

## EPISODE 35

# *Should You Ever Stop Writing a Series that's Not Working?*

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Hey there, writerly friend. Welcome to the Author Revolution Podcast. I'm your host, international bestselling indie author, Carissa Andrews and CEO of Author Revolution, the author's source for all things rapid releasing.

This week, we're going to be talking about series creation. Now, we all know that readers love series—especially voracious readers. The reasons to write a series are stacked up like a mountain, for sure, and we've talked frequently on this podcast about why a series is your best bet for rapid releasing. But is there ever a time when you should stop writing a series that's not working?

This question has come up a couple of times and it's one that's been an interesting mental challenge. For me, I'm a finisher. It's a huge struggle for me to cut something loose or abandon it completely. That goes for stories, series, friendships, and other relationships. When I was working on the Pendomus Chronicles, I knew I couldn't work on another title until I had managed to complete the story trying to make its way out. Even though I had to take a 3-year hiatus between book 1 and book 2. In the interim, I had plenty of story ideas coming to me, and I would just write down the ideas in my "idea" notebook. One of those story ideas was Diana Hawthorne's story in Oracle.



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I did complete Oracle immediately after the Pendomus Chronicles were finished, but interestingly, I never anticipated making her a series. Yet, both readers and, frankly, Diana herself, have been pretty adamant about her revival. So, while I intend to bring Diana Hawthorne out into a new full series starting in 2021, I haven't started writing in any of her books because I'm still finishing up my current series, The Windhaven Witches. Personally, I compartmentalize that way. I need to give one series my full attention before turning to another.

While this has been the way I work, truth be told, there are times when it's healthier for you to abandon a series that's no longer good for you. Writing, for better or worse, is an experiment. Until you put words on the page and have the courage to put those words out into the world, you won't know whether or not it's going to be successful.

The idea, when it comes to rapid releasing, is to find the one that does EXTREMELY WELL and run with it. Sometimes, that takes a bit of hopping around or testing the waters with shorter series first. In my experience, until you have a few different series or books to compare sales and interest to, you don't have the base reference you need to make an educated decision here. In fact, the goal with rapid releasing is to not only to find what works fast and get your backlist built fast – it's to also figure out as quickly as possible, whether or not your series has the potential to create steady income through readership.

For example, I can say with certainty that while my Pendomus Chronicles is a lot of fun, is well written and enjoyed by those who like Hunger Games and Divergent, it doesn't have the kind of potency that Diana Hawthorne has with her single book. She brings in just as many reads and sales with 50% less ad spend. While it's not the astronomical blockbuster hit that I've seen some romance writers get from their series, for being a supernatural detective, she's kicking butt. So, I'm looking forward to excavating her a bit more and seeing what she can do.

So, with all this being said, yes, I do believe there are times when you should opt out of writing a series and move on to something else. Here are my 7 tips to know it's time to stop writing your series all together:

When you didn't plan it out well enough – We all have to start out somewhere. Sometimes this means putting pen to paper before we really developed our world, story arcs, or characters. When this happens, it can lead to reviews that are less than stellar and a muddy, unclear story that readers just don't resonate with. While most of the time I'd like to say this just means pulling the series back and doing some rewrites to it, there are times when the plot holes and other issues can become so daunting that untangling the web could immobilize you. When this happens – it's time to cut it loose and move on to something else. If the story line sticks with you later on, you can always start fresh with a brand-new rewrite later on.

When it doesn't need to be a series– Look, as much as I tout a series for rapid release, sometimes, you just gotta write a stand-alone. There's nothing wrong with that. Stephen King, John Grisham, Michael Crichton, Gillian Flynn – these are all authors who have made a name for themselves by having lots of books, but most of which are stand-alones. It can happen. So, don't feel like every book you write has to be part of a larger whole. Like I said, Diana Hawthorne was never meant to be more than a single book at first. I also have two other stand-alone titles – Awakening and Love is a Merciless God. While taking place in the 8th Dimension Universe, they can be read 100% on their own.

You've run out of ideas – this is a big one, guys. If you've started a series, but your ideas have tapped out, it's time to abandon the series. There's nothing to say new ideas won't come at you, but trying to make something fresh when your well of creativity has run dry is the worst thing you can do.

Have you ever watched Final Destination? The first movie was brilliant and should have stayed a single movie. Instead, they created a crappy series of films, each worse than the previous one. You can tell the writers were just using a cookie cutter storyline to make the new ones happen. Don't do that. Readers don't like it and you won't enjoy it, either.

When sales aren't there – Okay, look, there's a fine line between writing what's calling you and doing it solely for the money. But let me just say that you do have a profitable series in you. If you're spending more on advertising than you're bringing in, or you're really struggling to get any traction with your series at all, it might be time to go back to the drawing board. At a certain point, even the Captain has to call for lifeboats when a ship is sinking. There's nothing to say you couldn't pick the series back up if conditions improve, but if your sales feel more like a dead weight you're carrying around, cut it loose and write something a bit more freeing.

