

## How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Synopsis

Stephanie Draven and Jackie Barbosa

### Romance Synopsis Template

*Hero/heroine's primary goal, motivation, & conflict*

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*H/H meet and clash (usually due to mismatch in goals)*

*H/H soften toward each other, but then are reminded of why their relationship can never work out*

*H/H begin to see a way they be together, but...*

*A catastrophic event occurs and all seems lost (the "Black Moment")*

*H/H resolve all internal/external conflicts and live HEA*

Add the following events where appropriate:

- *First kiss*
- *Consummation of the relationship*

**Synopsis Example #1:**  
**CANDIDATE FOR HER HEART**  
by Stephanie Draven

**High Concept:**

When a sassy Senate staffer learns that her boyfriend is a high-powered political gunslinger for the other side, her loyalties—and her heart—are torn in two.

**Blurb:**

Armed with a sassy haircut, a sharp wit, and a personal list of rules for all life's exigencies, Grace Santiago is a fiercely loyal Senate staffer who has everything under control. At least until famous political pundit Josh Castle walks back into her life. Grace hasn't forgotten their disastrous affair in law school, but she can't resist his bad boy charm.

When Grace learns that Josh has been hired as a political gunslinger for the other side, her loyalties—and her heart—are torn in two. Though their sexual chemistry can't be denied, they find themselves locked in political combat. Josh believes that all is fair in love and war, but he won't throw the election—not even to win Grace's heart. So what can a good girl like Grace do, but learn to play dirty?

May the best man—or woman—win!

**Synopsis:**

Armed with a sassy haircut, a sharp wit, and a list of rules for all life's exigencies, GRACE SANTIAGO is the kind of girl who has everything under control. On Capitol Hill, her expertise on environmental policy is almost as legendary as her gift for managing her boss, the cantankerous U.S. Senator from Maryland, Kip Holloway.

That's what Grace does: she manages things. Whether it's complex legislation or her own life, Grace always has a plan. She even has a plan for her love life: she intends to be engaged to the senator's grandson by New Year's Eve.

The only thing Grace hasn't planned for is JOSH CASTLE walking back into her life. Their disastrous affair in law school caused her to drop out. Now, years later, Grace is shocked and embarrassed to run into Josh at the annual Crab Fest Fundraiser. But embarrassment soon turns to passion when her old flame turns on the charm.

Josh is a hotshot campaign consultant who enjoys some minor celebrity as a political pundit on TV. With those intense green eyes and boyish good looks, he's left a string of conquests across the country and isn't the type to give up his jet-setting, bed-hopping lifestyle. Grace can't imagine risking all her carefully laid plans for a man like Josh, who is likely to walk out on her the same way her dad walked out on her mom.

But Josh is determined to turn his flirtation with Grace into more than just a fling. He's fascinated by her cool competence and charmed by her loyalty to her boss. He wants to spend time with Grace, and since he has to stay in Maryland to do it, he signs on as campaign manager for an unknown grass-roots candidate. The problem? Josh's candidate intends to challenge Grace's boss in the Primary.

At first, Grace is furious that Josh is "working for the enemy." But Josh persuades her that his candidate doesn't stand a chance of winning and that there's no reason they can't see each other. To Grace's surprise, Senator Kip agrees, giving his blessing to the blossoming romance. Soon, the two are spending as much time together as they can.

Josh is spontaneous and upends Grace's life like a whirlwind and teaches her just how sweet chaos can be. In spite of the stresses of their campaigns, Josh convinces her things really can work out between them. All that changes, however, when the senator's grandson and campaign manager gets into a car wreck and Senator Holloway asks Grace to take over his campaign.

Torn between loyalty and love, Grace breaks things off with Josh. She hopes he'll wait for her until after the election, but given his hurt reaction at her decision, she doubts he's going to stick around. In her experience, men never do.

Angered by the break-up, Josh redoubles his efforts for his candidate. His hurt feelings and bruised ego ensure that he's now in it to win it. For Grace, the stakes are much higher. She loves her boss and can't imagine what would happen to the old man if he actually lost the election. As the campaign heats up, so does the sexual tension. On Saint Patrick's Day, Josh seduces Grace. The wild encounter is unplanned, unexpected, and unsurpassed by anything Grace has ever experienced before. But when she finds herself sneaking out of his hotel room after sex, it brings up all the bad memories of how she'd been compromised by her affair with Josh before. Grace resolves it won't ever happen again.

