

Crafting Intimate Moments – Sex, Love, and Romance in Lesbian

Fiction

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Definitions and Expectations

A word about definitions and expectations. I have included expectations along with the definitions, because I believe that part of being an effective writer is considering and fulfilling reader expectations, to the extent that it doesn't constrain or restrict one's own sense of self-expression. I think this is important from a number of practical points, not the least of which is marketability. If your desire is to write with no particular concern as to finding a readership, then none of these expectations are particularly critical. On the other hand, if your goal is to write *and* to publish, it makes sense to have some understanding of the expectations of those whom you wish to reach. Secondly, if you wish to write erotica or a romance or any other form of genre fiction in particular, you need to have some understanding of the framework that defines the genre in order to have your work accepted. Otherwise, your erotica submission will be rejected as being a good character study, but not sexy enough, or your manuscript will be pronounced "very well written," but turned down because it's not "a romance."

There's a fine line here between meeting expectations in order to achieve "commercial success" and abrogating one's artistic vision, but the line is one that we as authors can place anywhere in the sand that we desire. Ultimately, we choose what we write, and we

can make the decision to write inside or outside the box. It just helps to know what the boundaries of the box look like from various angles.

Erotica: New Latin, from Greek *erōtika*, plural of *erōtikos*

: literary or artistic items having an erotic theme; *especially* : books treating **sexual love** in a sensuous or voluptuous manner

Pornography: Greek *pornographos* writing of harlots (from *pornē* harlot + *-graphos* writing)

1 : a description of prostitutes or prostitution

2 : a depiction (as in writing or painting) of licentiousness or lewdness : a portrayal of erotic behavior designed to cause sexual excitement

Expectations: Why are these distinctions important? The answer to this is important to an author both from a practical point of view, in terms of constructing an erotic selection, as well as anticipating and meeting reader expectations. Most agree that erotica is composed of works of art, including literature, photography, sculpture and painting, that deal substantively with erotically stimulating or arousing descriptions. Pornography is generally viewed as material depicting unadorned and unemotional lust, containing explicit depictions of sexual acts. The primary factor distinguishing erotica from pornography is that erotica infuses the sexual act with **emotional content** as well as places a **greater focus on the development of setting, characterization, and plot.**

One unique definition I found was, “the difference between erotica and pornography is simple. Erotica is what *I* like; pornography is what *you* like, you pervert.”

Personally, I have a broad definition of erotica and a relatively narrow definition of pornography, and I tend to equate **pornography** with exploitation, particularly of the participants, as in film or photography. This is a point which we could debate forever, but I think we all agree that we know it when we see it.

Romance: Middle English *romauns*, *romaunce*, from Old French *romans*, *romanz* French, something composed in French, tale in verse, from Latin *Romanice* in the Roman manner, from *Romanicus* Roman, from *Romanus* Roman + *-icus* *-ic*—more at ROMAN
1 *often capitalized a* : a tale in verse written in medieval times based chiefly on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural **b** : a prose tale written in medieval times **c** : a prose narrative having romantic qualities or characteristics: as (1) : one treating imaginary characters involved in events unrelated to everyday life (2) : one dealing with the remote in time or place, the heroic, the adventurous, and often the mysterious

Historically, the romance dates to the Fifth Century where these works consisted of legendary tales, tales of the supernatural, and stories of love. By the Middle Ages, romance came to mean tales of courtly love, chivalry, and knighthood. A quest (often for the hand of a Lady) was an essential part of the story as was a conflict between love and duty. These were works about larger than life characters in larger than life situations, and

they were very much the stories of a Hero and a Lady. Arthurian legend comes immediately to mind.

The first romances in English appeared in the 18th Century. Classic romances include *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Wuthering Heights*.

One great change in the evolution of modern romance fiction, particularly in lesbian fiction, is the transformation of the heroine into a contemporary woman who is capable, strong-willed, and sexual and not dependent upon the hero to be saved. Hence, a present day romance can be thought of as having two “romantic leads.”

Expectations: 1) The **main plot concerns two people falling in love** and struggling to make the relationship work. 2) There must be **conflict**, either internal or external, which centers on the love story. Traditionally, **sexual tension** is a hallmark of this conflict and is a primary force to propel the plot. 3) An **emotionally satisfying and optimistic** ending is the sine qua non of a romance.

