

Comment: Include your name and the title of your story in the upper left-hand corner of every page. Number every page sequentially.

Moon Madness

Synopsis

What if, all your life, you've always done the right thing? You've been proper, prudent, even cautious; never wavering from the straight and narrow path--not, necessarily, because you are any better than anyone else, but rather from an unacknowledged "Chicken Little" fear that if you do anything the least bit wild, something terrible will happen.

Comment: Be sure your synopsis is double-spaced using an easy-to-read font such as Times New Roman or Courier New. Use an easy-to-read size -- 12 point font is preferred.

Comment: Margins should be 1" or 1.25".

Comment: Indent each new paragraph.

Then one day, in a moment of bravado, you finally let go. You do something rash, something impulsive, something--okay, let's admit it--slightly illegal. And suddenly, all your fears come true.

Comment: As in this sample, use the first one or two paragraphs to "hook" the editor with the basic premise of your story.

Such is the plight of Diana "Dee" Edith Evans. For twenty-six years, Dee has been the perfect daughter, the perfect student, and finally the perfect employee as private secretary to Jason Masters. Then one day, Dee is jilted by her boyfriend Stewart for being too "conservative," and she suffers a moment of temporary insanity. Egged on by her friends, she decides to prove Stewart wrong by mooning him from the company carpool van.

Unfortunately, Dee's aim is off. Instead of Stewart, she moons her boss . . . and the sky starts to fall down on Dee's proper, predictable world.

Comment: These two paragraphs quickly set up the plot as well as introducing us to the heroine.

Although she lacks confidence in social situations, when it comes to her job, Dee has always been self-assured and responsible. Jason Masters might frighten the other employees at the company with his quick temper, but she's been working for Jason for years and knows how

to handle him by using good sense and a calm manner. But, of course, she's never done anything this stupid before. Humiliated by what her actions and dreading what her handsome, unpredictable boss is bound to do about it, she doesn't want to go to work the next day. Not only that, but she has a big bump on her forehead from when she fell over after doing the "dreadful deed." (She never should have taken off her seat belt!) But her friends convince her to go into work and see what happens, assuring her that there's a good possibility that Masters never even saw her. |

Comment: This paragraph neatly and succinctly sets up the heroine's relationship with the hero while continuing to outline the developing plot.

To Dee's surprise, her friends are partly right . . . but also partly wrong. Jason did see two white cheeks framed in the car pool van window, but he has no idea who committed such a disrespectful act, or even which of the company's four vans the perpetrator was riding in. Jason may have been wild in his twenties--enjoying dangerous sports, fast cars, and even faster women--but he's now 32 and since he became CEO of his family's business two years ago, Jason has worked hard to erase his own bad reputation and build the company's image as one of serious responsibility. Thus, he is determined to find the Mooner, who has jeopardized everything he's worked for. He asks for Dee's help.

Dee is half-relieved, half-stunned by the request. She's thrilled Jason didn't see who the Mooner was; and she is appalled at the thought of trying to hunt down . . . well, herself. Jason mistakes her red-faced stutterings as shock over the mooning and is indulgently amused by what he perceives as her innocence. (Jason, motherless from the age of four, was raised by his father along with four brothers without the softening influence of a woman. Since she began working as his private secretary, Dee has become his private "barometer" of proper behavior. If his temper flares over a mishandled deal, or his language ever gets too crude, the disapproval in her big gray eyes makes him realize he's crossing the line.) |

Comment: These two paragraphs introduce us to the hero while giving us a glimpse at his background, and his relationship with the heroine.

Since she seems unsure about accepting the position, Jason adds--practically biting off the words--that the most reprehensible thing about the whole incident is it may have cost the company a four million dollar deal. A client, the Italian businessman Antonio Dianti, was in the car with Jason when the Mooner struck. Jason is determined not only to fire, but possibly bring criminal action against the perpetrator.

Fear fills Dee at this revelation. She imagines herself without a job, broke, unable to feed her cat Fluffy, in jail at the worst, and at the least labeled a Mooner, publicly scorned for the rest of her days. Her sweet, elderly parents would be horrified to learn that their only daughter has done such a thing. She can't let anyone know! Swallowing her trepidation, Dee agrees to do her best to find the Mooner, and receives Jason's immediate assurance that he will do all he can to help her in the task.

