

Romance Beat Sheet

Annette K. Larsen · All Swoon. No Spice.

A beat-by-beat outline for a sweet, closed-door romance, from the first meeting to the happily ever after. Each beat has a short prompt and room to jot down what it looks like in *your* book. Beats can shift, merge, or swap places; this is a map, not a rulebook.

WORKING TITLE _____

LEAD ONE _____ **LEAD TWO** _____

TROPE(S) _____ **WHAT KEEPS THEM APART** _____

Part One *Two lives, one collision*

1 **Their world** OPENING

Show your lead in everyday life, and the thing that's quietly missing. What does she believe about love (or about herself) that isn't quite true?

2 **The meet-cute** EARLY

Make the first meeting memorable and let it say something about both of them. Is it charming, awkward, or full of friction? What does each one notice first?

3 **The reasons not to** EARLY

Give each lead a clear reason this can't work: a goal, a rule, a rival, a past hurt. Readers should see the obstacle as clearly as the attraction.

Part Two *Thrown together*

4 **The tie that binds** FIRST QUARTER

Why can't they just walk away? A job, a bargain, a quest, a fake relationship, a snowed-in inn. Lock them into each other's orbit.

5 **Beneath the surface** BUILDING

Each lead glimpses something unexpected in the other: a kindness, a hidden skill, a crack in the armor. Let respect grow right alongside attraction.

6 **The almost** BUILDING

A moment that nearly tips over (a held gaze, a hand that lingers, an almost-kiss) and then gets interrupted or pulled back. Small gesture, internal reaction, restraint.

7 **The midpoint shift** MIDDLE

Something changes for good: a first kiss, a confession, a decision to stop fighting it. Neither of them can pretend this isn't happening anymore.

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Part Three *Falling, and fighting it*

8 **Letting each other in** SECOND HALF

Real vulnerability: the backstory shared late at night, the fear said out loud. In a closed-door romance, emotional intimacy is the heat. Let this be the swooniest stretch.

9 **Cracks and pressure** BUILDING

The original obstacle pushes back. Outside forces close in, and the old wound whispers that this was too good to last.

10 **The black moment** LAST QUARTER

The relationship breaks through a choice, a secret revealed, or a sacrifice misunderstood. It should feel like the only thing these two could have done, given who they are.

11 **Apart** LAST QUARTER

Each lead is alone with the cost. What do they finally understand about themselves? Which false belief do they let go of?

Part Four *Happily ever after*

12 **The choice** CLIMAX

One or both leads act on what they've learned and choose love over the old fear, often at real cost. A grand gesture lands best when it's specific to them.

13 **Reunion and declaration** CLIMAX

The words they've been holding back, finally said. Pay off small details from earlier: the gesture, the joke, the dropped glove.

14 **The HEA** ENDING

Show them together and whole. A final scene or epilogue that proves they'll keep choosing each other. Readers should close the book with a sigh.

Closed-door friendly. Every beat here works without an explicit scene. If a moment would go further, close the door, fade out, or cut to the next morning. The swoon is in the anticipation and the emotion, not the details.

Notes *scene ideas, small gestures, lines you don't want to lose*