Back on the campaign trail, between Senator Holloway's gaffes and the mood of the voters, the polls tighten. Grace and Josh repeatedly clash as election day approaches, and she despairs that the rift between them can ever be mended. Desperate to win, she resorts to dirty tricks that take Josh utterly by surprise, and leave him wondering if he ever really knew her at all.

Grace is devastated when a third candidate wins the election. Josh didn't win the campaign, but neither did she. She compromised her ethics and has nothing to show for it but a broken heart.

The morning after the election, Grace apologizes... and is surprised to get an apology in return. Josh is sorry not just for what blew their affair apart in law school, but also for all the ways he behaved as if her career wasn't every bit as important as his. Learning the fine art of compromise, they finally figure out a way they can work together and be together, whatever may come.

## Synopsis Example #2:

### SKIN IN THE GAME

by Jackie Barbosa

#### **Blurb:**

When injured NFL quarterback Cade Reynolds returns to his hometown to take over coaching his former high school football team, he doesn't anticipate meeting any resistance, especially not in the gorgeous form of Angela Peterson. Angie may be tall, blond, and beautiful, but she's also a mathematical genius and a football strategy whiz. As far as she's concerned, the Harper Falls High Eagles are her team, and no one's going to steal them from her, not even the hometown hero and heartthrob she's crushed on since the ninth grade. As the two engage in a battle of wits and will for control of the team, they face an even greater struggle to avoid a much more dangerous foe: love.

#### **Synopsis:**

After nearly two years recovering from a serious injury, pro quarterback Cade Reynolds is ready to get back to his career, but first, he's returned to his Minnesota hometown to take over his former high school football team while the coach recovers from a mild heart attack. He's surprised and disappointed that no one seems to recognize him, despite the fact that he's the Harper Falls' one bona-fide hometown-boy-made good. As he's pondering this fact in the local coffee shop, a tall, gorgeous blonde walks in...and unlike everyone else, she recognizes him.

When Angela Petersen realizes Cade Reynolds is sitting in the back corner of her favorite coffee shop and that he's looking at her with undisguised sexual interest, she's torn between exhilaration and a profound desire to escape. The last thing she wants is for him to recognize her as the gawky, four-eyed freshman with an unnatural knack for football strategy who mooned after him his entire senior year. A brief conversation makes it clear, however, that he has no idea who she is and so, when he asks her out to dinner, she agrees.

Any real relationship between them is doomed, of course. She doubts he'll stay in Harper Falls for long, and she won't leave—not while her widowed father needs her and not when she's finally gotten her chance to prove that a woman *can* coach the football team. Still, she's not going to pass up the chance at a fling—however brief—with the only man she's ever really wanted.

As both Cade and Angie expect, their dinner date ends in bed. After a night of great, hot sex, Angie slips out without waking Cade or leaving her contact information. Better to end it now, before her heart can become involved. When Cade wakes up, he's angry and insulted; after all, she's given him the "coyote ugly" treatment. At least it won't be hard to find her and even the score. It turns out to be even easier than he thought—she's the acting head coach he'll be taking over for. With that information, he puts two and two together and realizes exactly who she is.

The next day, Cade shows up at football practice and announces he's been tapped to take over

the head coaching position. Angie is shocked and furious. And given the circumstances, she can't even ask him if he knew who she was—and how he was going to screw up her life—when he slept with her. After practice, Angie confronts Cade in the parking lot. They share an angry, impassioned kiss which is interrupted by the other coaches. Since their resentment of Angie is the primary reason Cade was asked to take over as head coach, he jokes that he's just trying to teach her a better way to use her mouth. Thinking he's serious, Angie slaps him and storms off.

Over the next week, Angie re-enlists her players' loyalties, having extra practices at her father's house to work up new, secret plays. She'll ultimately pull these out in a game to prove her superiority as a coach. She feels a little guilty about what she's doing, but consoles herself with the knowledge that coaching is just a lark for Cade. It matters to *her*. This is her one chance to prove to the school board that she's cut out for the head coach position when the current head coach retires. If Cade gets credit for the team's success in these weeks, it means she doesn't get it, and that could cost her the job later.

