

Synopsis for **Can't Deny My Love** by Jo Hughes

Planning a wedding can be stressful. This is exactly why bookshop owner Abbie Bennett is looking forward and giddy with excitement for her romantic weekend away in New York, with her fiancé Nick. New York at Christmas in a five star suite is exactly what they need, especially since Nick's been so distant lately. But finding Nick in a compromising position with his secretary changes all of that...

Abbie decides (after being convinced by best friend and force of nature, Lucy), to get away for a few days and both she and Lucy should go to New York anyway. Lucy convinces Abbie she needs to have fun, lick her wounds and try not to think about Nick at all. She's surprised that she is not missing Nick and for the first time in a while she can breathe and feel happy in herself. It helps her to assess her relationship and reevaluate who she wants to spend the rest of her life with, especially when she meets the gorgeous Marcus Grant. Lucy tells Abbie to go for it, whatever *it* maybe.

Successful business man, Marcus is in New York to help his brother get the hotel they own back on track. He's also left behind an ex that he'd rather not think about. When Marcus and Abbie meet, there are instant sparks and it's hard not to get swept up in the magic of it all. Marcus is shocked by his feelings for Abbie and how protective he feels of her. Marcus tries to distance himself and finds that Abbie is too much of a distraction. Marcus really should be thinking about his business and not the woman with the auburn hair who haunts his dreams and takes his mind away from the task at hand.

They constantly try to deny their attraction and feelings, but fate keeps throwing them back together. Whether it's at the airport, the book store, or the ice rink, they seem to bump into each other at every

turn. Especially when Lucy realises she is Marcus step sister and that he haven't seen each other in over fifteen years.

Unable to deny their feelings any longer they decide to see where the relationship will take them but Abbie's past comes back with terrible timing. Nick arrives in New York to beg for Abbie's forgiveness, and it's hard to ignore four years of history with someone you were going to marry.

Unlucky in love, Marcus is convinced Abbie has taken back her cheating ex, because how could she have fallen in love with him? How could the short time they've had together mean more than the years she spent with Nick? How can he believe that a broken hearted girl he met on a chance flight to New York would really be his future?

Abbie decides she needs to explore her feelings for Marcus but an employee trying to hide his deceit sets the hotel on fire and Marcus is trapped in the blaze, will they lose each other just as they have found that they Can't Deny their Love.

A story of heartbreak, love, healing and the magic of New York at Christmas, Can't Deny my Love shows that anything is possible if you just take a chance!

Editor's Critique:

Hello Jo,

Thank you so much for sending over your synopsis to *Can't Deny My Love*. Your story instantly promises a whirlwind of opportunity, hope and turmoil, which is perfect for setting up the emotional journey that your reader will follow from start to finish! The different worlds that your hero and heroine belong to also make the happy-ever-after all the more captivating and is a theme that works really well in some of our series.

Here are a few thoughts for you to consider when evolving Abbie and Marcus' story:

Structure

- The idea of both Abbie and Marcus trying to deny their attraction to one another when fate constantly forces them to face the truth really makes the most of your New York at Christmas setting. Just make sure that you're constantly sharing their emotional trail of thought with the reader during their periods of separation around the city, which shouldn't be too sparse – we want to see your hero and heroine on the page together as much as possible!
- We love the idea of Abbie going on the romantic break she planned with her ex alone. Leaving Nick behind and travelling as a proud, newly-single woman shows your heroine is strong and independent, even though she's been let down. But be careful that you leave Abbie's ex behind too! Allowing the cheating fiancé into Abbie and Marcus' love story would take over a significant amount of page space and take away from what is directly between the two of them. Perhaps he could reach out to Abbie by calling her and the reminder of how painful it was to be betrayed is what drives her and Marcus apart?
- The fire at the end sounds dramatic and truly heart-wrenching! What does this danger spark between Abbie and Marcus that wasn't there before? Remember that the turning point in their relationship *must* be emotionally motivated and not simply a result of an external, circumstantial event, so really take the time to think about the significance of this.

Your hero and heroine's conflict

- Marcus is the kind of hero everyone wants to read about! He's brooding, driven, and enormously successful. What is underneath this fabulous exterior that only your heroine can lure out of him? What has he been through in the past that has motivated him to be so successful? What did his past experiences with love leave him thinking about women and his future? And most importantly, how does Abbie help him overcome all of these things? Don't be afraid to show the reader how their romantic journey transforms Marcus from the man he was at the beginning of your story into the man only Abbie can show him how to be.
- Abbie is fun, head-strong and ready for an adventure, which immediately wins the reader over where they're rooting for her to find the happy-ever-after that she deserves! As previously mentioned in the section on structure, be careful that Abbie's past is used to fuel her emotional conflict in direct relation to how she feels towards Marcus. Three's a crowd, so ensure that Nick doesn't get too much of the spotlight on him. Instead use Abbie's past relationship with him to build on what's between her and Marcus. Is there something else that Abbie has been through in the past before Nick's betrayal? What has influenced her outlook on life before she met Marcus? What does Marcus help Abbie overcome that she thought would never be possible?

You've got the makings of a great story here! Hopefully taking on board the above thoughts will pave the way for an even stronger submission for you to put forward in So You Think You Can Write in September!

Good Luck and we can't wait to read it!

Harlequin Editors