



More indie writers are writing shorter books. Today's readers are pressed for time, Kindle Unlimited is - well -Unlimited Reading, and we want to get to the good stuff without a lot of filler. Series are big sellers, too, since they are a good way to find and keep an audience. Many people are writing novella series as a way to keep up their publishing momentum and attract more readers.

But how do we write a romance novella that will sell?

When writing commercial fiction, such as romance, an author has to fulfil the expectations of its audience. You might have the greatest new idea, but if readers can't identify the sub-genre, tropes, and conventions of your romance they won't read it. And you won't make any money. This is the dilemma for many new writers. How do I come up with something fresh and original if I'm just doing the same old thing?

Think about all the old stories have that been turned into new movies or reworked more than once—for example, Little Women or Jane Austen's novels. Why do we watch multiple versions? Because each one offers a different take. We want to know how and why the latest version takes the original story and updates or adapts it.

The same is true for romance novellas. Your version of a steamy romance novella will share many characteristics with all the others—this is probably why a reader will

pick it up—but it will do things differently, take another approach, or adapt and combine tropes and conventions in fun ways—which is also why a reader will want to read it.

After having read and studied many Steamy Romance Novellas I have put together two structure cheat sheets. You may find these don't work for you—that's okay! Again, writers take the container and fill it with their own special elixir. But I hope that they might provide starting writers with a beginning point of reference. A more detailed version is available – [click here](#) for the post on the Plotter Edition.

**STEAMY ROMANCE NOVELLA  
PLOTING TABLE  
Pantser Edition**

By Marie Belrose, 2021  
([authormariebelrose@gmail.com](mailto:authormariebelrose@gmail.com))

<b>Part 1 – Chapters 1 &amp; 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduce MC1 &amp; MC2</li> <li>○ Meet Cute</li> <li>○ Sparks Fly</li> </ul>	Meeting and physical connection. Can include sex, sometimes just kissing 
<b>Part 2 – Chapters 3 &amp; 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thrown Together</li> <li>○ Physical Exploration</li> <li>○ Nothing serious</li> </ul>	Learning about each other but not emotionally invested. They have sex if they haven't yet, perhaps a lot of it 
<b>MIDPOINT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Something changes</li> <li>○ Crossroads reached</li> </ul>	Realizing one or both want something more than just sex
<b>Part 3 – Chapters 5 &amp; 6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dilemma posed</li> <li>○ Intense Emotions</li> <li>○ Black Moment</li> </ul>	Letting fear lead but feeling more love too. It's not just physical anymore. They run or argue. 
<b>Part 4 – Chapters 7 &amp; 8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crisis</li> <li>○ Decision</li> <li>○ HEA</li> </ul>	Facing a crisis leads them to commit to love. They are together! 

## **Part 1: Introduce World and the Lovers**

In Part 1 you setup your characters and the setting.

Think about your characters. What makes them unique? Why are they lonely and unfulfilled? What lies are they telling themselves about why they are happy or unhappy? The reader wants to know how and why they are perfect for each other even before they meet.

Quickly establish the world(s) your characters live in. What kinds of lives are leading at the beginning? What settings do they move in? Who do they know and interact with? And where?

Have the characters meet. In novellas the Meet Cute occurs early (and now this occurs more often in longer romances too): this is the time and place where the two characters first meet. If it's a steamy romance novella then the Meet Cute can include some physical interaction—even sex if they have met before or there is a reason to go for it (deserted island? Fated Mates? sex club?).

## **Part 2: Bring Them Together and Make It Hot!**

After the characters have met they will struggle with their growing feelings for each other.

Throw your characters together. They are often thrown together during this phase, which increases the sexual tension and provides opportunities for romance.

Show their problems and the distance they keep. Although they get physically close your characters still hold back emotionally. They usually deny the feelings or hide them because of their character flaws or fears.

Bring on the sex and romance. For a steamy romance novella your characters will have sex by the end of this section, often more than once. These are opportunities for them to try out their connection and to build their trust of each other, but there are still things that need to be worked out before they are ready to commit emotionally.

## **Midpoint**

Here is where something changes for the lovers. The setting might be different—they have to chase the bad guys to a new location and are forced to hide together in a

cave, or they come home from a holiday where they had met and hooked up. Or something happens to one or both of the characters and they realize they want something more than just sex. This leads into Part 3...

## **Part 3: Cause Problems**

Show a dilemma for the characters. If something has changed at the Midpoint then they have to move forward. But how? And why? Is it worth it?

Give them intense emotions. Here the lovers have to deal with all those feels they've been avoiding. Someone has different expectations, or someone has to leave for a new job, or an old boyfriend appears. As they work out this one problem other problems keep popping up. But they still want to have sex while they're figuring all of this out. After all, they're only human!

Dark Moment. All the problems and intense emotions usually lead to a break up, argument, or a big change. They have to lose it all before they're willing to risk everything for love.

## **Part 4: Make Them Happy**

Solve a crisis: In many steamy romance novellas there is a big crisis that brings the lovers back together. An accident that puts one of them in danger, a job loss or the loss of livelihood, a family emergency are all events that can make the characters reevaluate their decision to part ways.

Force a decision. As a result of the crisis one character usually makes a decision to reunite and has to persuade the other (who may still be waiting for them to make this move or may have moved on with their life).

Declare their Happily Ever After. When the lovers have made up and declared their love then we want to see their HEA at the end!

For pantsers this outline may appear too formulaic, but you can write with just the big pictures for the sections in your head. Or when your draft is done you can look over the details to see if your SRN works within the general parameters. It is not meant to stifle your creativity but rather to show the structure that readers are expecting to see when they read this type of story. Have fun with it!

**You can download a PDF version of the sheet here:**

**[SR Novella Outline Pantser MBelrose](#)**