When a better story idea bites you in the bum – Hey, look guys, it happens. If you get one of those incredible story ideas that strikes you like lightning, sometimes you have to bend to its will. This could be the universe or your Muse slapping you upside the head to do what you're meant to be doing. When I first started writing, I was making an attempt at a ghost-human love story. But when I got the insights for the Pendomus Chronicles, it felt like I had literally received a download from the universe – I kid you not. I dropped that ghost story and I've never looked back since. In fact, the closest thing I have to that story is Love is a Merciless God, but even that one is a totally different bend than what I was originally going for. If you're mid-series and this happens, embrace it. Put the other series on hold, if you feel like it's not complete and you want to return. But whatever you do, don't let that flash of inspiration pass you by.

When your heart's not in it – If your series has gone from an exciting adventure to a tedious pain in your backside, it's time to set it aside and do something new. You only have one life to live and you shouldn't waste any of it writing books that don't light your soul on fire. Let's face it, if you're not having fun or feel like it's an important work, you're missing the point of writing. Even difficult, painful books to write should feel important and healing to you at soul level.

When you're burnt out – Rapid releasing can take its toll. Shocker, right? If you're writing at a frantic pace, you have to have a reason that's bigger than monetary gain. Money in and of itself is great, but if it's your sole motivator for rapid releasing or writing, burn out is going to welcome you with open arms. What happens then is you block your creativity and start to manifest all the things you're afraid of – namely, lack of sales, writer's block, and a downward spiral of doom. Not good. If you reach this point, you need to regroup to refocus and find a better why. Take a step out of fear to ask yourself why you chose writing to earn you money over, say, being a real estate agent or banker. Both of which probably have a higher and faster potential for income. When you tap into that real why, make a new plan for your publishing goals that bring you into alignment with it. If it means dropping a pen name or a series, or creating a new pen name, then do it. Remember, YOLO!

Now, remember, nothing is permanent here unless you really want it to be. While those are my 7 Abandon Ship Tips, there are other options you can consider.

Take a break - Whether it be a day, a week, a month, or years, give yourself the time you need to regroup and get clear on what you want as an author or from the series. Some series do require more thought than others. It might just be that yours is one of them. Maybe you need more life experience, have a person you need to meet before things click, or something else entirely.

I genuinely believe things will unfold when they're meant to. So, if your subconscious is telling you it's time to set aside a story, heed the message. Take a break and come back at it whenever you're called to do so.

Write in multiple series at once – This one is for those of you who can keep large pieces of information separate in your mind or in your organizational systems. I can write multiple books at once, but ultimately, one always wins out and I have to ride it to the end before going back to the other one.

Write a new story – whether it be a short story or new novel, pull yourself from the daily grind of writing the same old, same old. Letting our imagination play in a new playground for a bit can be just the thing we need to unlock some new areas we didn't know were trying to get out.

Pick up a hobby – In fact, along the line of the last tip, sometimes you just need to do something new. Pick up a non-writing hobby and give yourself a break from word and world creation. You might just find that by fleshing out yourself as a human, you're able to give more depth to the stories you write and the characters you create. We all need to be well-rounded human beings. Who knows, finding a new hobby like kayaking or painting might just be the thing that fills the plot holes you're struggling with.

Hire a ghostwriter – We talked about ghostwriters in episode 27, so if you're looking for ideas go back and check that out. But in essence, if you're wanting to keep a series alive, but you don't want to write it, have someone else do the work for you. Give them the details and see what kind of creativity they can bring to the table. You never know, it might just jumpstart your own creativity again and reignite your passion for the project.

Rewrite - In the end, sometimes it just comes down to rewriting. If a series isn't working, but you still feel called to it, take as much time you need to really plan out the series and characters better. Then, do a complete and total rewrite so it's told the way you envision it.

So, to recap, I do believe there are times when you need to walk away from a series you're creating. However, it doesn't necessarily mean it will be forever. Sometimes, you need to have space to see your situation more clearly. It's the whole seeing the forest through the trees adage. Sometimes that space will show you how to proceed.

Well, guys, there are my two cents when it comes to writing and continuing a series. Sometimes, it's in your best interest to let it go for a while and do something new. But as a creative person, dead doesn't always have to mean dead. At least, not with our projects. Now, it's your turn. Head over to the Author Revolution Facebook Group and let me know - have you ever abandoned a series you were writing? If so, why? And if not, why not?

If you'd like to download the transcript from today's episode or grab a link to anything else we talked about, you can head over to [authorrevolution.org/35](http://authorrevolution.org/35).

As a final reminder, this podcast episode is sponsored by my upcoming series, the Windhaven Witches. Please check out Secret Legacy on Apple Books if you have an Apple device to help me reach the 500 Apple preorders in June. If you don't have an Apple device, don't worry. It's available on pretty much every other platform out there. No matter where you preorder it, you can rest assured that your purchase helps by donating to the American Cancer Society.

Well, my friend, that's all I have for today. Go, get some writing done.  
So, until next time...  
Go forth and start your author revolution.