

Is Harlequin Superromance Right For You?

by
Brenda Mott

The romance genre seems to be growing with leaps and bounds these days, with many new lines popping up at various publishing houses, Harlequin/Silhouette being among them. With so many choices, it may be hard to decide who to target. Knowing your market is a subject that could take up an article in itself. So if you don't know your market, study it and *then* come back to the question addressed in the title of this article.

But if you know what you want to write, and you think long contemporary category romance is what you do best, you might want to consider submitting to Harlequin Superromance. (Please refer to the Harlequin website for specific submission policies and requirements.) In my experience, the editors at Superromance seem to always be on the lookout for new writers to add to their stable of authors. "Great!" you say. "So what do they want?" Good question. I'll do my best to answer it.

Harlequin Superromance novels have a word length of 85,000. You may play with this figure a little on the low side, possibly at 80,000. But stick as close to 85,000 as possible (This would be 320-340 double-spaced manuscript pages, with 25 lines per page in Courier New.) Supers are the closest thing to single title that category has to offer. This means you can do things in a Superromance that you cannot (or usually cannot) do with another line.

My own books often deal with issues--such as the death of the hero's seven-year-old daughter (which took place prior to the opening of the story) in

SARAH'S LEGACY. In COWGIRL, SAY YES my heroine's mother has Alzheimer's Disease. Tess must cope with taking care of her mother, and with being the primary caregiver of her entire family. Now I'm not saying you will never see these same issues addressed in another category romance line. I'm just saying these are the type of stories and issues Supers allows you, the writer, to tell.

By that same token, SARAH'S LEGACY was originally turned down by Harlequin American because they will not (from what the editor told me in person) accept the death of a child in a Harlequin American plot. (This was several years ago, so do your research on each line for current guidelines.) That same editor recommended I send the book to Supers, and as they say, the rest is history.

Superromance subplots are meaty. Notice I said *subplots*, simply because you must always keep in mind that the romance between your hero and heroine is the central plot (no matter which line you write for) and your story must center around that relationship and the conflicts it involves.

Some of the tones you will find in Superromance are **Humor**: For an example, suppose the heroine and her wacky family of eight suddenly find themselves stranded at the hero's ranch. He was raised as an only child with conservative parents who never played a practical joke in their lives, and the contrasting views of hero and heroine lead to comical incidents (not to be confused with slapstick humor.) **Emotional angst**: The loss of a child, or mental illness could be two

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examples. **Intrigue:** The variety here is just about anything you can think of. These books may not have the amount of intrigue found in an actual Harlequin Intrigue, but it is definitely recognized in the subplot.

These are just three examples. You may and will find others. There are no set "rules" when it comes to Supers. The editors are looking for a well-written, original story (as are all editors) that goes deep and captures the reader, pulling her into another world. That of your hero and heroine and your cast of secondary characters.

I recently read a Superromance in which the heroine faced an ongoing battle with alcoholism, while the hero was coping with having lost his wife and child in a crash caused by a drunk driver. (MY NAME IS NELL by Laura Abbot). Excellent conflict! Gripping story. In Susan Gable's THE MOMMY PLAN, the hero is coping with being the single father of a little girl who has had a heart transplant, while the heroine is trying to heal from the loss of her little boy and knows what it is like to have to face donating your child's organs to save the life of others. These are the type of books Supers is looking for. You can pull out all the stops and really, truly write the book of your heart with Supers, providing the book of your heart is a long contemporary romance.

I am so happy and grateful to have found a home for my stories with the editors of Superromance, who are extremely attentive to their authors. It's a great house to write for, giving the writer room to stretch her creative muscles, to dare to do something a little different, a little beyond the boundaries of what is often perceived as the "average"

category romance novel.

So if your story is meaty and edgy, if your writing is gripping and emotional, be it sad, funny or full of intrigue, then Harlequin Superromance might just be the right place for you. Grab a few Supers off the shelf of your local bookstore and give them a read. Buy many! <Grin> Seriously, study the line by reading it extensively, and if indeed you think your writing style might be right for the editors of Superromance, get a query out there to them!

They're waiting for that next great book.

*Brenda Mott writes for Harlequin Superromance (obviously) and recently signed a two-book contract for her 4th and 5th books. **The New Baby**, coming out in June '04, is the first of a trilogy. E-mail her at BrendaMott@hotmail.com*