

Episode 140

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SPEAKERS

Kat Caldwell, Carissa Andrews



Carissa Andrews 00:10

The indie author revolution has been around for more than a decade. But we indies continue to push the boundaries of what we're capable of. From getting over initial prejudices to staring down perfectionism and author imposter syndrome. We've become a force to reckon with indie authors now wear more hats than ever as we strive to create a career full of meaning prosperity, and potential. We have juggled the demands and continue to be rebels in the face of adversity. Now, after years of hearing the shouts of hustle and grind, we indies are rebelling again, gone are the days of publishing a book a month until we drop, and in its place, sow the seeds of a better way to rapid release, a way that feels incredible as we build a sustainable, lifelong author career, that not only increases our visibility and royalties, but it's all done with intention and ease. If you're ready to buck the system and become the visionary entrepreneur, I know you're meant to be, you've come to the right place. I'm Carissa Andrews, international best selling indie author, and this is the Author Revolution Podcast. Well, hey there welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast. I am thrilled that you're here today. Oh, my goodness, guys, you are going to absolutely love this podcast episode. My guest today is none other than Kat Caldwell of Pencils and Lipstick Podcast. And she and I don't know, we met I think originally on Twitter. And it was just one of those things where we're in the same circles, we're talking about the same sorts of things. And the next thing I know we are chatting up about in the other ship and what we do and we're falling into those podcasts. And I am so thrilled that I got to know her and got to interview her for today's podcast episode. So she is an interesting person because I'll tell you her insights into how she approaches not only her own writing, but the way she does a lot of her own business approaches for pencils and lipstick for the course she teaches for her membership. It she comes at things such a unique and interesting way that it makes me excited about the different opportunities that she provides. So without further ado, I'm gonna get into this interview because I think you're gonna really want to hear what she has to say. Let's get to it. Hi, Kat, welcome to the other Revolution Podcast. I'm so glad that you're here today. Obviously, I include my audience and a little bit about how we met and how this conversation came to be. But can you tell my audience a little bit more about who you are and what you do?



Kat Caldwell 02:52

Kat Caldwell 03:12

Yes, of course. I'm Kat Caldwell, Katherine. Yeah, I was named after Katharine Hepburn, but my mother spelled it wrong. So that has, you know, followed me all my way. wanted to be like her didn't quite end up like her. I mostly grew up in Wisconsin, so we were almost neighbors growing up probably, yeah, um, I now live in DC with my husband, and three children and a dog. And whoever knows they're trying to get me to get a cat. So that's what I do. That's me. In a nutshell.



Carissa Andrews 03:25

That's awesome. Well, obviously, it's not just you in a nutshell, because you do a lot of other things like write books and talk about books and help the author community. So let's talk about your author journey to start with, like, what has that looked like for you? Did you always know that you wanted to be a writer? Or does that come about?



Kat Caldwell 03:43

I did, except that, you know, I'm an 80s. Kid. So my grandparents and my parents patted me on the head. And we're like, Yeah, but for a real job, what? I started writing my first book in high school, by 2000 hole, gosh, we're going backwards, like 2003 or so. You know, self publishing was still not a thing. It wasn't. I mean, it was a thing, but it wasn't really looked upon. So I thought I knew stuff. You know, I'm in college, I know things. I'm not gonna go with that. Self publishing a I didn't have the money. So I found publish America, which I thought looked awesome. And had, you know, my stepdad look over the contract. And he was like, looks good to me. If anyone knows what publishing America is, it was like a scam.



Carissa Andrews 04:30

Oh, no, no.




Kat Caldwell 04:33

It's what you know, people would call a poor hybrid. So they didn't do any editing. The book covers are terrible, you know, they claimed that you would make money that you'd be able to get into a bookshop. I took it into the university bookstore, and they were like, we don't understand this barcode like our computer system won't take it. Yeah, they were willing to take my book and then, of course, people kept coming in and we're like, the formatting is weird. So anyway, oh no, that to say If it was a big bust, you know, I was so proud of myself. And here I am, I'm going to be this literary person. I imagined myself in New York City like, you know, literary New Yorker



Carissa Andrews 05:10

Absolutely.

 Kat Caldwell 05:14


Um, so I kept, you know, with a dream, but I got married, moved to Spain, my husband's from Spain and did translation because it still was in my head that I had to have a real job. And then babies came and all that and kept writing, but it wasn't until probably 2013 with a newborn, third, third child. Yeah, I'm gonna do this. To get best friend, or like baby's crying, and we're like,

 Carissa Andrews 05:42

yeah, like, I need to find me again. It's got to be here somewhere.

 Kat Caldwell 05:48


Yeah, so I started writing my, you know, my book, it was a long time it was I left the other one behind, I had tried off and on to, like, sell it and couldn't find really what I what I needed was like a mentor. That's what I needed to like, What is wrong with it? I don't know, how do you do this query letter thing? Like, what's wrong with my query letter? I don't understand why I keep getting these rejections, you know? Sure. Take, you know, keep in mind, like the internet was not that great. We we had writer's digest.com, I think and I had the big ol query letter books that I would lug over to Spain and

 Carissa Andrews 06:25


right, I remember those Oh, geez

 Kat Caldwell 06:28

like, the next year, you have to buy the other one is like \$50.

 Carissa Andrews 06:32

Right? They were not cheap. And there were a few of them. I can't remember if it was the query letter ones, but there was there was like an agent one too, like, it was almost like a phone book for agents.

