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If the Damsel Is ^①
In Distress, Be Sure
It's Career-Related

Seminars Attempt to Teach
Romance-Novel Writing;
Steadied by a Strong Arm

By BETSY MORRIS

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
CHICAGO—So you would like to write
The Great American Novel?

But you would settle for turning out
something less.

Then maybe writing a romance novel is
for you, a simple love story where boy
meets, chases and finally catches girl in up
to 250 panting, purple pages.

We aren't talking literature, you under-
stand—just good grammar, lots of adjectives
and imagination and enough action,
tears and passion to enclose in a damsel-in-
decolletage cover and sell at the supermar-
ket checkout for four times the price of this
week's TV Guide.

Silhouette Books needs you. The Simon &
Schuster unit is the No. 2 publisher of romance
novels, 80 million last year, and it
can barely get manuscripts fast enough to
keep its bookracks filled. Silhouette, plus the
industry kingpin, Torstar Corp. of Toronto's
Harlequin Books, and half a dozen new riv-
als publish 140 new titles a month in all,
and sales are so strong that romance novels
now account for 40% of the paperback-book
market.

If Damsel Is in Distress, Make It Related to Her Job; Seminars Give Pointers on Writing Romance Novels

^② Continued From First Page
romance genre. Its Special Edition series al-
lows heroines to be older and more worldly
and to let their hair down occasionally. Its
sexy Desire series lets them get downright
lusty. However, its newest series, Inspirations,
is aimed at devout Christian readers
and holds its heroines to stricter moral stan-
dards.

The hero "is your fantasy," Ruth Lan-
gan, the author of three Silhouette books,
tells would-be writers. "Decide what your
man will be." Many are blessed with power-
ful builds, bronze tans and square jaws.
They must be self-assured, hot-tempered,
passionate and wealthy.

Mrs. Langan modeled her heroes after
television stars in the past. But she has an-
other public figure in mind for her next

^③ one—Lee Iacocca, the volatile, hard-driving
chairman of Chrysler Corp. "He's so self-
made, so in control," she says.

Follow a tight outline so that every book
is similar and readers know what to expect.
The couple meets in the first chapter, prefer-
ably the first few pages. And make it
clear from the start that "they have a deep,
deep attraction for each other," Miss Solem
advises. That means making the heroine's
heart thud or her palms go cold or her
breath get short when she meets the hero. If
she is so undone by the first encounter that
she loses her balance and has to be steadied
by the stranger's arm (and make it a mus-
cular arm), so much the better.

Fortunately, Vickie Thornton was seated
when she met Barr Chandler in Rena
McKay's "Valley of Broken Hearts": She

^④ felt a bubbling excitement as Barr sat
down beside her. . . . She was sharply
aware of Barr's basic maleness, an attribute
that had never before jarred her right down
to her frosted toenails."

From that first encounter on, keep the
couple's destiny uncertain with conflict and
drama for at least eight or nine chapters.
But avoid storms, shipwrecks and kidnapp-
ings. Silhouette editors prefer perils of
competitive careers or conflicting values.
Those subjects appeal to Silhouette readers,
more than 60% of whom hold jobs and 50%
of whom attend college.

Provide detailed descriptions. Readers
"want to know the scent of her perfume, the
sound of his voice," Miss Solem says. And
that means lilting, lyrical prose that en-
gages the senses. A sample from Pat Wal-

^⑤ lace's "Shining Hour": ". . . a feverish
warmth enveloped her. She could almost
hear the vibrations sing between them. A
fresh, exciting smell, like cedar shavings,
emanated from his ruddy skin." Let the
reader, along with the heroine, thrill to
strains of seductive music, savor the color
and taste of amber wine, shiver as mouths
twist in kisses and have her racing pulse
propel not blood but "a narrow flood of fire,
like leaping mercury" through every vein.

Don't stint on emotion. "Make them
laugh, make them cry," Miss Solem ad-
vises. Write scenes like this one of Lucy
Hamilton's: "Oh dear God, she loved him.
As the tears came she wrapped her arms
protectively around herself and sat rocking
to and fro, huddled into a ball of misery."

^⑥ And don't scrimp on sensual scenes. Such
scenes should be "frequent and escalate in
intensity," according to a Silhouette tip
sheet handed out to audience members. But
keep them suggestive, not too graphic. "Too
many breasts and thighs, and I begin to
think I'm at the chicken counter in the gro-

cery store," Mrs. Langan warns.

Finally, resolve all the problems by page
192. That allows Silhouette to keep its retail
prices between \$1.95 and \$2.25. (More lati-
tude is allowed writers of some special Sil-
houette books that are 250 pages long.) And
resolve the problems completely. Before a
Silhouette reader springs for a new book,
Miss Solem says, she often flips through the
last few pages, "to make sure there's a
very, very happy ending."

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