

## What Happens After “Happily Ever After”?

Romances are supposed to all have the same basic structure: The hero and heroine meet, they go through trials, and at the end, they decide they love each other and will stay together. And that’s the end, meaning there’s nothing after that. It’s done. The story’s complete. They’re allowed to show up in later books, but just as vignette characters.

But what if that’s not enough? It’s not like anyone’s life stops at the moment they realize that they’ve found The One. Plenty of books that could be called “romances” keep going, *Outlander* and J. D. Robb’s *In Death* series among them. Even *Twilight* and *Fifty Shades of Grey*—which, regardless of packaging, are essentially romances stretched over multiple books—are series. Why do romances have to stop?

Mine don’t. They don’t because I don’t want them to and my readers don’t want them to! That was one of the major reasons I switched to self-publishing. My New York editors thought that couples should only get one book. I didn’t. By self-publishing, I was able to do what I wanted—and what I knew my readers would want.

At the end of each of my big, six-book arcs, my hero and heroine get their “happily ever after.” But they still have new challenges and new obstacles to face together, both in their relationships and in external threats that are too much fun not to explore.

This lets me develop characters at a natural pace, too. In *Cora’s Choice*, Cora Shaw must decide whether to continue her relationship with the dangerous vampire Dorian Thorne. By the next arc, *Cora’s Bond*, Cora is exploring what that relationship means while she and Dorian are under attack by outside forces. Giving the characters the time and the space to really grow lets me bring them to places they wouldn’t be able to reach in a single story arc...never mind that I write doorstops!

After those books, I get to do something really extravagant—go back and retell the same story from Dorian’s point of view, so we get all the scenes and thoughts that we haven’t experienced through Cora. Since Dorian is truly at the heart of the action, it’s a completely new book and experience. Many writers have promised this kind of journey but few have actually done it because they originally had only the heroine’s story in their mind. But I’ve known about Dorian’s hidden dealings from the beginning, so it’s an awesome treat to share them with my readers.

I don’t believe that there has to be just one “Happily Ever After,” and I’m thrilled to share them all with you—each one different and, I believe, a little more meaningful!