

***Indiana Romance Writers of America, Inc.***  
**“INDIANA’S GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY” CONTEST**

**ROMANTIC SUSPENSE SCORE SHEET**

<b>ENTRY CODE:</b>	<b>JUDGE:</b>			
<b>TITLE OF ENTRY:</b>				

<b>CATEGORY:</b>	<b>TARGET PUBLISHERS:</b>
<i>Romantic Suspense</i>	
<b>WORD COUNT:</b>	

**YOUR SCORE**

/250

**Point System for Scoring**

- 5 = Outstanding - ready for an editor**
- 4 = Very few flaws, needs only minor tune-up**
- 3 = Average**
- 2 = Many problems/errors**
- 1 = Major problems**

**PROFESSIONAL IMPACT:** (Possible Score: 15 points) [     ]

- [     ] 1. Is the entry presented professionally - in correct manuscript format?
- [     ] 2. Does the entry follow required format of this contest?
- [     ] 3. Are the grammar, spelling, and punctuation correct?

**WRITING MECHANICS:** (Possible Score: 30 points) [     ]

- [     ] 4. Is the first chapter compelling? Is there an intriguing hook? Does it make you want to continue reading?
- [     ] 5. Does the author use the senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) appropriately to create a vivid experience?
- [     ] 6. Does the author show rather than tell? Is the writing active and not passive? If passivity is used, is it appropriate for the scene and unobtrusive?
- [     ] 7. Is the writing style clear and distinct with appropriate use of adjectives/adverbs?
- [     ] 8. Is exposition presented in a believable and well-balanced manner?
- [     ] 9. Do the scenes flow smoothly? Is the manuscript well paced to increase suspense?

**READER'S INITIAL REACTION:** (Possible Score: 25 points) [     ]

- [     ] 10. How compelling is the suspense plot introduced in the opening chapters?
- [     ] 11. How intriguing is the romance plot introduced in the opening chapters?
- [     ] 12. Does the book open at the right place, and does the opening reveal something important and/or hint at the story conflict?

- [ ] 13. Are the central character(s) introduced at an appropriate moment? Is this first appearance believable and intriguing?
- [ ] 14. Are the opening situation and introduction of characters presented in a clear manner, without unnecessary confusion? If information is withheld for suspense/tension, is it done effectively?

**CENTRAL CHARACTER/PROTAGONIST:** (Possible Score: 20 points) [ ]

- [ ] 15. Does the protagonist display distinct character traits, flaws and virtues, and exhibit a range of believable emotions?
- [ ] 16. Is the central character/protagonist an active character, not just a victim? Do his/her actions affect the course of the suspense plot?
- [ ] 17. Can you identify with the central character(s), even if he or she isn't sympathetic?
- [ ] 18. Does he/she interact realistically with other characters?

**OTHER MAJOR CHARACTERS:** (Possible Score: 20 points) [ ]

- [ ] 19. Are the other major characters all necessary to the story? Do they play essential roles?
- [ ] 20. Is each major character well-defined and distinctive?
- [ ] 21. Do the actions of the major characters have an effect on the suspense plot?
- [ ] 22. Do they interact realistically with other characters?

**CONFLICT AND MOTIVATION:** (Possible Score: 20 points) [ ]

- [ ] 23. Do the motivations of the character(s) (including any villain) create genuine conflict, not contrived or forced?
- [ ] 24. Is the conflict (or conflicts - internal/external) strong enough to carry a story of this type and length?
- [ ] 25. Are the goals of the central character established or foreshadowed?
- [ ] 26. Do you see conflict and suspense rising in an effective way as the story goes on?

**PLOT:** (Possible Score: 15 points) [ ]

- [ ] 27. Is there a good balance between the suspense and the romantic plots?
- [ ] 28. Is the suspense plot free of logic lapses?
- [ ] 29. Does the plot promise to develop as a comprehensive whole, not just a series of episodes without much linkage?

**SETTING:** (Possible Score: 10 points) [ ]

- [ ] 30. Is there a clear sense of time and place?
- [ ] 31. Does the setting add to the suspenseful tone and/or conflict of the story?

**POINT OF VIEW:** (Possible Score: 15 points) [ ]

- [ ] 32. Is the Point of View approach effective and appropriate for this plot and this type of book?
- [ ] 33. Does the POV create empathy, understanding of the character(s), and a good vicarious experience for the reader?
- [ ] 34. Does the choice of a particular POV character (rather than another character's POV) for each passage or scene enhance the story, such as by creating suspense, giving a unique perspective on an event, or increasing the level of emotion/tension/suspense?

**DIALOGUE:** (Possible Score: 30 points) [ ]

- [ ] 35. Do the characters sound like real people? Are character voices consistent with their age, education, gender, ethnicity, etc? Is the dialogue appropriate for the time and place of the story?

- [ ] 36. Does each character have a distinct voice without too frequently resorting to misspelled words and other annoyances?
- [ ] 37. Does the exposition (information transfer) in dialogue seem natural to the speaker and situation?
- [ ] 38. Do the dialogue passages effectively use paragraph length, word choice, placement and type of quote tags, punctuation, vocal idiosyncrasies (like sentence fragments, etc), action, and introspection to create a conversational experience both inside and outside the quotation marks?
- [ ] 39. Does the dialogue move the story forward and cause plot changes?
- [ ] 40. Do the conversations between characters reveal and change their relationship?

**SYNOPSIS:** (Possible Score: 50 points) [ ]

- [ ] 41. Is the synopsis presented in an acceptable format, and does it clearly define the period, situation, and locale of the story?
- [ ] 42. Does the synopsis present a story of a sufficient complexity and length for romantic suspense?
- [ ] 43. Does the synopsis tell the story in a clear chronological fashion, with the cause-and-effect dynamic of events identified?
- [ ] 44. Does the synopsis clearly show the actions of the major characters (including any villain) and how they affect the plot?
- [ ] 45. Does the synopsis answer all the questions the reader might have about the plot?
- [ ] 46. Does the synopsis describe the conflicts, showing how they rise in tension and resolve in the end? Does the ending answer the story questions?
- [ ] 47. Is there a presentation of the emotional cause and effect of story events?
- [ ] 48. Are the characters, their motivations, and their conflicts clearly defined in the synopsis?
- [ ] 49. Do transitions between events effectively link one event to another, promote the ease of the reading experience, and improve coherence of the plot?
- [ ] 50. Does the synopsis make you want to read the rest of the book?

**TOTAL POINTS** [ ]

In the event of a tie score, the entry with the highest score in “Synopsis” will be declared the winner. If both entries have a tie score in this category, the entry with the highest score in “Mechanics” will be declared the winner.

## Judge’s Comments

**What I liked about this entry:**

**Areas that, in my opinion, need more work:**

**If I were judging this entry in the Golden Heart, I would give it a:** [     ]  
(based on a scale of 1 – 9, with 9 being highest)

**Judge's Name** (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mark all that apply:**

Published, romantic suspense: \_\_\_\_\_

Published, other romance \_\_\_\_\_

Published, not in romance: \_\_\_\_\_

RWA PAN \_\_\_\_\_

RWA PRO \_\_\_\_\_

RWA contest finalist/winner \_\_\_\_\_

RWA Golden Heart/RITA finalist/winner \_\_\_\_\_