

A love story game?

- Warren Spector? Will Wright? Uhhh...

There was only one solution...

Cheat.



Passion's Tender Embrace

A Romance Novel Experience!



Romance Novel Generator!

- Genre fiction is cliched by nature
 - Plots are predictable
 - Character arcs are simple
 - Characters are usually archetypes
- Make it multiplayer and let players take on different roles
 - Play the plucky lass, the dour servant, the sarcastic sidekick, the nervous swain...

Pick a genre

- We're going to do Regency romance
 - Flouncy skirts
 - Every girl is always about to “come out” at the ball
 - Every guy is a rakehell who refuses to settle down
- You could also do other romance genres, epic fantasy, mystery, etc
 - Anything that is really cliched

Choose the players

- You always play archetypes
 - The engine accepts a number of players and creates the plot to fit
- The character flaw
 - Every character has a conflict or flaw that they must overcome
- Extra traits
 - These are used to add “Tom Swifties,” minor incidents, etc



Typical flaws

- Not ready to settle down
- Overly dependent
- Too proud to accept help
- A social snob
- Thinks they want adventure
- Scared of the world
- Rigidly conservative
- Jealous or envious
- Greedy
- Attracted to appearance
- Can't trust others
- Can't control their temper
- Lazy



Setting the stage... for love!

- Kidnapping!
- A forced wedding!
- A betrothal!
- Becoming a spinster!
- Coming out at the ball!
- A battle!
- A friend is getting married!
- Your parents have died!
- You have become wealthy!
- You have been emancipated!
- Running away from home!
- Some other breathless thing!



Pick a plot that doesn't matter

- Each plot has a set of predetermined story arc points
 - You don't get to deviate from the story
- Each character gets their own plot
 - This is a multiplayer experience, after all
- Some plots have tragic endings
 - But that's OK if the player feels emotionally satisfied. I think.

Some typical plots

- You (or a friend) is going to die (of illness, murder, or accident)
- You (or a friend) is going to get hurt (in the same ways)
- You are going to fake your own death
- You're going to kill someone
- You're going to leave home
- Bankruptcy!
- Kidnapping!
- Blackmail!
- Getting married against your will
- Embezzling money (perhaps to save your dying sister...)

The real story is...

- See each other from a distance
- Meet socially
- The boy challenges the girl, she gets pissed, and accepts the challenge
- They kiss





And then... the main loop

- Boy gets into trouble
- Girl saves boy
- Heavy petting ensues
- Then the girl gets into trouble
- Boy saves girl
- Then we foreshadow some major trouble ahead...

And then...

- The girl commits, but doesn't admit to it
- The boy commits, but doesn't admit to it
- They break up, feeling unrequited
- Awww...



The climax!

(No, not that sort of climax)

- The girl gets into major trouble
- Boy saves girl
- They realize the other is committed!
- They live happily ever after!

(NOW that sort of climax)





Now we have to write it...

- A chapter per plot point in each character arc
- A chapter per plot point in each plot arc
- A chapter per section of the romance proper

Where's the game?

- I told you I cheated.
- Each chapter is a multiple choice conversation tree.
 - We include NPCs, interactive objects, etc.
 - Do whatever you want, but the chapter ends when you complete the required conversation.
- The rough outcome is the same, but the paths vary.



Love is a spectator sport!

- There's a parallel chat channel
 - Experiencing this is a spectator activity for anyone not in the chapter
 - They can cheer on certain choices
- At the end, get a website “book” of your collaborative story
 - Or “bookmark” your place if you need to take a break. The engine will pick up where you left off.



Prass marketing drive

- Sell CDs of art sets, conversations, etc, stuck on the back of Harlequin romances
- Hire well-known romance writers to write chapter incidents and branching dialogue
- Retire to Tahiti where no one knows you perpetrated this atrocity

A sample generated plot

- We meet Samantha, who is a plucky lass who has trust issues.
- We meet Frederick, who is a shallow vain rakehell who chases after beautiful girls.
- Samantha and Frederick see each other at a distance. There is a sudden attraction.



Setting the stage

- We see evidence of a prior betrayal of Samantha—she has good reason not to trust.
- We learn that Frederick has led a pampered life.
- Frederick and Samantha meet socially. It is somewhat awkward.



Adding complications

- Samantha and her best friend are seen cavorting. She confides much in her friend.
- Frederick learns that he has to leave the country soon—a condition of his inheritance. He is much distressed.
- Frederick challenges Samantha to break free of her silly Regency assumptions. Frederick and Samantha share a first kiss.

Tragedy strikes!

- Samantha hears that her best friend is ill, but struggling valiantly with her illness, She comforts her.
- Frederick prepares to depart amidst great pain and sorrow.
- Frederick gets into trouble—a letter or something that he wrote, maybe legal issues, maybe an accusation of immorality.
- Samantha saves Frederick (probably through fancy talking)
- Samantha and Frederick get into some heavy petting.



Can they come together?

- Samantha is blind to offered assistance because she cannot bring herself to trust.
- Frederick rejects a possible bride because of her bad looks.
- Samantha gets into trouble—maybe she was too daring with her neckline.
- Frederick saves Samantha in some show of silly gallantry.
- We see some foreshadowing of major trouble for Frederick and Samantha's relationship—she can't trust, and he is vain and shallow.





They're in love, isn't it sweet?

- A situation forces Samantha to trust someone—probably someone she never liked.
- Frederick discovers that people without good looks might have good hearts, probably by interacting with some wonderfully kind ugly person.
- Samantha finally surrenders her heart to Frederick.
- Frederick is in love, but won't admit it to himself.
- Samantha and Frederick break up. Awww.



Crisis!

- Samantha hears of the death of her best friend.
- Frederick manages to not leave and stay in London after all!
- Samantha gets into some very serious trouble—kidnapping, a house fire, something like that.
- Frederick saves Samantha. Everyone cheer!



Denouement

- Samantha realizes that she must be more trusting in life.
- Frederick demonstrates that he can see past appearances.
- A touching reconciliation scene, and Frederick and Samantha pledge to marry.
- They live happily ever after.