 Kat Caldwell 06:43

Yeah, you're like, I remember that meeting. What might they what is women's fiction? I don't know. Just information. industry was not as up to date, you know. So it took me about four years of writing and moving back to the states and figuring out how this whole industry works. And I finally decided I was going to self publish in 2017. And then once I hit publish, I was like, I still don't know what I'm doing.



Carissa Andrews 07:13

I don't think anyone does when they first hit that publish button.



Kat Caldwell 07:16

What is what is going on here? You know, I didn't expect it to be a best seller. But I did have to recognize like a my confidence wasn't really up there yet. I didn't have a lot of feedback on it, except for people around me who had read it and let me know. And most of my friends are pretty honest. But you know, they're still your friends. Like they're not gonna hate it.



Carissa Andrews 07:38

I don't know, I have a couple of friends that were pretty brutal.



Kat Caldwell 07:41

Some of them like are afraid to read the book, you know, because they don't want to have to say if they, but I spent 2018, then just trying to figure out how to run a business, because that's what I realized. This is a business. I need to figure that out. I did a lot of business books, read a lot of business books. did, you know, a couple masterminds, things like that? Came out with my next book in 2019. I did not write a series.



Carissa Andrews 08:08

Next on the agenda,



Kat Caldwell 08:09

so then I get you know, I spoke with one of the guys that we Readsy, and he was like, You should write a series.



Carissa Andrews 08:18

why did no one tell me these things?



Kat Caldwell 08:20

Yes. It's like, I think, like a lot of people, it's, it's doing one thing and seeing that you need to learn another and so in the meantime, you're always writing. Yeah, always growing. You're learning and you're coming out and then COVID Hit



Carissa Andrews 08:35

Ugh... yep



Kat Caldwell 08:37

yeah, how is that already a thing. You know, that's two years went by. So I came up with another book, but always writing, the biggest thing that I found was like, I didn't know what I didn't know. And I couldn't find people who could tell me, especially being in Europe, you're not in the States, where we have a lot of writing local writing things, right. But sure, I was in Spain and France, and not a lot of people were writing around me. And so I couldn't find it and online forums, you just go down a rabbit hole. And it was just, that's what I wanted. I wanted a community where I could find that. And, you know, once you start creating something, you start seeing it everywhere.



Carissa Andrews 09:15

Sure, yeah. That's law of attraction. Yeah. Like energies are drawn to like energy. So all of a sudden, you see it everywhere. It's like when you have a new car you want to get and all of a sudden you see it, everywhere.



Kat Caldwell 09:27

You should buy it, you know? Yeah. So I really took to like, I need to find this community, I need to figure out how to build this community. And so first part of COVID I was just with different masterminds of like, how did you build your community, whether it was writing or otherwise, and then I launched my community because like, what we need as the writers is a place to ask questions, a place to be like, I tried this and it didn't work. Can you read this for me? Why is Why do I keep writing goodbye with the dash? I don't know that right? I I don't know. How do you spell Gray? I have no idea. Right? All these things. How do you blonde?



Carissa Andrews 10:07

That's another one. Yeah.



Kat Caldwell 10:11

So that's what I did. I came out with the community. What year this 2021. So beginning of 2021, not even just little by little, we have a great community. We talk about writing all the time. Fantastic. So we keep going with it. We have Sprint's we have talks, I don't know everything, and I don't ever pretend to know everything. So I have people coming in all the time editors, you know, how do you look at your stuff through an editor's eye? Why are they

saying these things? You know, what is show? Don't tell me? Right? Lay Misumi people who know how to market better than us, you know, something's going right for them. All these things? There's so many things to know. So many.



Carissa Andrews 10:58

That's fantastic. Now your your community is on your website. Now. Is this part of the one that's a membership where people come in through the membership? That's so cool.



Kat Caldwell 11:06

Yeah, um, we did. I tried a couple of things before that, where I tried free things on on Facebook. And the problem was nobody took it seriously. It was just people wouldn't show up. I would show up with an expert, and nobody would come. So the membership, yeah, they find it on the website, we do most of the things in Slack. So it's not related at all to Facebook, because there are lots of people who don't want to be on Facebook. Yeah, and absolutely. We don't want distractions. You know how you get on Facebook? You're like, I'm only going to look here.



Carissa Andrews 11:43

Yes. That's why I use Buffer.



Kat Caldwell 11:49

Is that just me? No. It's completely completely separate. We do it on Slack. We're actually looking at discord now. Because you can have video inside discord, which is very exciting.



Carissa Andrews 11:59

I think you can do it in Slack as well. Now I've seen like them have like to pull? Yes, I think so. I think they're starting to implement it. Maybe it's just in beta? I'm not quite sure. But



Kat Caldwell 12:08

I think they're trying to keep up with Discord, you



Carissa Andrews 12:11

know, probably yes, absolutely.



Kat Caldwell 12:14

We actually meet a lot on Zoom. And I know everyone's kind of tired of zoom. But the communities from all over the states in Canada, and Spain. Now that I'm thinking of it like that word International, is awesome. So yeah, we get on and we actually write together. So I don't know if you know, if you've ever done sprints before with other people. I think sprinting works really well. I used to do it by myself where I would set a timer and be like, I will not look at my phone for 15 minutes.



Carissa Andrews 12:42

Yes, absolutely.



Kat Caldwell 12:44

When I was addicted to my phone, whatever happened, I want to break I sort of do that. So I thought, well, I'll do it with my writing. Because if you have kids, you just use whatever time you have. I implemented that in during COVID. And that was kind of the first thing of like, Let's get together and right. We started out three times a week. And now we meet eight times a week, 20 hours a sprint a week. You can show up whenever you want. But it's just on zoom you It's weird how it works, just psychologically you walk into the room, and you're like, I might as well write because everyone else is writing.



