

1 week ago Dancing With the Wrong Girl — What Really Drives Plot



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Imagine a scene at a grand ball. The President is the guest of honor. Maybe the Princess of England is there too. It's that kind of night.

Our protagonist is a young man—the son of a high-ranking politician—at ease in this highbrow setting. He's dressed in a black merino tuxedo cut from the finest European bolt. He notices a beautiful blonde guest in a pink ball gown. Their eyes meet. He invites her onto the balcony.

It's a love story, right? Easy. Familiar. I've handed you the hook.

But let's go back—to the second before his eyes land on the woman in pink.

Another young woman has slipped past security and entered the ballroom unnoticed. Her hair is pinned hastily. Her dress is off-the-rack. She's anxious, out of place, and clearly not invited.

She steps in front of the politician's son. Before he can approach the blonde, this uninvited girl whispers something in his ear. He averts his eyes, takes her hands, and leads her—gently, silently—off the dance floor and onto the balcony. There, in the shadows, they speak in hushed tones.

Suddenly, it's not a fairy tale.
It's a story.

Why? Because this version **violates expectation**.

It introduces tension.

The protagonist is at risk.

And that's when **plot** begins.

 **Plot Isn't What Happens—It's What Disrupts**

The difference between the two scenes? One relies on polished tropes. The other **creates disruption**.

Seeing a powerful young man leave a glittering ball with a woman who clearly doesn't belong? That's scandalous. That's mysterious. That's narrative tension. Now we're hooked. Now we're asking: *Why? What just happened? What's at stake?*

Many craft books try to define plot in complex ways. But good fiction is simple: **it begins when a character is moved off their comfortable perch**. Something unexpected forces them into a choice they didn't plan to make.

That's it. That's the start.

Plot Is Built on Causality

A dragon may not appear until the fifth chapter, but it's the first hint of disruption—the unwanted letter, the whispered secret, the landlord pounding on the door—that drives the story into motion.

Great plots don't just unfold—they react.
One thing causes another.
Each moment ups the risk.

And when characters respond to that risk, the reader is pulled into the heartbeat of the story.

Final Word

You don't need formulas. You need friction.

Good fiction doesn't play it safe. It puts the central character at odds with what they thought was true—and then asks them to act.

Dancing with the wrong people is a daily risk.

It's also how every great story begins.

Risk it.

Posted 1 week ago by [Patty](#)

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Anonymous [February 10, 2012 at 8:09 AM](#)

okay, so which book is it? i want to get it! Awesome post, by the way

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Patty [February 12, 2012 at 11:12 AM](#)

It's an example. I have quite a few of these that I keep saying I need to plot into books.

Thank you, Marianne!

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