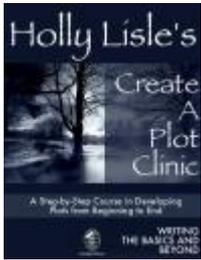


Cover Art: Plot Clinic

By Holly Lisle



Wanted something shadowy and just a little bit sinister—plotting being the arcane, twisty art that it is. This is what I came up with.

Back to work. The words, the words are calling...

And I definitely must revise the **Character Clinic** cover to match the rest of the covers. Soon. Very soon.

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Pages finished

By Holly Lisle

I'm on page 63, love what I got, brain is frazzled. So I'm going to take a short break, put together the **Create A Plot** cover, and come back to this when my eyes aren't crossed and see if I can get another set of pages done. The Air Force Kid and his wife are coming for a visit for a couple of days, and it would be nice to have the time off for visiting.

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Quick note on the rewrite

By Holly Lisle

I just now, right now, figured out why the bard with his haunted harp and the silver huntress with her blind hounds were chasing the kids. (I thought I knew all along, of course.) It's terrific, it surprised the socks off of me, and I can't wait to get to the scenes where I get to start using this stuff. It just makes the ending all that much more explosive.

Thrilled, I return to the manuscript slog ... which this time doesn't feel like a slog as much as it does an adventure.

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Working since way before dawn

By Holly Lisle

I've made my words for the day.

It's been hard going. My RPE (Required Pages to Edit) for my one-pass revision requires that I edit 30 pages a day to get this done in time to type in all the edits and new additions.

For those interested in writing neep, it breaks down like this:

256-page manuscript divided by 9 working days equals 28.4 ppd

rounded up to 30 ppd to provide a bit of a buffer.

Nine working days to do the write in—takes me to March 7th

Ten working days to do the type-in—takes me to March 21st

Five working days to print, proof, mail—to March 28th.

Deadline is the end of March.

Honestly, thirty pages of write-in a day doesn't seem like much when I'm just thinking about it. I've *written* thirty pages a day before—occasionally on a daily basis. It ain't fun, but I've done it.

But I noted that this was going to be a large edit, and so far, my hand-written new material is running at a ratio of 1:2 with existing material. If this trend continues, my 50,000-word first draft will expand to 75,000 words in send-off draft, which is a bit more than I'd bargained for. Editing a draft is tougher than writing it, too, because the one-pass process requires so much more out of me than putting down fresh new words. I can make all the mistakes I need to make in first draft. Second draft being final draft, though, all those mistakes have to go away in this round.

But I got the pages and I'm happy with my fixes so far. The new opener is better, and the characters are coming out more clearly right from the beginning this time. It's going well. Eight days to go.

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Revision, the Friday Snippet, and the next Clinic

By Holly Lisle

I started ripping **The Ruby Key** apart in my head about an hour after I finished the first draft. I was going to start in on it on Friday, but Friday rolled around and I realized I wasn't quite ready. So I made myself not look at the book until today (actually, I'm printing it out to work on right now, so I still haven't looked at it).

But that didn't stop me from thinking about it. I love the general story and there are parts of what I've written that will undoubtedly go almost unchanged from first draft to print. But the first draft has problems. Almost all first draft manuscripts do.

I'm not happy with the **depth of any of the characters except for Genna**, the protagonist. Both Yarri and Danrith need to be much more involved.

There are a couple of **scenes that, from memory, feel to me like just running around**. As I read through them over the next few days, I might find that I've put more into them than that, but at the moment I don't think I have.

The first chapter isn't where I need to start the book. I like the chapter and it still feels solid to me, but **the story actually begins back at the house**, just after twilight, with a scratching at the shuttered and barred window of Genna and Dan's house.

I don't think I've used **the blind hounds and the warrior-haunted harp** to best advantage. They can be scarier than they are, and they need to be. I like what I did with the bard, but I don't care much for the wobbly line the silver woman takes.

The audiomaerist, now that I know her deal, needs to have some of that foreshadowed. Or maybe reverted back to what I'd planned for her in the beginning. And I have no clue yet why she and the cat were connected, and I'm not sure if that's a tangled web that needs to be worked out in this story, or held over as an important thread in the next one.

In any case—Friday rolled around and I tried to figure out what to post for the **Friday Snippet**, and discovered that between things I knew I was going to change, and things that I think are going to stay the same but that have massive spoilers in them, I didn't have anything I could comfortably post. And I realized that it's going to take me a good part of March to tear **The Ruby Key** apart line by line and put it back together again the way I can see now that it needs to be. So for me the **Friday Snippet** is going to have to be sidelined until I start on the next fiction.

Zette, however, had a cool idea about the **Friday Snippet** being a *thing*, in which published and unpublished writers would post a short cut from their current work in progress. She'd maintain the list, and folks could go to her site and go through it, checking to see who'd put up something new. I love the idea, and want to be in on it.

Finally, comments on the **Create A World Clinic**, and the clinic that's actually going to be next. **Create A World**, as I've envisioned it, will require quite a few illustrations, and in PDF form, illustrations increase the file size immensely. My objective has been to keep every book under 2 MG so that everything will be accessible to folks on low-bandwidth connections, and so far, I've kept very close to that. The books don't clog buyers' e-mail boxes, they don't take a lifetime to download on dial-up.

So I have to refigure how to present that particular clinic, or how to get it to low-bandwidth readers. In the meantime, I want to do another clinic. And the **Create A Plot Clinic** looks

like the way to go. The other books look like they have good support, but **Plot** came in with a compelling lead, and a few voices of desperation.

So that will be my next project if I don't hear back from Anna Genoese with her **Hawkspar** revision requests before then.