Carissa Andrews 13:21

Like, yeah, what's that whole that whole energy to have like being able to say, Okay, guys, you know, family, whoever is outside my door, I have a meeting, I'm going to Don't interrupt me, it's so much easier to like you're on a call, they can see you're on a call. And they mean, and they have to stay out. And so it's just easier than to focus because of the fact that you've got that energy of of the ridership going it's it's really cool. Even the Zoom meetings, they're phenomenal.



Kat Caldwell 13:47


Yes. And I know you You talk a lot about mindset, and that I think mindset wise, it's easier to tell your family I'm in a meeting than it is to say, I need to go right now for some reason, and I hope that we get to that point where I need to go right means, you know, carries that weight. But if you need that excuse, I'm in a meeting. You can see I'm in a meeting. There are other people here. Don't please don't interrupt for one hour. Give me one hour.



Carissa Andrews 14:12

Yep, I do that a lot. With my youngest son. He's the only one that kind of interrupts and I will not so much meeting anymore. But I'll say I'm in the middle of writing my chapter. So when I'm done with this chapter, yes, we can go play or Yes, I can get you whatever it is you're asking for. But as you can see, I'm still writing this chapter. And so he always is like, has a chapter


going anywhere words I left. So that's kind of it's cute because he is associating the writing part of it like this is work. Does this still work? But this is the chapter so when I'm done with this chapter, then you can interrupt

 Kat Caldwell 14:42

and then you implement math like if my chapters are 300. And yes, he's like, Oh, no, nevermind, mom.

 Carissa Andrews 14:48


I gotta go. Although he's still he is my math kids. So I don't know he might come. Yeah, he might start doing the work so good.

 Kat Caldwell 14:59

You Give him your launch plan be like, how many days you left? And what percentage is that? Huh? Yeah,

 Carissa Andrews 15:05


right. Give me Give me the ideal date to launch based off of these parameters.

 Kat Caldwell 15:10

I never know, you know.

 Carissa Andrews 15:14

It'll become my Stephen Hawking or something. Oh my gosh. Wouldn't it? Oh, he loves science and space. So you never know. crazier things. searcher? Yes. Research? Absolutely. Oh, gosh. So how many books do you have published? Now? How many are out?

 Kat Caldwell 15:35

So I have three books published and one novella, of course, in the middle of, you know, after I heard about writing the series,

 Carissa Andrews 15:43

now you have new plans.

K

Kat Caldwell 15:45

Yes. I was like... He doesn't know what he's talking about, you know that first like, oh, yeah, he does know what he's talking about. Okay. I wrote a novella. For the my first one, and I'm working on in I'm one of those. I'm not a series reader. And so I hop around a lot. So I have one story that I'm going to finish. And I'm sort of outlining the second historical romance as I, as I finished this contemporary. So I'm like, that's back and forth. I'm trying to focus. But yes, it will. It'll probably be like a mini series, you know. So going the see the friend's story. Yes, they have a point.



Carissa Andrews 16:27

That is awesome. Now, I did notice on your website that you say that you don't write in genres, but you do write good stories. So how do your stories typically come to you? Like, what, what interests you enough? Or, like, do you get inspired? Or do you go, I'd really like to write a book about XYZ. What How did they come to you?

K

Kat Caldwell 16:43

Yeah, that's funny. It's so like, the first one. You know, I'm really interested in people I used to, I used to make up stories about people whenever I was a kid. So Wisconsin, big family and my stepdad. At that time was like Irish eight kids. So you're, you get like, so many cousins that you get lost among the same. are like, Are the children Oh, no.



Carissa Andrews 17:10

Yes. There's like, bazillion of them. And then when you leave the house, you're like, just why is it so quiet? It feels weird. Yeah. Yeah. My mom was Aaron. Patricia O'Connor was her maiden name. So I feel Yeah, it was Irish family with bazillion cousins everywhere all the time.

K

Kat Caldwell 17:27

You only go home if you're bleeding.



Carissa Andrews 17:28

Yeah. Right. And I was usually the one under the willow tree with a book going. She's in the house.

K

Kat Caldwell 17:37

I was a kid too, like, yeah, where everyone is, I know. And I'm making up stories about everyone. I also would read books like whatever, you know, there was no Amazon and books

were expensive and live near a library. So whatever I could get my hands on. And a lot of them were my grandparents books. So for sure. Is anyone, grandparent or another? And some of them are like, not very good. well written. I didn't like the ending. So I would write the end game.



Carissa Andrews 18:04

That's cool.



Kat Caldwell 18:05

Like this, you know? So it's really more about people to me, like I'm very interested in people's, I should have studied psychology, but I wasn't, wasn't smart enough to, to understand that. So a lot of times, it's like, what would happen if this person got into this situation? You know, for the first book, stepping across the desert? I was, I like history. So I was reading about the Barbary pirates, because I found out that So Don Quixote, the guy that Cervantes who wrote it, he was taken by the pirates, because Europe used to, like no one used to live on the coast, because pirates would come up and just go,



Carissa Andrews 18:45

Sure. Oh, my gosh...



