

# Episode 90

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book, series, write, outline, author, characters, story, plan, challenge, never ending story, world, arc, building, main characters, act, big, indie author, concept, revolution, plot twist

## SPEAKERS

Carissa Andrews



Carissa Andrews 00:12

I'm Carissa Andrews, international best selling indie author and CEO of author revolution. With more than 15 books published, it's safe to say I have made a ton of mistakes in my endeavor to become a full time author. The most important thing that I've learned in the past decade is that indie authors need to protect their creativity and their serenity. Being an author is a long game. And that's why I'm on a mission to teach other indies just like you how to publish books because the sustainable rapid release method, I created the author revolution podcast to give you insights and actionable step by step strategies to help you do just that. If you're an ambitious author, or one of the making, who's looking to create a long term author, career and a life you love, you found your tribe, my friend, let's get your author revolution underway. Well, Hey there and welcome back to the author revolution podcast, my friend, I am really excited. This week, Amanda is finally launching. And I've been busy with audio book launch strategy, and new plans for the Diana Hawthorne series because I only mapped out the first three books, guys. So now it's time to move on and do some more planning. Now because Amends done, like I said, I'm rolling into a new six week reading spread for immortals, which that one is already planned out. But I'm also gearing up to make some more magic happen. I have three more books that I have titles for, I have a basic concept for. But that's it, I need to map out a strategy for the rest of the series. Well, the rest of the series that I know so far anyway, that I'm going to be working on this year and then into next year. In addition, I have been working hard on the upcoming author revolution, three date writer series challenge. It's all happening on the first week of August. So obviously, planning and writing a series is totally on my brain right

now. I've been thinking back to previous classes I've taught and in person discussions that I've had with other authors, and all the questions that people have when it comes to writing a series because obviously with this challenge, I want to make sure we are digging deep, and making sure that we get past some of the limitations that have been holding us back in the first place. The single most asked question that I get is, how do you write a series outline? Which is kind of funny when you think about it, because a lot of people are more like, Oh my gosh, how do you even write a series in general period? Well, obviously, the next stage of that is to write an outline for it. But a series outline doesn't have to be some big crazy endeavor. It's not like writing a book necessarily. Now in rapid release roadmap, we always work in for book increments, because we're trying to write in a way that is sustainable in a way that we can continue to do year after year. So I always recommend doing four books as you're planning out your series outline. Now, if you do an online search for trying to figure out how to write a series outline, you are going to get bombarded with tons of information that can make the idea of writing a series way more complicated than it actually needs to be, at least in my humble opinion. I mean, nothing like scaring away potential authors when they tell you you have to have some sort of like deep in depth character profile, like a cop does when they're trying to catch a serial killer, am I right? You don't need to know your character's favorite color or what's in their pocket in order to get your writing going and get your book done. Okay, if you ask me, a lot of that is simply another way to procrastinate on doing the actual thing you want to do, which is write the damn series. It's okay to plan. It's okay to look into some of these things like characterization and world building. But ultimately, your biggest thing is making sure you understand your series arcs, making sure you understand your stories arcs, and writing them down. Because a lot of characterization, a lot of the character planning and stuff. It can come out inside the story as you're doing it. Sure, there are certain things that you're going to want to, you know, work out and we can talk more about that a little bit later. But ultimately, if it's stopping you from writing words on the page and getting the story written out, it's not necessary, it's not a thing for you. Okay, so let's dive straight into my tips for writing and planning a series outline. Number one, you're gonna want to ask yourself, what kind of series am I writing? Is it a finite arc? Or is it a never ending story and rapid release roadmap. Like I said, we're always starting off with those four books. So I don't care what type of series you want to write. However, it is super important to know which one because it will impact how you're going to finish out the rest of your outlines, and how you're going to go on writing your books. So even if you don't have a concept yet, that's fine. You just need to start with your series type, finite arc, or never ending story. Now, I personally have done both the pen damas Chronicles, and the windhaven witches series are both finite arcs. I mapped out all the books in advance, well, a little bit less so with pen damas, but definitely hardcore when it came to in haven. So that way, I knew which books would highlight what now to me, there's more impact in a series, that short, that's tight that has a finite arc, because you can really draw out the characters growth for each