Once these criteria are met, any plot can accommodate the romance genre: contemporary, historical, supernatural, suspense, action, fantasy, or sagas that span generations. Most interestingly, now, even the romance writer’s web sites include the “erotic romance” as a sub-genre of the romance. You’ll note in the list of romance sub-genres included at the end of the handout, the factor which distinguishes erotic romances from the other categories is language.

What Sex Can Do For You: Rationale for Writing a Sex Scene

Erotica: It would seem that the rationale for writing sex in erotica was self explanatory. Erotica is about sex. At another recent literary conference, I was struck by the fact that many gay male writers write “sex on the side for fun and profit.” One well published author stated that he wrote sex to pay the bills. The number of gay and lesbian publishers producing erotica anthologies has increased dramatically in the last several years, as have the number of anthologies they produce. In addition to Cleis and Alyson, which are most commonly associated with lesbian erotica anthologies, Bella and Bold Strokes and others are now routinely producing erotica anthologies. An erotica submission is generally short, usually 1500 to 5000 words, and although the monetary payment per selection is not large, being included in an anthology can be an effective means of **marketing**.

Commercial interests aside, writing erotica offers an author the opportunity to **hone technical skills** as well as to explore areas outside one’s usual writing arena. If one is a novel writer, erotica provides the opportunity to write in the short story format. Everyone knows how challenging it is to write an effective short story, and being forced to write outside one’s comfort zone can teach us things about ourselves and how we write. Learning to make every word count, to create distinct characters in a few lines or a few words of dialogue, and to construct setting with several broad strokes are valuable tools for any novel writer to acquire.

One of the benefits for the author in writing erotica is that erotica has “no rules.” There are no expectations as to form or content, other than the fact that the selection will be

“sexy.” For an author who primarily writes romance or mystery or fantasy, erotica provides the **opportunity to expand and experiment**. Erotica can be very intimate, both for the reader and the writer, which is a situation that is generally not true in fiction. Although writing fiction is extraordinarily personal, and we all draw from our own well of experience, dreams, and desires when we write, those emotions are filtered through the characters. There is built-in distance which shields both reader and writer and preserves a certain “comfort zone.” In erotica, especially in first-person erotica, the dynamic is very different. I think it’s fascinating to discover that authors whom we think we know very well can surprise us when they write erotica. Erotica gives us permission to step outside the boundaries imposed upon us by the very genre traditions that we choose to write within when we write a romance or a sci-fi novel. On a less personal, but no less important level, I also think it’s the perfect forum in which to **explore the vast spectrum of lesbian sexuality**, both as writers and as readers. As with any genre, some of us have more comfort with it than others, but it’s one of those areas where if you try it, you might like it.

Romance: What are the modern romance reader’s expectations regarding sex? This is a question which was easily answered as little as 10 years ago. Traditionally, sex was not critical to a romance, in fact, there were very stringent “rules” as to when or even *if* sex was appropriate in a particular romance sub-genre (sex was not permitted in Regency romances, for example). Now, the entire topic of the how, where, and when of sex in romance fiction is being discussed by both heterosexual and lesbian writers and readers. To my knowledge, there haven’t been any “formal” surveys done regarding this issue, but

several informal surveys have been taken on a number of Internet groups regarding the “importance” of sex scenes in a romance novel. There’s no question that the “romance,” or the evolving love relationship between the main characters, remains the critical element that defines romance fiction. Nevertheless, these surveys indicated that a significant proportion of readers felt that sex was “very important” in a romance (and would feel disappointed or “cheated” without it) or “desirable but not absolutely essential.” In the two surveys I saw, well over 50% of responders fell into these categories. Others responded that they were neutral regarding the presence or absence of sex scenes, whereas very few responders actually said they *didn’t* like sex scenes in a romance. These surveys are clearly biased in that the numbers are small and the groups may have self-selected for readers who desire one type of romance fiction over another. The trend, however, clearly suggests that portraying the sexual interactions between romantic partners is becoming an accepted part of romance fiction and that readers welcome or, at the very least, are not negatively disposed to it.

What can a writing a sex scene offer the author beyond the issue of meeting reader expectations?