Kat Caldwell 18:47

because, you know, it's the 1600s this is what we do. It sounds like that's really strange, you know, and so the Catholic Church would pay ransom. And the Anglican Church was like, No, thanks. Thanks for taking our people off of our hands. Oh, yeah. Isn't that terrible? So that's kind of where it starts, you know, like, what would happen if somebody you know, a woman got in North Africa? Like, how would she get home? And so you know, it never, never follows exactly how you're imagining it. From that very moment. Yeah, but that was the seed of it. So I sort of go like that, like, what would happen if we do this? You know, and I don't know, I guess a person comes to me, and then I have to figure out a story around that.



Carissa Andrews 19:31

Cool. I know Stephen King is very similar to that. I mean, not so much around the people but like the the question, he's talked about that how like, his stories will come based off of the How would you react if XYZ happened, you know, if your pets came back to life, or if you were trapped in the midst or you know, that there's always that inciting incident and everything else goes from there for him. So it's very similar except you start with the character. That's really cool.



Kat Caldwell 18:55

 Kat Caldwell 19:55


Yeah, but you know, you have to find that inciting incidents in that content. For a while, so with this new one that I'm working on, I want to get started with what would happen if two brothers were in a band and like the day before their big concert, like they're finally going to make it. One brother just doesn't show up. And of course, that's like kind of where it starts. And then you have to figure out like, why isn't he showing up? Why is this other brother, you know? And so, really kind of moves from that. And sometimes the story turns out completely different. So one of my issues then is finding that inciting incident, which were, which I wish Stephen King would give me, so

 Carissa Andrews 20:34

maybe it helps when you start with the inciting incident.

 Kat Caldwell 20:39

dilemma people, you know, yeah. If anyone has inciting incidences, let me know.

 Carissa Andrews 20:44

Right, right. Oh, my gosh. So is that your biggest struggle as an author? Or do you? What is your biggest struggle so far as an author, as you're kind of working through the process and trying to figure out your method? Yeah, I

 Kat Caldwell 20:58

think, um, part of it is the inciting incident. Part of it is, I'm okay with reading really long books. And not everyone else is. And I like, I'm kind of a classics girl. You can't write like, the classics anymore. Nobody cares what the wall looks like, like nobody can. You know, so I had, I had to really learn that, like, all these details that I like, or might enjoy, other people don't, and that it's really about the change of the person. And so figuring out, why are they deciding to do these things, and what is then going to cause them change, and then finding an incident that makes sense to force them to change. So for a while, I would struggle with like, there's a difference between storytelling and an anecdote, because you can tell like a story at the dinner table, in which you are expressing yourself through your emotions and your body language. And it's, you know, it's coming across the people sad or funny, or like, what just happened, you know, shocking, in a lot of times, you don't have to finish your sentences. And you don't even have to really finish the story. It sounds like, but that's not a story of book, you know. And so I would, for a few years, it wasn't difficult to figure out stepping across the desert, because it's, it's a romance. And so they have to sort of figure out, you know, leaving their baggage behind. And I knew that with that, when I wanted to talk about, even if your past is pretty bad. You can look at it in such a way of I wouldn't be here in this good spot if I hadn't gone through that bad spot. Because if I had just stayed where I was, I wouldn't have met you, you know. So that was kind of the idea. So I have to find that, you know, what do I want to say with this book? And then how can I stick to that as I'm writing? Because I tend to go off on rabbit trails.



Carissa Andrews 22:59

Are you a pantsers or plotter?



Kat Caldwell 23:01

I am a pantsers. And so I'm learning to plot. I am learning to plot. So my second book was a bit of a low fantasy, but it just sort of like came it started out as a short story. And sort of just came to me. And so I didn't need to plot it as much. But I'm learning that I could save a lot of time if I would learn to plot. So I really like Lisa krones blueprint learning sort of that way of of plotting, because I've tried just plotting out ideas. And because I don't know all the incidences I know more the character, I kind of like this occurrence way of doing it. So story genius is a great book to learn that with. But that's probably my biggest issue is if it doesn't download immediately, it could take five years to write the book, and I don't want it to take five years. So



Carissa Andrews 23:51

absolutely, yeah, take some excavation, sometimes it just kind of digging around and poking holes at it and just playing with it. And I Yeah, and if you're a pantsers sometimes if you don't get all those insights, and you're not quite in the I don't know if the vibe is the right word, but kind of if you're not in that zone of understanding what's happening with characters, it's hard to catch that trail of it and run with it. I could see that Absolutely.



Kat Caldwell 24:14

Are you kind of write the same scene three times. You know, I have to go back and read because I am very disciplined and I write every single day. But like I said, you might not always have that that moment when what you're really in the character. And so the blueprint is helping me with that. But I still sometimes if I'm not feeling it or getting interrupted a lot of come back and be like that's basically the same same just with another person. And learning that deleting is okay, that's yeah, that was a struggle now it's a little bit easier.



Carissa Andrews 24:47

Yeah, it's a little bit painful when you're like, oh, my gosh, it just act 2000 words. But yeah, if it's necessary and it it moves the flow of the characters forward and moves the story forward. I get it. There have been Many times, especially when I'm writing from two different perspectives, where you start thinking, I'm gonna write it from this character's perspective, and you get like halfway through and you're like, this just isn't jiving, I don't know why. And then you try switching to the other character, and all of a sudden it flows fine. You're like, okay, that's right. For two days, it's great. Love when that happens.



Kat Caldwell 25:21

It's hard, especially when you like use word count as a way to measure something. I mean, we,

you know, whatever motivates you. And I like watching all my words stacking up, but I just found that it made it more difficult to, to take away what I, you know, to delete what didn't need to be there. So I had to stop that. Sure.



