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Let's Get Intimate - The First Four Stages of Intimacy

By Debora Dennis

No matter what heat level you write, there has to be some form of intimacy between your hero and heroine, and let's face it, there's plenty going on long before they hit the sheets. As I begin my new project with that all-important first meeting of the hero and heroine rushing toward me like a steaming locomotive...I usually panic.

I don't want to rush them, but I do need to start from their very first moment on the page to build the attraction. I need to fan the flames of their intimacy as early as possible to give the reader what I promise from page one to the end—an emotionally satisfying HEA.

Everything from heat levels to the length of the story, and even the characters themselves, will dictate how quickly the characters will move through each stage. But make no mistake, even if they happen quickly and all at once—it's important on an emotional level not to leave one out.

With that end in sight, I glance over at my handy "12 stages of intimacy" chart and start at the top. Today, I'm talking about the first four.

EYE TO BODY: We all do it, we've all been on the receiving end of this - whether it's a quick glance up and down or the slow burn of being undressed by his eyes. At this stage, unless they've met before, this is purely physical! This is the first perusal; it's where we notice the hug of the jeans, a firm behind, etc.

EYE TO EYE: From across the room or over a candlelight dinner. In an elevator or on opposing sides of a conference table - this is the first chance we have to give the glimmer of something more on an emotional level. Cold as steel or warm and inviting, it doesn't matter...your hero or heroine is now intrigued. Something stirs inside; they can't look away or can't look away fast enough. A split second connection or a need to get lost in the most beautiful eyes they've ever seen. Use it and punch up that emotion early!

VOICE TO VOICE: It's more than the sound, more than the accent, it's the way he says her name. Does the sound of her voice soothe his soul or stir the loins? It's in the way he whispers in her ear, the way she mumbles under her breath...so much can be conveyed when they speak. Is it authoritative and powerful or sweet and demure? Maybe he doesn't even hear her voice, all he sees is her lips moving and losing control isn't too far off :)

HAND TO HAND: First time we have actual physical contact - skin to skin, oh my! Are they hard-working hands, rough and powerful? Is her skin soft and supple, so small in his? Jolts of energy, heat rising up their arms? Tight grips or a casual taking of her hand to lead her out of a crowd - this is a big moment - even if it happens in an instant. Give me that moment of knowing this is more than a casual touch.

Now go explore and have fun!

And that wraps up the first four, join me next month when we continue the journey of intimacy...now I'm off to incorporate them into my own first meeting scene!

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