This is the area where I believe we as writers have the most to gain from exploring sex in romance fiction. The sex scene can be used as a tool to add depth and texture to our writing. The sex scene in and of itself can **1) say something about the character, 2) say something about what is happening *between* the characters, 3) and/or provide a forum for plot advancement.** Moments of sexual intimacy often show the characters in

a different light than any other interaction, and we can use this to reveal to the reader **greater depth of character**. For example, an anonymous tryst early in the book may suggest that the character fears attachment or prefers physical as opposed to emotional connections. The opening chapter in *Above All, Honor* portrays one main character having sex with a paid companion. This says a great deal about her emotionally and psychologically. It also defines her as an atypical hero within the context of a romance, in that she is neither sexually chaste nor operating within the boundaries of sex being a natural extension of love. I chose to pair her with an equally sexually aggressive partner for whom sex was both an escape and a form of rebellion. In this way, the sexual scenes involving these women, either together or with others, were fundamental to establishing both their characters and the evolution of their romantic relationship.

Likewise, we can employ moments of sexual intimacy to **reveal aspects of the character which are not easily depicted in any other way**. For example, by showing an aggressive, emotionally constrained character relinquishing control during sex and being emotionally nurtured by her partner, we can add dimension to her character and create reader empathy and bonding with her. Now the reader *knows* that she is really a sensitive woman, even though she appears to be otherwise in every other circumstance, because we have allowed the reader to experience her in her most unguarded moments.

We can also use sexual interactions between the characters to **introduce points of conflict in the plot** - for example, if the first sex between the romantic pair results from a moment's indiscretion, leading to remorse or guilt, this may introduce a critical element

in the storyline. If one of the characters is just coming to terms with her sexual identity, the progressively more graphic sexual interplay between the characters provide important markers in plot progression.

The Mechanics of Sex

The form a sex scene takes varies between erotica and romance in several basic ways: context, overall balance, and language. The simplest difference is **context**, in that the sexual encounter constitutes the purpose of the erotica selection whereas it is a secondary element in a romance. Therefore, the **balance** of the intimate scene versus plot and/or character development favors the sexual interaction in erotica, whereas the reverse is true in romances. Finally, the **language** in which the sex is related almost always differs between erotica and romance fiction.

1) What – Finding the Erogenous Zones

What is sexy? This is the most difficult question to answer, because it is extraordinarily individual. In erotica, where the primary focus is on arousal, the erotic theme or tone may be created through setting, plot, dialogue, language, and the position in which you place the reader (narrative voice) – 1) **the erotic setting is unusual, feels dangerous, or creates a sense of secrecy**: the back yard swing, public places, next door to your parents room, 2) **plot: encounters that are “forbidden,” risky, or outside the “norm” for a particular character type** (the schoolteacher who has wild sex in a leather bar while at a

conference in Las Vegas; the tennis, riding, driving “lesson” that turns into something else; two friends lost in an ice storm who discover a new meaning for “sharing body heat”), 3) **dialogue: what the characters say/think** about their feelings or desires, 4) **language: the words you choose** to convey those same emotions, and 5) **the narrative voice** – first person and second create a heightened sense of intimacy by placing the reader within the story, whereas third person, typically one of greater distance, may create a sense of voyeurism which in itself may be erotic.

As counterpoint to what works, there are certain scenarios that have been used to the point of becoming “old hat” in erotica, and might not be your first choice - sex with the repairwoman, sex at the gynecologists, sex under the table in a restaurant. On the other hand, I think I’ve used every one of those settings, and still find them erotic, but if you choose a “traditional” setting, try to interject something else unusual in terms of characterization etc. Newer themes which are appearing more often in lesbian erotica collections (as opposed to heterosexual, bisexual, or gay male erotica anthologies where these are more common) are threesomes, transgendered sex, sex between long-term partners, and transient encounters with sexually aggressive straight women.

Whereas in erotica, the author must create setting, character, and plot to support the erotic encounter, the opposite is true in romance fiction. These elements have already been set into play to a greater or lesser degree, and the challenge becomes creating an erotic moment that is both effective and acceptable to the reader. **The key to finding the erogenous zones in romance fiction is to ensure that the scene is organic to the plot**

(integrated) and that the characters speak and behave “like themselves.” The reader may have begun to see the characters as friends, or surrogate fantasy lovers, and anything which disrupts that image will “throw them out of the scene.”