Carissa Andrews 25:41

That's a good point. Absolutely. Yep. I think for me, the biggest, the biggest motivator is when there's a deadline ahead, and I'm focusing more on chapters than word count, per se. So I'll be but I am a plotter at this point. I'm kind of a hybrid, but I still plot enough that I feel pretty secure in the writing as I'm going forward. So for me, it's more about like, Okay, I got chapter eight done today. Thank God. Yeah, that sort of thing. Where, in the past, when it was more word count based, especially like during the NaNoWriMo, is, it would definitely be a blow if it was at that scene where you're going, Oh, crap. Now I gotta take out all these words and start over. Yeah, absolutely. Now, I've seen that too, that you also create journals and writing prompts. So what inspired you to start those?



Kat Caldwell 26:28

Well, part of that was probably 20. You know, as a young mom, I've always journaled, I really think it's good for you mentally. I also think that we have a lot of stories to tell. So I remember sitting like, so we lived in France at the time with three children, wherever they were, I remember sitting in my bedroom thinking like, I shouldn't journal, I don't have anything to say. And I look back on that, like, I think a lot of us have felt like that at some point. And I really think that we all have stories to tell, you know, my grandmother has passed now. But the older I got, the more I wanted to hear her stories, like, where did you grow up? How did you grow up? How did you deal with that? Like, what was it like to be a young woman in there's a war coming, and she lived in the South. So she had, she lived in Texas, right on the border. So she knew different cultures. But then Japanese men came in and to her, that was a whole different culture, you know, like, not Japanese, sorry, Chinese. And she said, they kept like putting a dime in or a nickel, I guess it would be in the coke bottle would come down. And then they just set the coke bottle aside, and they put it in another because they just wanted to watch the machine. You know, and like her just observing this. So you start asking them stories, and I realized, you know, what she thought was not that big of a deal. To me in the sort of more modern age was just fascinating and a fun story to hear. And how did you meet grandpa on? Yeah, I'm like, three different states away. And so I know that we have stories to tell, but it's hard to look at a blank page and think like, there's nothing special about me, you know, like, I think we just all go through that. And so I wanted to help people not feel like that. It's really important to me, for people to understand that they have stories to tell that most of the stories we write are just retelling stories that have been lived, you know, at some point. So I started with writing prompts, I did a few and COVID just coming out with like PDFs of writing prompts. And then I created a hardcover journal that has 36 prompts, but they're, they're kind of really looking into you, you know, when's the last time you got angry? Did you have you like, were you correct? Are you right? You know, what would you tell the person now? Like having a space to be able to say that? How did you meet your significant other? What's your favorite recipe now? What are you watching now? Like, you know, documenting who you are in this moment. And it's interesting, because I was thinking as we usually do, like, the, the audience would be

somebody like me, mid 30s At the time, 40s, whatever. And I've actually had a lot more response from older women who are realizing that they have stories to tell and it's helping them remember these stories, but just really Yeah,



Carissa Andrews 29:20

I so cool. That is so cool. I love when that happens, especially when maybe they weren't even writers to begin with. And now all of a sudden they realize oh my gosh, I love this process. And I love being able to tell those stories in a way that is well received because I think most like you said, most of the time it is it's like they have these really fascinating ways of dealing with things and if you already have this interest in history or in understanding how people are now listen, you you mix those two together and you've got just this fascinating like visual in your head of like how did this work? I love that.



Kat Caldwell 29:55

Yeah. And you know you have the the separation of time. Think of our mothers and our grandmothers, they live through some crazy times, especially females, you know, right. We're living through some crazy times. And so maybe we don't look at it now, because we're just in the midst. But, you know, I think 20 years from now, we'll be like, huh, that was a weird What was it like to homeschool your kids when there was COVID? Mom? Like what happened? Like, what did you guys? What was that? Like?



Carissa Andrews 30:26

What do you see why these pictures are bald? There might be a reason there. I don't know. Oh, goodness, but I completely agree with you. Yeah. What do you love most about your writing process? Like about being an author? In general? Do? Do you love the exploration of it? Or what? What is it that draws you to it?



Kat Caldwell 30:51

Oh, gosh, I think, um, I have a lot of thoughts in my head. So I think one of the great ways to get rid of them, and to not let them go, you know, make you crazy is to get them out. But I do think it also helps you understand? Society for me, like, understand why people are doing things. Not, you know, not that I understand everything, because that's definitely not true. But I like sitting down and thinking, usually take a person that I've seen, or an action that I've seen, and I can put it to somebody and I can think okay, why would they act like that be now in DC, or Wisconsin girl from a town of 2000 people is just like, This is so different here. So why that will behave the way that they do? You know, why are they so obsessed with going like to high schools that are so expensive, you know, instead of, it's easy to mock each other, it's easy to you know, we know this, right? If you're ever on Twitter, that's sort of how we're, we're becoming as a society. But the truth is, like, people do things for a reason. And most people are pretty normal and pretty nice. And so, right? Why would they do it? And so for me, it's like a process of figuring that out, and how would they react? And I think that's why we read stories, you know, why? Why would somebody act like this? You know, all the myths are like, and you

should behave, because otherwise the Dragon will eat you, obviously, right? It's kind of like, high school. And this is why and you know, and so people have a reason for that. So I like that exploration. And I'm just, I think I've always been sort of in my head. So getting the people out on my head. And sharing that with people is fun. Learning about storytelling, I think is fun. It's just sort of, you know, the more I do it, the more I like it, I just, I like sitting, seeing it come alive on the page and realizing that you're creating this character, you know, that's not perfect, but it's enjoyable to follow. And I don't know, I just really liked being in that moment where you can see the person moving and you're just trying to get it out as quickly as possible. You know,



Carissa Andrews 32:59

I do too. I love that as well. It's so much fun and to know that you're like the the conduit kind of for for whatever it is that they're gonna do whatever crazy things are gonna say whatever is going to end up happening. It's just such a such a thrill to be in that moment. Absolutely.



