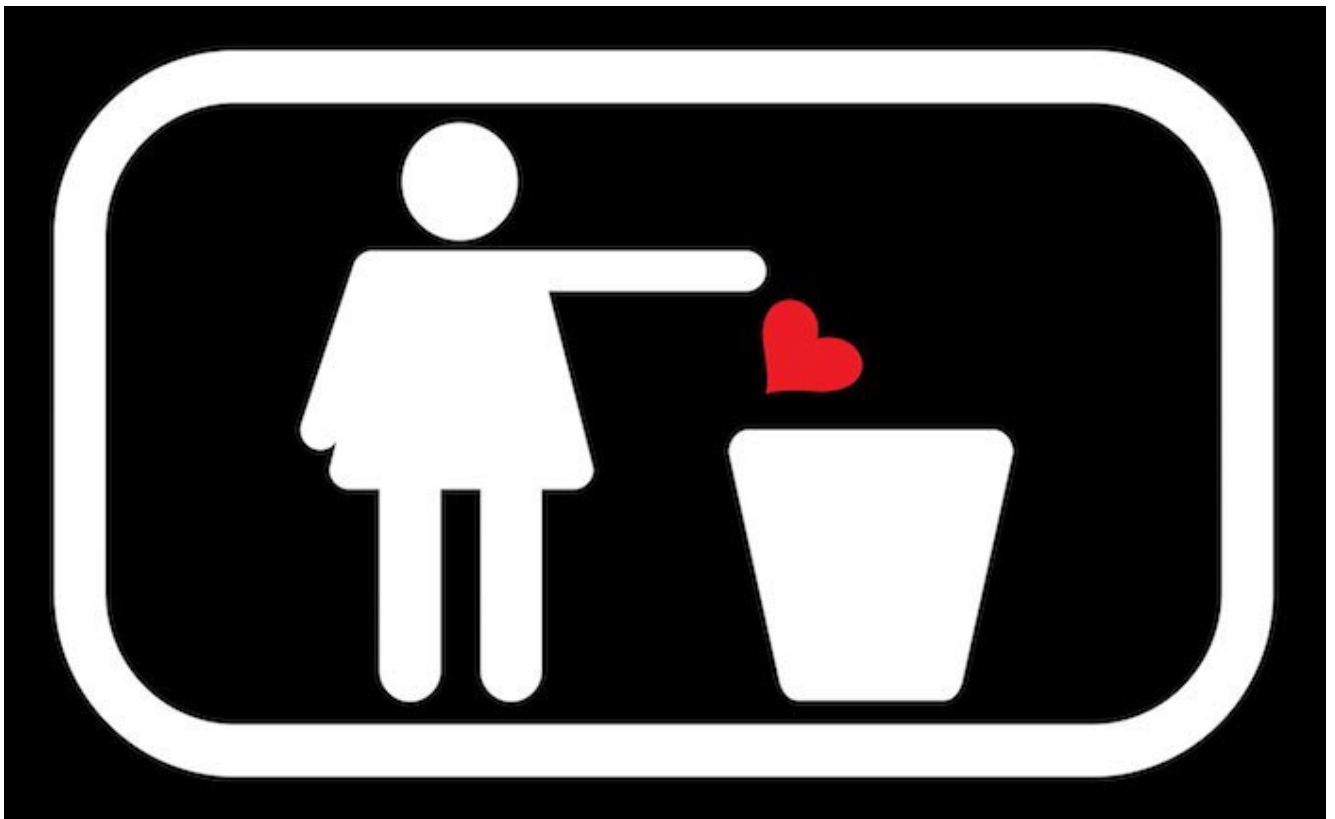


Reader Question: What if you fall out of love with a script?

[Scott Myers](#)

“What about a script you fall out of love with after 2–3 drafts, and just can’t finish? Put it aside for now or just push through?”

This is impossible to answer in the abstract because there are so many different potential meanings to the words “fall out of love”. So let me create **three different scenarios**, speak to them, and perhaps you fall into one of these categories.



Scenario 1: The writer has fallen out of love with their

script... because they have grown tired of it. It's lost its sheen. Whatever magic the writer felt about it from the point of story conception has waned to the point where they are bored.