Cade, meanwhile, feels like a jerk. He likes the kids and gets a kick out of coaching them, but it's a mission for Angie. It doesn't help that every time he sees Angie, he thinks of their one night together. He can't stop fantasizing about getting her back in his bed and maybe even having her in his life long-term. Which is crazy because he's certainly not *staying* in Harper Falls. He decides that after the next game, he'll invite her out to dinner and tell her the real reason he was asked to be head coach. Even if he doesn't get lucky, he'll feel better.

That night, the game is close in the fourth quarter and Cade can't understand why because the other team is clearly inferior. Then, in the waning seconds, with the Eagles trailing by two points, the offense runs a pattern Cade has never before and scores a touchdown, winning the game. Cade realizes what's happened and he's not happy. Angie had no business going behind his back. He's about to lay into her for it when he notices the crowd is deathly quiet. The quarterback, who was tackled on the play, hasn't gotten up and isn't moving..

The player is taken to the hospital by ambulance. Angie blames herself; she never thoroughly vetted the safety of the play. At the hospital, they learn the boy has a mild concussion but is not otherwise seriously injured. Angie's relieved but apologizes profusely to the boy's parents. Cade overhears her and interrupts. It's not her fault, he tells the parents. There was nothing wrong with the play at all; one of the offensive players missed his block and the defensive player was overly aggressive. The parents agree with Cade, absolving Angie of guilt.

Later that evening, Angie apologizes to Cade for trying to make him look bad so she'd look better. She was in the wrong, and he *is* turning out to be an amazingly good coach. Maybe it was right to bring Cade in; maybe she really isn't as ready for this job as she thought. He tells her she's wrong about that. He's about to explain everything, but she kisses him with great enthusiasm.. After they make love back at his hotel, Cade finally tells her the truth and that he's resigning. He's sure she can handle things just fine without him.

In the morning, Cade's agent calls to tell him the Jets want him to come to NY for talks this

afternoon. Can he be on the next flight? It's the opportunity Cade's been waiting for, but he doesn't want to leave Angie after everything is finally going well. He invites her to come with him and she agrees.

The trip is a new experience for Angie: flying first class, riding in a limousine, staying in a world-class hotel. After his meeting with the team, Cade takes Angie to dinner at a popular Manhattan restaurant. Angie feels out of place, but Cade fits right in with the rich and famous. As they're leaving, they're accosted by reporters and paparazzi. Cade sees her discomfort and refuses to answer any questions, but he's privately pleased to be back in the limelight.

They spend Sunday morning in bed (and elsewhere) in the hotel, making love, talking, and watching/analyzing football. It's all glorious, but Angie's heart is breaking a little. Whether it's this week or next or the one after, Cade is going to move on.

When they get back to Harper Falls, however, all hell breaks loose. Angie and Cade have been all over the entertainment papers and TV. Angie and Cade are dragged in front of the school board. Cade defends Angie, but the other coaches claim she's setting a poor example for the young people and want her fired. The Board says they'll have a decision in a few days.

With Angie on the verge of losing almost everything, Cade asks her to marry him. Even though she loves him, she refuses. She can't leave Harper Falls because of her father, even if she wanted to—and she doesn't want to. It can't work between them; they want things that are too different. Cade protests that he can give her everything she's ever wanted and more, but she tells him all she wants is what she had before.

Though hurt by her refusal, Cade decides there's one thing he can do, and that's to make sure she gets back what she had before and then some. He goes to the assistant coaches and tells them if they don't withdraw their complaints, they'll be next in line to lose their jobs for sexual harassment and hostile work environment violations, because he'll tell the whole story.

The next day, Angie is reinstated and named interim head coach. No one mentions Cade's involvement in this. Angie throws herself into teaching and coaching. News reports say Cade has been offered the position with the Jets, and she assumes he's has left town. Then a boy on the team mentions that Cade has been giving him some private instruction.

Angie confronts Cade. Why is he still here? He shrugs. He's decided he likes Harper Falls. So much that he accepted a backup quarterback position with the Vikings. He'll be starting practice with them this week, and he's made an offer on a lakefront property near town..

But the Jets...? Yes, they offered him the position, but he'd rather stay here. At home. With her. Forever, if she'll have him. Turns out, she will.