Kat Caldwell 33:16

Yeah. And to know that you're not actually, you know, a godlike figure like, they will not do. No, yeah, you you're trying to force them to do and like they won't do it. And that's so weird.



Carissa Andrews 33:28

Yeah, it's like, You're not a kid. What are you doing?



Kat Caldwell 33:31

It's like, No, I'm the writer. And yeah, the character won't do it. And so it's a fascinating process. We like that one completely different way than I've had.



Carissa Andrews 33:42

I've had that happen so many times. We're like, I'll be writing a different book. And another character is like, hello, don't forget about me. We got to do this thing. And you're like, No, like your two books from now. Go away.



Kat Caldwell 33:55

That That's so frustrating when they do that. Hello, I'm right here. Knock knock. Like I only have 24 hours a day.



Carissa Andrews 34:02

Okay. It's only right. I cannot clone my brain as of yet. So wait a second. Oh, gosh, if we could

clone ourselves, that would be frightening. Oh, wow. I have noticed obviously, over the past couple of years here that you host a pencils and lipsticks, podcast, pencil and lipstick. There we go podcast. So before we talk about the podcast itself, I gotta ask you though, how did that name come up? Because I don't know that I've ever caught that.



Kat Caldwell 34:31

So I was with a friend of mine. So I was um, it's 2019. And he was sort of trying to figure out his where he wanted to take his business or, you know, he wanted to create a business. And he he was a hairstylist at the time. Don't worry, this goes somewhere else my hair and he's like, I really want them to create this podcast because I have all these ideas for this podcast for hair stylists and because he wants had to like, you know, teach hairstylist that it was more than just hair. I was like, Huh, I'm gonna steal that idea. Okay, what would it be like? And so we're brainstorming, okay, what would I do? For a podcast? I'm just, I'm a writer, it's 2019. So I had, I was coming out with my second book and the journal. It's like, alright, what I still have a lot to learn. I'm realizing, you know, how to get the book in front of people. I'm doing all the book funnel things. All right. But about a podcast, and I realized for I'm, I'm a bit of an introvert as writer sometimes. I'm, I'm pretty cool with asking people questions, if it's within a context of something. Sure. I'm not going to just call you up and be like, how did you do this? But I could get you on a podcast. So he's like, Yeah, but you need a really good name. You know, Caldwell podcast. I was like, I don't like that at all. Right? What would talk about books and so we're brainstorming a lot and I came in with really bright red lipstick on and, and he was like, if you get your pencil and your lipstick, and as I call it, pencils and lipstick, actually hated the name. He was like, No, call it that no one will understand it as like, I'm gonna do it.



Carissa Andrews 36:18

Like Yeah. Oh, that's epic. I love that so much. Oh, I love when when names come about that are like that, where it's just as unusual, unique way to be able to merge them together. And they it's like, it's just perfect, though. Because it encompasses the energy and authenticity of who you are. So I think that's just so amazing. That's so cool. And I love that he hated it. Because it's like, yeah, see how no girl?



Kat Caldwell 36:47

No good at all. I was like, Well,



Carissa Andrews 36:50

I love it. And I love that you stuck to your guns that you were like, No, this is it. That was the that was the right one. I love that.



Kat Caldwell 36:56

titles, but I was like, No, I think I think that's good.



Carissa Andrews 37:00

Yeah, yeah. It's okay. Now I feel I feel complete with that. It's awesome. I love that. So when it comes to the podcast itself, then how is it different from other writing podcasts? And like, what I guess called you to actually create it then was Was it because of your friend doing one for the hairstyles? Or was there something that was kind of playing at you before then? I



Kat Caldwell 37:23

had been listening to podcast, I really like the medium, especially as you know, my kids are older now. But as a mom, like, oh, my gosh, we've moved to Dallas and you live in the car. And it's interesting enough, like in 2015, you paid for streaming, you know, like, like, your data would get used up really quickly. It's crazy how things change so fast. Yeah. So podcasts you could download, that you can delete. So I really love the medium. And so 2019 early, we're talking about it, how would I do it? How would I figure it out? And my brother's an artist. And so what I was realizing, trying to figure out my business was that I could find I could learn a lot from small business owners, but they were not creative business owners. So there was a difference. And there was something lacking. And I was like, Okay, that's great that that's how you sell, whatever. But I sell books. Like, no, it's the same thing. I said, No, it's really not like, there's something lacking. And I didn't know what it was. I don't have a business degree. You know, my husband does, but he's always working. And he was like, I don't know.



Carissa Andrews 38:27

You're like, you're so helpful.



Kat Caldwell 38:28

I love you, honey. Like I just need to ask you, but I need to figure this out. There are forums, yes. But a lot of times you get really snarky remarks from like, right. I don't you know that already? Oh, I don't know.



Carissa Andrews 38:42

Stop working for me a while ago.



Kat Caldwell 38:46

I cannot read your thoughts from the country away. I actually put it out on some forum writing forum I was on in Facebook. Like if I started a podcast, would anyone want to come on? David Rawlings from Australia was like all come on. How about next Monday?



