just love what we can't have? The words "don't touch" are more of a challenge than a warning. And myohmy, don't we love to read this.

Let's start with our two Verona lovers: Romeo and Jules. "You can date anyone you like, but not that *spitspit* Capulet/Montague scum!"

And it's been one forbidden love story after another ever since.

Thou shalt not date your best friend's brother. Looking at you *Kissing Booth*. Or your brother's best friend, *Once upon a wild fling*.

A whole generation swooned at *The Thorn Birds*...in love with a priest?! Shock, horror...give me more.

Twilight? Don't date humans

Dead before Dark? Don't date vampires

A Song of Ice and Fire? Don't date your sister

Taboos can range from the innocent to the downright borderline incestuous, depending on the genre you're writing in.

The lure of the taboo is tantalizing. Use it.

- **Longing**

Longing sets up the chase – the further the object of your character's longing moves away, the more they chase!

Or what about unrequited love? Bearing in mind we're covering the spectrum of love stories here, unrequited love is the grandmaster of longing. Comic hero, Wolverine is besotted with Jean Grey, who's very much taken by Cyclops. His unrequited love demonstrates such a soft tender heart in Wolverine, it's painful to watch.

There is emotional pain in longing that doesn't let up.

Think of any of those slow burn, agony inducing love stories that have kept us invested in TV shows loooong after their sell-by date:

Gilmore Girls' Lorelai and Luke. Jeez, you could feel that guy's burning from a hundred million paces away.

The Office's Tim and Dawn (UK version). I haven't seen the US version but would imagine Jim and Pam were the same. It was bloody painful watching these two NOT get together for a-g-e-s. And Dawn gets engaged to that utter tosspot, I can't even remember his name. So now it's forbidden too, and poor Tim, he has to just stand there and watch. 100% agony.

Heck, even in *Schitt's Creek* when Alexis is pining for Ted. But now she works for him (forbidden). He has a girlfriend (forbidden). I couldn't wait for the next episode.

The couple in question is *this* close to making the connection but they're thwarted every time. You root for them. You want them to get over whatever's holding them back, because they are PERFECT FOR EACH OTHER...SOULMATES. And soulmates theory states that they should BE together. But they're not, and it's so UNFAIR. So, if you're like me, I keep watching, waiting for the moment when I will be rewarded with their eventual hook up.

- **Insurmountable Obstacles**

"Men are apt to despise that which is easily achieved."

Montesquieu

We like our relationships with a little struggle. The path of true love never runs smooth (you get the feeling Shakespeare knew his stuff).

Most of the love story should be about their conflict and struggle – their harmony in their HEA or HFN has to be hard won (and only right at the very end of the story). Who wants to read about a couple going on a successful date, then another and another, all loved up and nauseating? No-one that's who. It's *boring*. [To be clear, in real life, boring is good, in fiction, it is decidedly not.]

Will they? Won't they? The eternal dance.

Think of authors like JR Ward who teased the Blay/Quinn relationship through numerous books before they finally *finally* got their own story. Obstacles on obstacles. *Come. On.*

And if they do get together? The 'sweet' between the two lovers must be brief before they are thrown back into conflict.

**For you to ponder in what's left of February:
How do your lovers know he/she/they are THE
ONE?**

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