Strategies: Whenever I work with writers just starting out with a new idea, I always ask them this: *What is your emotional connection to this story?* Two reasons why: (1) This is a critical threshold to cross in picking a story to write because if you do not have a strong resonance with the material, it's like whatever affinity you have for it will wane. If, on the other hand, you DO have a strong connection to the story, the energy deriving from that resonance can help to push you through the writing and rewriting slog. (2) By putting into words your specific connection to the story, you will have in writing something you can refer back to in the event you lose your focus or energy.

Whether you wrote down something about your emotional connection to the story at the beginning of your story-crafting process or not, try to recall that initial association you had with it. Perhaps you can build on that, rekindle your original flames of inspiration, reminding yourself of precisely WHY you were attracted to the story in the first place.

Scenario 2: The writer has fallen out of love with their script... because their attention has been drawn to a *different* story. This new idea seems full of potential, much cooler than this *old* idea which now seems rather stale.

Strategies: Situations may arise in which a writer can reasonably make the argument their enthusiasm for a new idea justifies them switching from an old one, at least for the time being. The Coen brothers famously did this when they were stuck writing *Miller's Crossing*, then after going to a screening of *Baby Boom* — of all films! — they were inspired to write *Barton Fink*, which they pounded out in about a month, then returned to *Miller's Crossing*, now able to finish it.

However, be honest with yourself: How much of the allure of the new idea is based on legitimate reasons like its marketability, your connection to it, your enthusiasm for it, and how much is a product of [The Shiny Object Syndrome](#)? I've known a couple of writers who have constantly started scripts, gotten through a draft or two, or not at all, then set the old script aside to try their hand at a new one, something REALLY EXCITING!!! Then while writing *that* one, fell in love with *another* new idea... and so on until they end up not finishing anything at all. Obviously that's a bad scenario, one to be avoided at all costs.

If, on the other hand, you honestly think you are NOT under the sway of The Shiny Object Syndrome AND you believe this new idea is a killer one AND you can identify a strong emotional resonance with that narrative material, then maybe it's best for you to switch projects. Hopefully, you'll come back to the current one after you finish the new script in a revitalized state and bring a fresh perspective to the old material.

Scenario 3: The writer has fallen out of love with their script... because the rewriting process has led them astray so much, they have no idea if what they've written is any good or not. By the third draft, it's probably safe to say that a writer should have a pretty good sense of the story, so if they do feel lost, that's an effective way to squash one's affection for the story.

Strategies: Two things. When I asked Eric Heisserer how many drafts of *Arrival* did he write, he told me this: "100." Yes, a hundred drafts. Now most of those were just tweaks here and there, one scene, two scenes, but still he probably rewrote the script substantially enough to qualify as a legitimate new draft at least 20 times. Hell, M. Night Shyamalan didn't discover that Malcolm Crowe was dead until the 5th draft of *The Sixth Sense*. So the first thing is this: Suck it up, dude! The old adage, "Writing is rewriting" applies more to screenwriting than perhaps any other form of narrative. Two or three drafts? Come on, man, you've probably barely scratched the surface of your story.

Commit yourself to one more draft whether you're in love with your story or not. Sometimes... shit, MOST times writing is hard. We hate ourselves, we hate our stories, we feel lost. But then there are those days when it all flows, the pages make sense, and somehow simply through sheer effort, our god damn story emerges as this wondrous thing.

Okay, so that was Bad Cop. Here's Good Cop's advice: Find one character in your story you most identify with. Or feel is the most interesting. Compelling. Fascinating. Better yet,

you connect with them in some fundamental way. Think: You're not writing your story, you're writing THEIR story, that character. It's you and them in a relationship.

In between writing sessions, do some character work with that individual. Interview them. Interrogate them. Get into their head-space and do some free writing of their monologues. What are they feeling, what are they saying. Lean INTO them. Become wrapped up in who they are, why they are, and how they are.

If they are the Protagonist, great. That makes it easy. If not, no problem. As far as THEY are concerned, THEY are the Protagonist of the story, so be especially attuned to their take on things. Again lean into THEM.

Bottom line: You want to do EVERYTHING you can to get that script into a marketable state. If you do decided to set it aside, get on your calendar and mark a date no more than six months down the road where you will pick up that script and pound out the next draft.

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