Carissa Andrews 39:06

What's gonna be fast? Let's do it. I don't know what's happening right now.



Kat Caldwell 39:09

tends to be what I do. So that's what I did. And at first, at first I did anybody who was doing a creative business, how, how can we help each other out? There's a collaboration between it. And part of that was just to get people on the show and learning. And so it was a lot of authors, but it was a lot of other creatives like muralists and artists. I had some fantastic people, and they were very interesting to listen to. But I realized, like, about a year and a half ago, a little bit less than that, that I was getting more and more writers and really what I was more interested in was writing and at first I thought, well, there's lots of writing podcasts out there. But I think what's different about mine is I don't have a specialty more than I find myself being like the middle one. I mean, I can get that person and I can get the audience and then they can talk. So cool. Yeah, so I see myself more is that I don't have, you know, like writers Inc, they those guys know a lot. You know a lot about mindset and things like that you have a lot of teaching that you can do solo and I do a lot more interviews because I, I'm fascinated by a lot of things and asked me things about surrounds getting kidnapped. And I could probably tell you, but not everyone wants to know.



Carissa Andrews 40:31

Those people don't listen to that podcast episode, it's fine.



Kat Caldwell 40:37

So I love learning from other people. How did you do it? And I think a lot of it is asking questions. So that's what I do. How did you come up with this? How did you get it? I just had somebody writing a memoir. And it's like, that sounds really hard. Just mentally, how did you deal with the criticism, people have opinions about you. And we talk about that. And so that's a bit what's different. We, we might talk about people's books, but we talk more about the journey and the questions that other people have, and then what they have to offer offer, because a lot of people have amazing groups, amazing coaching amazing products. And we just, we need to be connected with them. And I think slowly, you might have a mindset group and somebody else might have a mindset group and you're going to connect with some people and they'll connect with other people, you know, there's enough people in the world. Thanks, everyone, so



Carissa Andrews 41:30

and you can be connected to more than one group. Right? It's like being a reader. It's you can read more than one author's books and enjoy all of them. And so it's it's that same process of, I don't really think any of us, especially in the creative industry, we're not really in competition with one another because we're all doing things just a little bit differently. And they all enhance everything that everyone does. Yeah, so yeah,



Kat Caldwell 41:58

I agree. I agree. And there's writing coaching, we can always learn writing, you know, I mean, I was that young person that thought, well, I have a talent. You know, like 20 year old, I know how to write a book, I just finished a book. So obviously, I know everything.



Carissa Andrews 42:14

Because don't all like young adults. I'm pretty sure they do.



Kat Caldwell 42:19

What I'm doing and you know, you become more humble as you get older. No idea what I'm doing.



Carissa Andrews 42:25

All of a sudden, it's like, oh, I didn't know that. I totally get that. So you've, you've got a course called prompted. So did, obviously you have this love about the prompts and being able to do the writing sprints. So which came first? Was it the membership? Or was it the course that came first?



Kat Caldwell 42:49

So the membership came first? See, this is I have a hard time focusing I might be, you know, yes, I have a very hard time focusing. So I think I was doing it all at the same time, I realized that, you know, I was doing sprints, I was doing free sprints, and they were prompted. And so people and so that's kind of how I just grew my audience, like I'm willing to be here having this prompt, and we're going to sprint to it and, and I've liked prompts, I think they're really fun. Just, you know, I, I look around me, and I tried to think like, this guy was in Dallas had a mannequin head on his antenna, you know



Carissa Andrews 43:32

Like, what?



Kat Caldwell 43:33

That looks really dystopian and like, Okay, what's going on here, you know, and so I wrote a little flash fiction about, you know, instead of Roman soldiers with their spears, like, they're in these cars with heads on sticks. I think I was watching things at the time. I was like, well, look at that. I love I think people's, you know, sometimes you get trapped by your own brain, you

need like, Another prompt. story today has great prompts. She has decades of prompts a decade of prompts and her on her blog. So I that, you know, people liked that. And I, okay, I'll do a course about it. And it just took me a while. And in the meantime, I realized in the membership group, everyone had their own project. So we're all writers, we all have a book we want to finish. And so using the time to work on our x, our project was more beneficial than constantly having prompts for them. And so I started to diverge that just make that into a course that people can find 28 prompts, so I mean, 28 days, but you can do it whenever you want. And then the group is really more about coming in with whatever you want to write. I mean, there's no you can write your blog if you want to. Sometimes we write our newsletters. Yeah, they did diverge a little bit that way.



Carissa Andrews 44:53

That's really cool, though. I love I love that because I don't think there's a lot of courses out there when it comes to being prompted and like how the content The Sprint's and prompts can really, like you said, help you get out of your, like the box your brain kind of gets put in. Because we do we kind of get into these habits of like how we view the world or how we think our writing should work, or all of those things. So sometimes just having that, number one, that opportunity to sprint, because that helps you stop, you know, the internal editor and all of the other things that go along with not sprinting, but having the opportunity to write about something that isn't even tied to maybe what you're already planning on writing or whatever, that gives you the opportunity to open those doors and kind of travel down some of those side quests, so to speak, where you're, you're learning something new about your style of writing, or how you want to write or maybe it gives you a different idea for the story that you're already writing that you would never have thought of before.