Clutching at a faint hope, Dee does point out that it might be impossible to ever find the culprit. They have no proof, and one, er--fanny looks pretty much like another, after all.

Jason disagrees. He'd recognize that bottom anywhere: It has a crescent, moon-shaped mark smack in the middle of the left cheek.

That information causes Dee to feel faint. Jason notices her paleness, and also the bump on Dee's forehead which her friends tried to help her hide. (Instead of her usual bun, Dee's naturally curly hair has been cut shorter and is bouncing all around her face.) Jason tilts up her chin and asks her how she received the injury. Dee is alarmed by the way her heart leaps at his firm, warm touch, as well as the fear that he might guess she's the Mooner. She shies away from his hold and tries to avoid answering. He's increasingly persistent; she's increasingly nervous. He gets angry at her evasiveness, suspecting that her boyfriend--that wimp from accounting--may have struck her. Dee denies this, and admits she's no longer seeing Stewart. When Jason

Comment: Present events and climaxes/crises in the order they will appear in your final manuscript.

still demands an answer, she finally lies. She tells him she received the bump while surfing, then manages to escape, thinking miserably that not only is she a coward and an exhibitionist, she's also become a liar as well.

Jason is surprised at her revelation. His quiet, little secretary doesn't seem like the type who would enjoy surfing. Maybe there's more beneath that placid surface than he ever suspected. He is staring thoughtfully at the closed door to his office when his younger brother, Jon, (who also works for the company) enters. Jon mentions how flushed Jason's little secretary looks, and deduces dryly that Jason must have carried out his proposed plan to have her find the Mooner. Jason admits that he has. Jon asks him why he's going to all this trouble, and getting his secretary involved, when Jason already suspects who the Mooner must be--that is, one of the women who take the van to Cypress (a small city outside L.A.). Jason replies that all the women on that van are Dee's friends, hired by him at her recommendation. Rather than finding the person involved and denouncing her himself, he'll let Dee do it, thus avoiding her resentment.

Comment: Again, these paragraphs continue to outline the developing plot, while neatly setting up the conflict and attraction between the hero and heroine.

Comment: Clearly identify new characters as they enter the scene.

Meanwhile, locked in a stall in the women's restroom, Dee uses her compact mirror to gloomily confirm that Jason Masters has remarkable eyesight. On her left butt cheek is a crescent-shaped birthmark. She's permanently branded a Mooner.

How can you forget you have a birthmark? Her friends demand when she tells them what happened at lunch. Dee reminds them that her bottom is not a place she's likely to look at much. She tells the women about Jason's plan. They are happy, convinced this is the perfect answer: All Dee has to do is go through the motions of finding the Mooner, fail, and the incident will gradually be forgotten.

Cheered by the thought, for the next few days Dee pretends to search for the Mooner. She compiles a list of everyone who rides on the company carpool vans, and presents Jason with

odd reasons on why they might be the Mooner, and then shoots down her own theories. She tries to convince Jason he might have seen something else--like a low hanging streetlight or a white balloon floating past. Finally, she parades unsuspecting carpool riders--all men--past him in his office by inventing an impromptu "Get to Know the Boss" party.

Jason, who has been wryly amused by what he perceives as Dee's way of avoiding implicating one of her friends, loses patience at this final tactic. He tells her the Mooner is definitely a woman. Are you sure? Dee asks. Yes, he's sure, he replies, exasperated. He damn well can recognize a woman's ass--er, derriere--when he sees it!

Reluctantly, Dee then arranges for all the women carpoolers to come to his office for a "Get to Know the Boss" meeting. Jason isn't surprised that the Mooner isn't among them (most of the woman are over fifty), but when at his insistence Dee finally includes her friends in the party he is surprised. After all the women have left his office, Dee enters to find him in deep thought. When questioned, he admits that none of the women were . . . quite right. Some had bottoms that were too big. Others were too small. Some hips were too narrow. Some were too round. None were exactly the inverted heart shape he remembers. His gaze drifts to Dee's hips, and almost unconsciously, his hands settle there. He says the Mooner was more her size. She also wore a dark skirt--something like Dee is wearing.

Comment: This is only a partial sample; in an actual synopsis, the plot should be outlined fully right until the ending. Definitely tell the editor how the book ends and how the romantic conflict and plot are resolved.