

Synopsis for **A Second Chance at Love** by Stephanie Hand

When Lesley finds herself pregnant with no way to support herself, she moves back to the hometown she'd sworn never to return to. Living with her mother and sister doesn't come without a price. Her mom insists that, in exchange for help in supporting Lesley and the baby, she would have to take charge of her younger sister, Lindsey, who seemed determined to get away from her family even if it meant getting arrested. And Mike, the only reason she left home in the first place, was determined to have a second chance. It was only her love for her sister that had her stepping into the same building as him.

Lesley puts off returning home until the last moment. Eight months pregnant, she walks into her family's diner, prepared to ask her mom for help. She agrees as long as Lesley is prepared to start training to take over the diner like they had planned and that she takes charge of her teenage sister, dealing with Lindsey's constant anger and misbehavior. Like any small town, gossip traveled fast and soon half the town was pushing its way into the diner to see if she had actually come back, including Kate, the woman who had come between her and Mike so many years ago. The call came a week later. The Sheriff had caught Lindsey and some of her friends joyriding. With no other options, she goes to confront Lindsey and Mike.

He'd known the moment she had come back, had watched her that first day outside the diner. For years he had wished for a second chance and only the fear of losing that chance kept him away from her for the last week. When he and Eric had caught Lindsey and her friends, it had given him the opening he'd been waiting for. Lindsey needed help. Help that her mom wasn't giving her but that Lesley would go above and beyond to give her. He insists on working with her, knowing she would be out of her element dealing with an angry teenager and using the proximity to remind her of everything they had shared: the memories, the dreams, and the love. Despite the longing he would see in her eyes when she didn't think he was looking, she fought the connection that still thrived between them. When she goes into labor with only Lindsey by her side and no way to the hospital, her sister calls him. Mike rushes them to the hospital, staying by her side even as the birth gets complicated and Lesley has to have a C-Section.

The day Lesley and Alicia are supposed to check out finds her unable to get a hold of her mom. With Lindsey too young to drive, she has to call Mike to have him pick her up. It's obvious from the moment he enters the room and looks down at her daughter that he adores the little girl. After that day, he comes to check on them both whenever he gets off work, playing and cuddling with Alicia while giving Lesley time for a nap or just a chance to prop her feet up as they watch a movie with Alicia sleeping in

the rocker bassinet next to them. When things turn a bit too cozy, Mike moves in to kiss her and she melts into it. Alicia wakes up and Lesley jumps away. She knows that she and Alicia has become too dependent on Mike, that they would both be heartbroken when he left them to start his own family; what man would want to marry a woman with someone else's baby? She tells him that they can't keep seeing each other like that, that she needed him to leave and not come back again.

Mike finds himself lost without them in his life. Talking to Lindsey, he knows that Lesley is forcing herself to smile through the days while Alicia spends most of the day crying, as if knowing something, someone, was missing. He knows that it's his fault that Lesley can't bring herself to trust him. That he should have hung out with her that night instead of going out with his friends. Not being around her, around Alicia, makes him realize that he has to come clean about that night. Admit that he had gotten so drunk that he passed out, unable to remember anything from that night. Admit that, while in his heart he felt like he could never betray her, he was never able to say for sure that he hadn't, that he still didn't know and Kate wouldn't tell. He can, however, tell her that it will never happen again, that Lesley and Alicia are the most important people in his life and he would give anything to see to their happiness. While his speech went a long way toward winning her over, Lesley knew that it was the way Alicia calmed as soon as she heard Mike's voice, the way she cooed happily when he picked her up, that convinced Lesley that the only thing that mattered was that she and Alicia both loved him and he loved them. Anything else could be deal with if it/when it happened.

Editor's Critique:

This synopsis hits the highlights of the story. We can identify the essential elements and hooks (single mom, second-chance romance, small-town setting) so we know whether or not it's a good fit for our series (Heartwarming or American Romance, maybe yes, for example, but not Presents or Desire.)

There's no such thing as a spoiler in a synopsis. Your cover letter is the place you can include a teaser for your book – an enticing peak at your novel that hooks the editor the same way a movie trailer hooks the audience for a summer blockbuster. Your synopsis, though, is *also* a behind-the-scenes, professional document that shows the editor you've carefully considered your hero and heroine, what's keeping them apart, and how the conflict between them will be resolved. In order for the synopsis to do that effectively, you have to give us the details – *including* the characters' secrets about the past, fears and desires for the future, and what they do about them.

The synopsis should make character motivation and the resulting romantic conflict clear. For example, in the second paragraph of this synopsis, Lesley "goes to confront Lindsey and Mike" because she has "no other options." Why not? What is she going to confront them about? Why does Lindsey "fight the connection that still thrived between them?" Exactly what happened in the couples' past to lead them to the present?

An editor wants to see that the characters' motivations and conflicts are relatable. Does Mike only help Lindsey because he sees the "opening he'd been waiting for" with Lesley? More information about what might draw Mike to helping the troubled teen would be helpful in fleshing out the hero and making him more appealing.

Some additional details about Lesley and Mike (including profession, dreams of the future, and so on) will not only help the editor understand the romantic conflict, but will also demonstrate how your story stands out from similar stories that have been done before. (For some great tips on employing tropes, see Tahra Seplowin's blog post on soyouthinkyoucanwrite.com, *Plot 102: Romance Tropes – Fab or Drab?*) What twists on the second-chance romance story make *A Second Chance at Love* really stand out? What aspects of the setting or situation provide an element of surprise? How does falling in love break apart Lesley and Mike's world in a way that's unique and makes your book unforgettable?

Completing a synopsis is the perfect exercise to tell you whether or not the essential elements are in place for your book –appealing characters and a compelling plot with a believable romantic conflict. If you can see those elements clearly in your synopsis, you know not only that you've got a great synopsis – you've got a great romance.