book. Now, the series I'm writing right now, for Diana Hawthorne, it's a never ending series. It's kinda like Nancy Drew, but with a snarky psychic. Now, this type of series is more episodic. Think of a TV show. And each book is actually an episode, you'll still want to have an overall arc that ties all of the books together. But each book really honestly in its own way, stands out and the story has its own arc. Number two, your next going to decide if your series needs to be read in order or not. Because sometimes the series can be written without any order in mind, if they are completely standalone, like a Hardy Boys book or whatever, you can then pick up any single one of them, it doesn't matter which one they grab, and they can read it and follow along and everything's just fine. That works particularly well, but those never ending stories. Now mine on the other hand, even though it's a never ending story, it needs to be read in order, because that's how I personally like to build my world building, it's how I like to build the series, because I like to be able to go based off of whatever happens in that last book, and then continue on from it, it helps me write faster. And it just keeps me going because I write sequentially, both in writing the book and in writing the series. Now, number three, once all of that is decided, I want you to sit down and do a brain dump. Because we have a lot of ideas. And we have a lot of loves. And we have a lot of likes, and we have a lot of things that we want to get out. And that's why this book is brewing or this series is brewing. So this is also sometimes called a mind map. And it's where you get all the stuff that's in your head out on page. Now, I love using the tool scapple for this, but it can also be done with a simple piece of paper and a pen. What you're going to do is write down all of your interests, your story ideas, the struggling thoughts about something that you want to write the character types that you want to include in the book, the tropes that you want to have come into it, you put it all in there, and you'll link it all together. Now I have a special technique that I'm going to be using in my upcoming three day plan your series challenge. So if you want to dig in deeper, you can always join the challenge and hang out for three days as we get this ball rolling. Just sign up at [author.evolution.org forward slash plan your series](https://author.evolution.org/forward/slash/plan-your-series), no spaces or dashes or anything, just plan your series. And we will get you started. Number four, it's all about then the series concept. In order to create an outline for your series, it comes down to what's your concept. And that's usually just a single paragraph about your series and what you intend to do with it. So for example, with Diana Hawthorne series, The concept is supernatural, the show meets Nancy Drew. It's about a snarky, but big hearted psychic who becomes kind of the champion for the down and out by finding supernatural beasties, as well as being paired up against a mysterious governmental agency that's determined to enslave the supernatural world, and all its powers. Seems pretty simple, right? When you hear it like that, that's literally all it is to this particular concept. And I wrote that down in like, two minutes, it was not that hard. So you can do this too. It's very easy. Once you have your series concept, I want you to then go into your series book concepts, the same thing. Again, you're going to be doing in a simple paragraph. And what you're doing then is thinking about Okay, so what is each of the four books going to

be about? So for example, with the windhaven witches book, one was about the main character, finding about her family's secret legacy and her hunting past. Okay, Book Two is all about the moral value of a soul. What does a soul mean? What does being alive mean? What does being dead mean? Book Three is all about unleashing the main characters necromancy abilities, and then digging deeper into who she's ultimately becoming, because there are bigger forces at work here. And then book four is all about her breaking free from the family curse. Or maybe not. And so the whole point of it is so that each book builds on each other. And it gets to be more concrete, the characters get fleshed out, the world building gets fleshed out, and everything gets bigger and more valuable to the reader. And if you're doing a never ending story, that's the same thing. It doesn't matter which way you're going, those books are all going to have their own lovability, they're still going to, you know, build on the characterization of your characters, because it doesn't matter. If your character really doesn't like change at all. Like, you know, Nancy Drew, I guess doesn't really change. Neither does Sherlock. So those types of characters are beloved because they are steadfast because they stay the same, because they are quirky in their own way. It all depends on how you want to write your series, how you want to write your characters, where you feel the most comfortable. So once you have your book concepts, those couple of sentences, a paragraph, whatever in mind, for the four books, I want you to then move into a skeletal outline. I know this is a process, right? But each one of these things guide you a little bit closer to what it is you're doing. So skeletal outlines, what does it look like? Once you know what each book is going to be about? It's time to just figure out and pick up the boulders of your story and put them in place. Now it's a lot easier to flesh out the map of anything that you're doing when you have a few guideposts. Right. So what I do is I use the 3x structure as my guide. What can I say I like the number three. So that's why I use three xx structures. But I know that in the first act when I'm going through this whole thing, so I have a special form that I use. And I will go through and go, okay, main characters, setting the inciting incident, that's everything that's going to go in that first act, then act two, it consists of actually a half of your book, quarter one is your first act, quarters, two and three are your act two, and quarter four is your Act Three. I know sounds confusing, but when you look at on the sheet of paper that I've actually put together for you inside of this three day challenge, it's really makes it much simpler. Okay, so it's part of the reason why the middle part of your book feel so long, why it feels like Oh, god, this parts never going to end. It's because it's actually two full quarters, it's a half of your book. And it's the heart of your story. It includes conflict, conflict and more conflict, and then muster up some more drama for your characters. It's all that stuff that is building the storyline and bringing you closer to the big explosion, and then the resolution, right. And if you add in a plot twist around the midway point, you are golden here. And then by the end of the second act, you're going to want to be presenting the resolution, or at least the idea of a resolution. Finally, Act Three is all about winding things down, you're going to have the resolution, and you're going to

