

TOUCH OF MAGIC 2010
Romantic Suspense Scoresheet

Use these criteria for scoring romance suspense, and suspense/thriller with romantic elements. Each criterion is worth 5 points.

Romantic suspense is defined as a novel in which romance is the primary or a principle element, in which story line includes substantial external conflict and danger, a villain as antagonist, and a level of tension that may be missing from other romantic novels. As such, entries will be judged on elements in the context of the suspense genre as well as romance.

Assign points as follows:

5 – ready for publishing!

4 – minor tweaking is all that’s needed here

3 – this area isn’t bad, but it does need some improvement before submitting

2 – needs extensive reworking

1 – needs better understanding of basic concepts in this area, then extensive reworking

Our goal is to give the author *useful feedback* that she or he can use enroute to successfully publishing the work. Please comment on all areas to the extent possible. Comments are required for any score of 1 – 3, and highly recommended for any score of 4.

Entry title:

Entry#	Judge#
1. Setting (10 points)	
Criterion	Score 1-5
Author created a plausible world through setting with a clear sense of time and place.	
Author used all five senses to put me in the world of the book.	
Total points for Setting	
Comments:	
2. Characters (40 points)	

Hero is likable, intriguing, or otherwise “heroic” enough to sustain the plot of a romantic suspense novel (factors may include being clearly an alpha male, for example).	
Hero is fully developed. Not just a two-dimensional on-paper character, but author gives us a good sense of his motivation, goals and conflicts from the beginning of the story (or alludes to them sufficiently to be intriguing rather than leaving the reader missing something). He’s not perfect, but instead has intriguing flaws and characteristics that help bring him to life.	
Hero is realistic. His actions/reactions are realistic, his dialogue gives us a sense of his character, and sets him apart from the other characters.	
Heroine is likable, or at least intriguing (if she has less-than-likable characteristics), or otherwise meets expectations of a heroine in the plot of a romantic suspense novel (factors may include mental, emotional or physical strength, for example).	
Heroine is fully developed. Not just a two-dimensional on-paper character, but author gives us a good sense of her motivation, goals and conflicts from the beginning of the story (or alludes to them sufficiently to be intriguing rather than leaving the reader missing something). She’s not perfect, but instead has intriguing flaws and characteristics that help bring her to life.	
Heroine is realistic. Her actions/reactions are realistic, her dialogue gives us a sense of her character, and sets her apart from the other characters.	
Secondary characters are well-developed and necessary, without overshadowing hero/heroine. If no secondary characters are present, they are not missed.	
Villain/antagonist is introduced or alluded to, or if no villain is present in the opening pages, his/her presence is not missed.	
Total points for Characters	
Comments:	
4. Dialogue (15 points)	
Dialogue furthers the plot and is appropriate to the setting.	
Language used in dialogue is appropriate to the character and the genre (ie swear words, which may not be appropriate in some other lines, may be considered appropriate in this genre)	
Dialogue tags are used appropriately and dialogue is easily attributable.	
Total points for Dialogue	
Comments:	

5. Pacing (10 points)	
Pacing is appropriate for a romantic suspense novel. There is appropriate balance between dialogue and narrative, and the action is suited to the genre.	
Backstory and other explanatory prose is layered in appropriately.	
Total points for Pacing	
Comments:	
6. Plot/Conflict (25 points)	
Author reveals an intriguing plot that is appropriate for the romantic suspense genre.	
Plot is fresh, or author's voice is distinctive and brings a fresh perspective.	
The type and degree of conflict are appropriate to the romantic suspense genre.	
Both external and internal conflict are present or alluded to.	
Romantic elements are present, or if hero/heroine haven't met, the romance is easily anticipated in the opening pages (ie set up so it's clear they'll meet, have conflict, etc). Note: the romance does not need to be at the core of the story, but a romantic element must be present.	
Total points for Plot/Conflict	
Comments:	
7. Point of View (10 points)	
Point of view is clear and effective. Author's voice does not intrude.	
Point of view switches are smooth and appropriate.	
Total points for Point of View	
Comments:	
8. Mechanics (30 points)	

Manuscript is professionally formatted. (do not take off points for odd page breaks caused by electronic transmission) Appropriate (readable) font is used in a standard type size, with standard margins. Author ended entry at an appropriate break (that is, not in the middle of a sentence).	
Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct.	
Sentence fragments, if any, are used effectively.	
Author's word choice is appropriate to the romantic suspense genre and adds authenticity to the story/setting.	
'Showing' outweighs 'telling'.	
Active verbs balance passive verbs as appropriate to the story and genre.	
Total points for Mechanics	
Comments:	
9. Voice and other intangibles (10 points)	
Author's voice shines through and lends itself well to the romantic suspense genre.	
The opening pages are intriguing, drawing me in and making me want to read more of the story.	
Total points for Voice	
Comments:	
Total Score (150 possible)	
Other comments:	
Judge's info: (mark all that apply)	
Published, romance	Published, romantic suspense
Published, other	
Un-published	