2) When – Integrating Sex and Plot in Romance Fiction

An interesting difference that I discovered while researching sex and romance was that in some categories of straight romance fiction, there was an unwritten rule that sex must occur in the first 60 pages. Traditionally in lesbian romances, the physical consummation occurs, if at all, at the end of the book – as the payoff or the head nod to the fact that yes, the “lovers” are actually physically as well as emotionally committed. Very often, the love scenes occurred offstage or ended somewhere after kissing but before orgasm.

The fact which I’ve heard reiterated by almost every reader is that the sex scene in a romance must be a natural extension of both characterization and plot. It must make sense for the characters to have sex when they do, in terms of their emotional and/or physical attraction, and in terms of the positioning of the scene within the overall context of the narrative. If the entire focus or driving force of the novel is sexual tension (as in the traditional romance arc), either because one character does not realize she’s a lesbian or one or both characters are resisting sexual involvement because of past betrayals or fear of familial and/or social reprisals etc, then **a sex scene which neutralizes the sexual tension too soon will also derail the plot** and leave the author with nothing left to say. In

a plot such as this, the first sexual encounter *does* need to be very close to the end of the book. I would suggest that **when in doubt, delay**.

On the other hand, if we separate sex and commitment, then the first sexual encounter does not necessarily mean that the story is over. However, this is more of a challenge precisely *because* it breaks with tradition, and because in addition to sexual tension, there must be another source of conflict which needs to be resolved. Without something to prevent the main characters from committing to one another as soon as they have sex, we will lose the reader's investment in the story. One way to do this is to employ parallel sources of conflict from the beginning - perhaps they have sex, but one character is a nun and must struggle with her commitment to the church; or one is a single mother living in the Bible belt and she's concerned about losing her children; or, as with Cam and Blair in the Honor series, both characters have already separated their physical and emotional lives to the point where sex does not require an emotional investment, and it is precisely the reader's desire to see them recognize and admit that they have fallen in love that creates the driving force behind the romantic plot.

Another way to integrate the sex scene into the plot is to ensure that something happens during the sex scene *in addition to* the sex. If **a discovery, a confession, or an emotional declaration occurs**, then the scene does double duty as both an erotic interlude and a pivotal plot point, and the reader will be much less inclined to skip it. For example, if in the midst of a sex scene, one character confesses that a scar is the result of her battle with a life-threatening illness or she admits to never having been touched by anyone before or

they declare their love for the first time, the sex becomes but one part of an emotionally critical scene.

I frequently use “after sex talk” as a way of **introducing a new plot development or recapping recent events** in a particularly complex plot. I find this particularly helpful in intrigue/suspense series where the plots tend to be filled with evolving events which are difficult to keep track of. Therefore, when two characters are lying in bed together following an intimate moment, they often talk about “the case” or what may have happened to some of the other characters or what the next chapter will bring in terms of the plot. In this way, the sex scenes become another vehicle in which to relay information.

3) **Where?**

In contrast to romance fiction, a sexual interlude in erotica requires far less preparation in terms of setting, characterization, or plot. Nevertheless, the reader needs to be grounded in some believable fashion in terms of **person, place, and context** in order to experience the event. I believe this is the great difference between erotica and pornography. Pornography deals only with the act itself, whereas erotica places the act within a greater context, allowing both emotional and physical satisfaction.

Whether the sex occurs within the context of a novel or erotica, the author must engage the reader on as many levels as possible: what I call “**creating the sensual envelope.**” The reader’s sense of sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing as well as their emotions must be satisfied in order to have an effective sex scene. After writing a sex scene, reread it to ensure that all these areas have been addressed.

4) How -- Beyond the Missionary Position

The **vocabulary** of the sex scene is often genre specific and is typically different for romance and erotica – the two use a different “language,” and by doing so impart a different message to the reader. Every author has a comfort zone with the vocabulary used during the construction of an intimate scene. Authors who are uncomfortable with graphic language probably are not writing erotica. **Slang, street terms, and shorthand** in erotica reflect the immediacy and personal nature of the writing and the action – formal language would remove us from the experience, which is the opposite of what is intended in erotica. In a romance novel, especially if told in the third person, the narrator needs to be distanced from the event, and the term “clit” instead of “clitoris” might appear jarring in that context and may introduce an element of intimacy that throws the reader out of the experience.