Kat Caldwell 45:48

Yes, it's weird how our brain works, if you get a prompt. I mean, the the videos might be three to four minutes, max of me just explaining what it is, you know, I think one of them is like a birthday party, you know, and I give something about it. And it's weird how your brain can focus right then on that one thing? Yeah, 15 minutes, you just write, you know, and you might just leave it in your journal just fine. Maybe use some new vocabulary or whatever. And some of them are like, try to write it as pompous as possible, you know, just change the voice up a little bit. But like you said, all of a sudden, after that 15 minutes, you might be like, Oh, I know exactly what my protagonist has to do.



Carissa Andrews 46:29

Yeah. Isn't it weird when you think about it, that you're a pantsner, where you could be technically like, if you if you viewed your outline, and did like, let's say a chapter by chapter synopsis, that could be each chapter could be your prompt, so that your brain could focus and then go off on your sprint? Yeah, interesting.



Kat Caldwell 46:49

Yes. And wouldn't it be fun to have like an extra thing if you say okay but today we're going

Yes. And wouldn't it be fun to have like an extra thing, if you say, okay, but today, we're going to start out, I'm going to write it, you know, this is going to happen, but I'm going to write it from this character's point of view. And then I'll rewrite it because I mean, I think we're so consumed with, like getting our books out there so quickly, that sometimes we don't have fun with it. And so like, do it from the first person's point of view, if you write in third person, or vice versa, you get to use that your readers will want that, like, Would you like the scene from the five year olds point of view? You know, like, yeah, of course,



Carissa Andrews 47:20

yeah. I've actually broken the the mold a little bit with this new series that I'm doing right now. Similarly, like that, with accidental elf, I have everything from like, I'm used to writing in first person present tense, because I like the immediacy of it. And I like the unreliable narrator aspect of it. But when I switch to the male perspective, to stoness perspective, I use third person past tense, because I wanted like just that shift, I wanted it to be enough of a jolt that it's different. And so but it's fun for me, because now I'm getting to play in a different style of writing that I don't normally write in. So it's kind of flexing that muscle. And I'll admit, it takes longer to write those scenes. But it's fun to do, because I don't normally write like that. So it's neat.



Kat Caldwell 48:04

Yes. And Lisa crone actually says to write some of your backstory in the first person, if you write in third person, so I write third person pass. And so I did that. I was like, Oh, this is really interesting. And it's, it's not going to necessarily go in the book like that. But it helped me understand the character and now it's in my head. It's developed and yet I mean, you just handed out as you know, extra content to your readers and that's always fun.



Carissa Andrews 48:31

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, it's so cool. Okay, so where can my audience go to find out more about you about your podcast your membership your course where do they go in order to learn all the good fun stuff?



Kat Caldwell 48:42


All defensive? They can go to Kat Caldwell with KATcaldwell.com. I pretty much has everything there. I hope to organize that that website a little bit but it probably won't go down ever.




Carissa Andrews 48:58

So don't get your hopes up guys just start thinking there is also google or Go to my show notes and you will you can find everything there as well.




 Kat Caldwell 49:07

I mean, I'm on all the social media I'm mostly on Instagram but um yeah, cat Caldwell has everything the courses and membership if if they want, you know, specific questions, they can DM me on Twitter, or Instagram. They can sign up for my newsletter there I answer all the reef you know the replies. But if you want to just try it, you get two weeks free. You can come in and you can sprint for two weeks you can we have mass marketing, masterminds on Fridays. Can see if it's for you.

 Carissa Andrews 49:36

So cool. No strings attached. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for being here today. I'm so glad that you were able to take the time and tell us all about all the awesome things that you're doing. I know I personally love your podcasts and I love all the different like aspects that you're doing. I didn't realize about the courses and or the course and the membership until I was dicking around a little bit for this though, which is super weird because I'm like, How did I miss this? before, but I'm so glad that you're able to be here. Thank you so much for joining us.

 Kat Caldwell 50:05

Thank you for having me. Carissa.

 Carissa Andrews 50:07

Oh my gosh, guys, wasn't that a great podcast episode. I love the way that Kat is so interested in the storytelling that everyone you know has within them, whether it is understanding that they themselves have stories that you have stories to tell, or just helping to suss out those stories if you're getting stuck. I think her ideas are surrounding and about like the prompted course and her membership in order to help you join up with a community to be able to ask questions and get involved and to sit down and work separately together by writing and doing the sprint's I think it's she's developing such a unique and wonderful community that I think many indie authors, especially those of us who are a little bit more introverted, can really benefit from. So I hope you are going to check out Kat and all of the information that she was talking about today, her books, her membership, her course, head over to KatCaldwell.com. Or if you want to get all of the links and kind of check them all out and know that you're in the right place, head over to authorrevolution.org/140. And you can dig into the show notes and everything will be provided right there for you. You can also download the transcript of today's interview and just get a feel a little bit more for cat. In fact, make sure you're checking out sometimes the podcast show notes because if I have an interview like this, and we've opted into a video, the video version of it will also be available. So make sure that you're checking that out as well if you want to see Kat in person or see some of the other interviewees in person as we're having our conversation. So hopefully you've had a wonderful week, hopefully your July INDIE-pendence month is kicking off well. We are already mid month I can't even believe it. In fact, today, as I'm recording this outro it is Prime Day on Amazon. So I've already put out information about how we independent authors have our month, not just a day, we have a month, we're doing awesome things. So I do hope that you will also check out the independence month sale that I have going on with all the courses because I really hope that you will level up your author career and see the transformation that is available to you if you

just give yourself the insights and the breakthroughs that I know that you've been asking for. In the meantime, I hope you have a wonderful week. I hope you write tons of words. I hope all of the fun things that you're trying to get written on the page or planned out are all coming together. So go forth and start your author revolution.