Art of the Slow Burn

Ways to build the romantic tension between your characters and create page turning intensity in your story.

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Definitions

Slow Burn: A romance that **builds over an extended period of time** before anyone admits or acts on the attraction. Throughout the story the romance is hinted at, ignored, or teased.

Fast Burn: Fated mates, insta-love, or love at first sight. When the **romance builds quickly**, and the remaining story includes complications of that romance and the external action.

Romantic Tension: Actions that make you **fall in love** with someone. A character rescues a puppy.

Sexual Tension: Actions that make you **want to have sex** with someone. A character wears a sexy dress.

Heat level: Amount of sex in your story. None is **sweet or closed door**. Non-stop is called **hot, spicy, erotic, explicit**.

Key Points

All stories should include romantic and sexual tension. You can have slow burn or fast burn regardless of heat level.

You can have a fast burn spicy story and the slow burn element is the characters falling in love.

Examples

Pride and Prejudice – Slow burn sweet, romantic tension (saves her family from scandal), sexual tension (wet shirt).

Bridgerton – Fast burn sex, sexual tension (he licks the spoon), romantic tension (they look at art), slow burn love.

The Lost City – Slow burn sweet, sexual tension (she sees him naked), romantic tension (they talk, they dance).

Activity

- Pick a favorite romance book, movie, tv show. Describe its elements of tension and heat.
- Think of your current work in progress. What is your plan for tension and heat?

Slow Burn Strategies

Awareness
Watching the other person with interest (Physical)
Connecting glances/eye contact (Physical)
Conversation/Learning who they are (Emotional)

Trust
Embrace (Emotional/Physical)
Kiss (Physical)
Sex (Physical)

Respect
Body awareness (Physical)
Deeper conversation/Understanding (Emotional)
Touch (Physical)

Love
Natural use of personal space (Emotional)
Extended touch (Physical)
Sex (Physical/Emotional)

Conclusion: By using tension, your characters earn the payoff of falling in love and/or having sex. Take your readers on an emotionally satisfying journey. They will want to read your stories over and over again. Happy Writing!