By the same token, **point of view** has a significant effect on how the reader may respond to a sex scene. First-person is used much more often in erotica than in a novel. I prefer first-person for erotica because it allows for an immediate connection to the emotions of

the narrator and also allows me to very rapidly construct the character by giving the character a “voice”. Then, the narrator can describe the setting and circumstances in a sentence or two, orienting the reader to what is happening, and why. In third person, there’s much more distance between the reader and the characters, as the scene is “filtered through” the narrator, and it takes longer to “set the scene.” Obviously, the point of view of the novel is already determined before a sex scene occurs. If the novel is told in first-person, we can only have one character’s reaction to the events. Since I use third person, multiple point of view in all my novels, I switch point of view frequently within sex scenes, because it allows me to relate both character’s physical responses.

Avoid **clichés and euphemisms**. We all have our “pet peeves” about which clichés are overused and are more likely to make the reader groan as opposed to moan. Some of these might include such anatomically mysterious items as love buttons, honey pots, nubbins, and the uncharted territory known as the “nether region.” I personally don’t think that breasts are globes. Every time I see the word, I get an image of the Atlantic Ocean, Africa, and South America. I’m also fairly certain that the clitoris is not a bud and will not grow up to be a flower or a tree.

Also be aware of **repetitious phrasing** in your sex scenes, because a particularly sexy combination can quickly lose potency if used over and over again. You definitely don’t want to repeat words such as “wet, slick, glistening, rock-hard, throbbing, pulsating, swollen folds etc. etc.” within the same paragraph, or preferably within the same few paragraphs. On the other hand, my personal preference is not to replace “sex words” with

metaphors. The clitoris is a clitoris although sometimes it's a clit. It's a perfectly good word, and we can reestablish our claim over words that have been usurped ("queer" and "dyke" are great examples) as well as sexualize them by giving them legitimacy within the erotic context of our writing. On the other hand, any word can be overused, and reasonable descriptors to replace anatomical terms can be useful. If you can't come up with a word to replace an anatomic part that you've used too much, try to think about what happens to that part during sexual arousal. If it gets hard, swollen, distended, supersensitive, painful, tingling, taut, flushed etc. etc. then used those words which evoke some sensation as opposed to an artistic metaphor that creates no visceral response.

On the subject of **visceral responses**: one thing which renders a sex scene less effective are descriptions of activity which have no sensation attached. For example –

- 1)They kissed passionately.
- 2)She felt her excitement build.
- 3)She moved erotically upon her.

None of those sentences or words describe or evoke a feeling. A more effective approach would be to describe the sensation associated with the action with terms that have innate tactile meaning. This will allow the reader to experience what the characters experience, which is pretty much essential for erotica, and can make any intimate scene more pleasurable for the reader. It also engages in the reader, rather than displacing them from the scene.

(They kissed passionately.) Their kiss began tentatively, a slow careful glide of moist, lips and the barest flicker of inquisitive tongues, until hunger forced them deeper into one another's mouths.

(She felt her excitement build.) The longer they kissed, the harder the pulse beat between her thighs, making it impossible for her to think of anything else.

(She moved erotically upon her.) She settled into her, one thigh finding its place between her lover's parted legs, bringing heat to heat.

One final technique which I find very powerful in transferring the intimacy of a sex scene to the reader is **dialogue**. Having the characters talk to one another while they make love can provide an erotic trigger, which is a potent tool in erotica. It also empowers the characters by having *them* direct the sex scene verbally (by telling their partners what they want them to do). In a novel, it can heighten the reader's appreciation of the characters' interpersonal and very personal relationship.

As with almost every tool, the use of dialogue can be a double-edged sword. **Avoid trying to replicate "sounds" with dialogue.** An occasional "oh" or "ah" in conjunction with "god" or "baby" or some other phrase is believable, but it can quickly become old and evoke no response at all. I find it much more effective to have one character tell the other character how she's feeling in response to something the character has done. For example, I find it much more powerful to hear a character say "You're going to make me

come” as opposed to “I’m coming.” Obviously, it depends on the situation, and both phrases can work.