be bringing things into the happily ever after, or the unhappily ever after, or maybe even a cliffhanger. So when you know what each part of your story is meant to be, it's a lot easier to put in place those boulders if you know your character is going to be about a necromancer who doesn't know she's a necromancer, who has to then find out she's a necromancer, and find out her whole past and her whole idea of who she was, is maybe not even real, then you have to place those pieces on the board and go from there. So that's kind of the idea with windhaven. I knew she was going to become a necromancer. But I had to figure out where I was going to place the reveals where am I going to put the plot twists, where am I going to create something that is going to next level the experience for the reader. And by doing that, then you use this little sheet that I've I've written down, I literally write a couple of words, I don't even do like a full sentence half the time it's it's just quick scratch and what I think I want to have on there and move on. Because once that's done, you move on to the final stage of your series outline. And even though I'm saying series outline, it's actually your book. So what you do for each one of those four books as you go in, and you write chapter by chapter outlines. Now the ones that we were just talking about the skeletal outline, so you're going to want to do that for each of the four books as well. But then you go into the chapter by chapter outlines, you can do this, if you wanted to, you could do it for one book at a time. I did that with the windhaven, which is for the first book, and then what I was done with with secret legacy, I decided I wanted to see the rest of the series. So I went ahead and did all of them all at once. And so when I was writing, so legacy, I knew what was going to be happening in curse legacy, I could place information, knowing where this whole thing was going to go. I get it. It's not always sexy to outline and many of us are discovery writers, I know I am from time to time, I'm actually kind of a hybrid discovery writer. But the pros far outweigh the cons when you can do this, and you actually dig into each chapter by chapter outline, I can honestly say this from experience. Besides even though you're mapping things out, it doesn't mean that you're not going to deviate from this plan, I can't tell you how many times I wrote something, and then ended up switching things around a little bit. It just means that that you're giving yourself permission to explore the story and explore the characters and figure out what you want to do. You know, how they always say that that first draft of the story is really just you telling the story to yourself? Well, this exercise is just a way for you to tell the story to yourself, but faster. So I do this, typically, in just a couple of hours in an afternoon, it doesn't have to take all day, guys, it doesn't have to take a super long period of time, you can write your outlines for all four books, in a matter of four hours, for example, I know four hours might seem like a lot, and maybe you don't have that kind of time or that kind of stamina. But what I'm saying is four hours to put together your entire four series outline for the year. That's not too shabby, right. So when you do this, the story ideas then are planted in your mind. And even if you are a little bit slower, or even if you are starting with the first book, and you kind of let the other ones Slide it gets implanted into your subconscious mind to. And what happens is that you can start

dropping, like I said those subtle hints or foreshadowing up front, because you already know what's coming down the pike, you can craft as an unreliable narrator, if you wanted to. I mean, I'm telling you *Gone Girl* was not written that way by accident. Okay, it was written because Gillian Flynn went through and she outline that book. So basically, writing good stories gets a lot easier, because you'll have a bird's eye view of your entire plot. Well, four books worth at least, this is logistically, all you really need in order to write your series. Now, do you need to know your characters? Of course you do. Yes, they are pretty critical to the mission of a series. But you can also discover most of what they're going to do along the way, or most of who they are even along the way. Even if you don't have everything about them plan to a tee, things are going to suss themselves out, or you'll be able to think about them as you're going along. As long as you give them an internal and external motivation, as well as some really good flaws and some conflict, you're pretty much golden. Now, the more you write and produce series, the faster you're going to get a character generation. So in my experience, you don't need to spend as much time here, as many other gurus maybe suggest, do what feels right to you. But if you ever come to the point where you feel like it's taking a little too long, or maybe feels like it's too much work to build these things, it probably is. So cut it loose and just start writing and see what happens. You can always feel that stuff in later, a first draft can just be that a first draft, and you can go back in and flesh it out even more after the first draft is in place. So like I said, cut loose, start writing and move forward. Now, do you need to do some world building? Well, again, that totally depends on the type of book you're writing. If you have a sci fi or fantasy series, well, then yes, you're going to need to do some world building in there. So you're going to want to go back to mind mapping and do some more work within it. Or if you're a student of rapid release roadmap, for example, in my bonus module of series conception, there is a Scrivener template in there all for world building. There are questions up the wazoo that you can ask yourself if you're really want to dig into it and really think about all those things and have it in sort of a series Bible place. Okay? But your your goal here truly is to allow yourself to get that information out. Get the world building put in there, but don't let it drag you into an abyss either. Nothing, let me repeat this. Nothing is as important as actually getting the words on the page. As a reminder, I am starting a three day plan your series challenge that takes place starting August 2 and goes through the fourth. If you want to take a deep dive into series creation with me and learn how it really works to get words on the page. For this, this challenge is going to be for you. All you have to do is head over to [authorrevolution.org forward slash plan your series](http://authorrevolution.org/forward-slash-plan-your-series) no spaces, no dashes, one word, [authorrevolution.org forward slash plan your series](http://authorrevolution.org/forward-slash-plan-your-series). Now as always, you can download today's transcript to this podcast episode by heading over to [author revenue dot org forward slash 90](http://authorrevenue.org/forward-slash-90). I'll include the links to the challenge as well as a link to scapple. In case you want to check that out. Like I said, it is a super handy tool, even if I do say so myself. I would like to also mention that this challenge will be taken down August 8, it has its own Facebook group. It has its own

ecosystem of sorts, but it will be available for students inside of rapid release roadmap. So if you're thinking that you want to join the challenge, but you're not sure if you're going to have time to really dedicate yourself to it. I get it. It's free, but it's a limited time thing. So it comes down August 8. So if you're interested in wanting to go further, you do have lifetime access as a student inside rapid release roadmap. Just something to think about. Well, my friend, that's it. That's the end of this podcast episode and it's time to go forth and start your author revolution.