5) How Long -- Balancing the Scene

As a basic rule, I think the “sex,” defined as the culmination of the physical interaction, should reflect the “setup” in pacing and tone. By set up, I mean whatever happens to bring those characters together in that specific sexual encounter. If some explosive event occurs where the characters take one look and jump each other, the subsequent action is going to be fast-paced and both the vocabulary and sentence structure need to be sharp, hard, and fast. If we have a slow gentle seduction scene, then it will take much longer for the physical action to reach completion. “First-time sex” often, but not always, proceeds slowly as the characters take time to learn one another’s bodies and responses etc. If they have spent 200 pages getting to the point where they first touch, don’t let the moment pass too quickly. Let them undress each other slowly, let them spend a lot of time touching one another, let them share their thoughts and feelings in conversation. In this instance, the sentence structure may be more complex, with more description and dialogue. Even if the first encounter between the characters is a hot, fast, sweaty five minutes, their next encounter may be slower, more gentle, as they catch their breath and take the time to explore.

I’m often asked how, after writing hundreds of sex scenes, I keep the scenes fresh. My answer is that a love scene is a conversation between two characters. No two couples are

the same, and each time a couple comes together, they're saying something different than the time they did before. There are only so many things we can do with body parts and positions before we have to repeat ourselves, but each sex scene, when placed within the context of the narrative, will be unique if it reflects what the characters are feeling about one another at that moment.

Romance Sub-Genres

Contemporary Romance

Romance tales set mostly in the present time, but can be categorized as taking place after the World Wars. Can (and often does) contain elements of suspense, humor, drama - or any mix thereof.

Erotica

Focuses heavily on the sexual component of the story, often relying on graphical descriptions to turn up the heat. This sub-genre makes heavy use of language not commonly found in other categories of romance.

Fantasy Romance

Although still centered on a romantic tale, Fantasy Romances take place on other worlds and contain elements of magic. They can also sometimes incorporate mystical creatures, like fairies or dragons, or horrific creatures, like vampires and werewolves. Some authors blend elements of mythology into fantasy romances.

Futuristic Romance

Obviously, romance stories set in the far future and containing some science fictional or fantastical elements. Mostly classified in the "paranormal" sub-genre, Futuristic Romances are gaining in popularity and thus some publishers may classify this sub-category as its own sub-genre.

Glitz/Glamour Romance

Often focused on the rich and powerful, the jet-set elite crowds and celebrity-like characters. Think Jackie Collins or Judith Krantz and you've encompassed this sub-category nicely.

Historical Romance

Romance stories set in the past and generally before the World Wars. Unfortunately "before the World Wars" is a broad classification and can be stretched so far back into our history to include: American West, American Colonial, American Civil War, American Revolution, American Reconstruction, Native American, Australian Colonial, European Dark Ages, Early European Renaissance, French Revolution, Celtic, Medieval England, Middle Ages England, Victorian England and Regency England.

Paranormal Romance

Romance tales containing "other-worldly" elements such as ghosts or specters. Can also be extended to include spirits, devils, demons or angels. In some cases, the characters may possess certain paranormal 'powers'.

Medieval Romance

Stories about knights in shining armor rescuing damsels in distress in medieval European settings.

Pirate Romance

Adventure and romance on the high-seas, featuring swash-buckling pirate captains and feisty heroines willing to risk all to be with the bad-boy of the sea!

Regency Romance

Romance stories set in England in the early 1800s - even though they are not the same as a "Historical Romance". They generally have a stronger focus on the surrounding society and the interplay between characters. This sub-category of the original Historical sub-genre became popular enough to warrant its own separate category.

Romantic Comedy

From fast-paced screwball antics to simple, quiet wit, these novels are often categorized in the "Women's Fiction" section of some bookstores. Commonly displayed with a cartoon-like cover, these books are gaining in popularity!

Romantic Suspense

Romance containing an element of mystery and intrigue. Sub-categories include: Espionage, Forensics, Homicide, drug-dealing, smugglers. Generally contain a more dramatic tone and are most frequently set in a contemporary setting.

Time-travel romance

Romance tales set across two different time periods, with one or more characters "time-traveling" between both.

Viking Romance

Harder to find on the shelves these days, but Viking Romances center around characters from early Nordic cultures.

Western Romance

Often categorized under 'Historical' romance, these tales are of romances set in the American 'old west'.

Young Adult

Romances written with the teenager in mind, so the sensuality levels will obviously be understated. These are hugely popular with the teens and are always in demand.