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Ruby Key first draft is done

By Holly Lisle

Landed the ending, and I'm already thinking of the scenes I need to add to fill this thing out. And I'm excited about what I already have, which is always a plus.

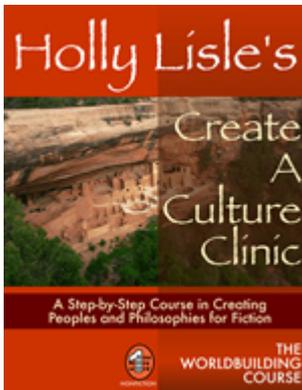
I'm going to give myself a day off to think about other things, though. Then I'll print the manuscript and One-Pass revise it. My final goal will be 60,000 words or greater. My objective will be to maintain very tight suspense.

Was a very, very good work day.

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Create A Culture Clinic now in print

By Holly Lisle



Here's the link to the print version of the Create A Language Clinic.

And one to the print storefront, in case you want to browse.

The print version is a ringbound workbook, the same as the character and language clinics. Very happy to finally have it finished, and I hope those of you who prefer print books to e-books find it useful.

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Which writing clinic do you need most?

By Holly Lisle

Most or soonest.

{democracy:4}

Feel free to suggest clinics I haven't thought of, and to expand on your choices or reasons wanting a particular clinic in comments.

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Wandering Ways

By Holly Lisle

I'm almost done with the first draft of **The Ruby Key**. Due to the fact that I left out a lot of important and exciting things in the middle portion of the story (because I write very, very tight in first draft and almost always have to expand in revision) I'm going to end up wrapping the first draft at around 55K, and then going back and adding in. The story might go a bit longer than that, but my editor, Lisa, assured me that organic writing and running long was okay with her, so long as I didn't go over 100K. Since I'm pretty sure I can do what I need in 65K, I think I'm good to go on this one.

But that's not all I've been doing. **C–The Secret Project** is back in my life. I cannot leave it alone, which tells me that I shouldn't try. I'll give you the first two paragraphs; maybe those will tell you why this story is still eating at me after years of playing with it. (Maybe not. If not, then I concede the possibility of insane obsession. Otherwise, I'm holding out for *sane* obsession.)

Down the red clay road, dirt bone-dry and hard beneath her feet, with dust kicking up behind the heels of her cowboy boots, Kay strode with purpose. Blood on her palms, tears on her face. In her pocket, two wedding rings, a silver pin, an

old harmonica. In her right hand, a shovel.

Sheâ€™d left her purse in the car sheâ€™d abandoned a mile back. All her ID was in it: credit cards, driverâ€™s license, birth certificate, a load of things she was leaving behind. This was the last shot, last time, last gasp, last hope. And how much hope was it really, hoping to be reborn but being ready to die, too, if that was the way things went?

I'm slowly putting together the paperback workbook version of **Worldbuilding 2: Culture Clinic**.

And I'm outlining **WB3: Build-A-World Clinic**.

Add in homeschooling the kidlet, and I've been a shadow of my former self online. But beneath the silence, a lot is going on.

Oh. And the business-related stress that had be tied up in knots for a couple of weeks? Resolved, all good, and there is a reason you want the very best agent you can get—and a reason I am grateful every day to have the best agent there is: You the writer are one lone, insignificant flyspeck in the universe of megacorp publishing—the industry that eats its young—and when you're making deals with the giants, you want a master duellist negotiating for you.

ADDED LATER: Forgot the **Sympathy for the Devil** screenplay. Doing that for the film school kid, who's finished film school, is casting for her second short, and to whom I promised a screenplay. I figure one from one of her favorites of my books would be good. At the moment, I'm notecarding that, which means lots of words but no visible progress.

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Friday Snippet: The Ruby Key

By Holly Lisle

Genna, Dan, Yarri and the cat travel the moonroad the old woman told them to seek.

We had barely caught our breaths than the cat said, "And now Coldfall," and something in my heart contracted at the sight of the red sparks that spun around him, brightening and tightening until they coalesced into a terrifying spiral.

"I don't want to," Yarri whispered. Dan clutched my hand, and I grabbed Yarri's arm, and I dragged the three of us forward and into that spiral before the road could slide away from us. And before I lost my courage.

Things moved around us as we fell. Creatures, shadows, glowing eyes that stared at us in bodiless pairs. Broken people, twisted animals. Monsters. They slid past us or dropped behind us as we raced by, and some of them opened mouths and screamed without sound, and others reached out to try to grab us, though their hands slid through us as if either they or we were made of nothing but smoke.

And some saw us and laughed, and even though I could no more hear the laughter than the screams, it was somehow worse. It was as if they knew—absolutely knew—what was about to happen to us.

I yearned for wings, or a way off the road. I wished Dan still had Papa's sword.

I tried to breathe, but my terror clogged my throat. Hands grasping, and eyes staring, and shadows wrapping themselves around the three of us and trying to slip inside, as if they

wanted our bodies to wear like coats.

We crashed out of the road, all three of us feeling filthy and ill-used, and the cat landed in a heap on us, hissing and spitting and with his claws out.

“Up, quickly,” he said. “The old woman said this was the way, though I didn’t want to believe her. This way, though, nothing good lies between her and what we seek.” He got to his feet, and stared over my shoulder, and puffed himself to twice his size.

“Run,” he whispered.

We did not look behind us. I could feel something there. Something big. Wet-mouthed. Hungry. I could hear the moist noises of its movement. I got to my feet and bolted after the cat that streaked away from us, and Dan followed me, and I hoped that Yarri followed him. I could not hear her when she ran, so I did not know, and I feared that if I looked behind to check on her, I’d see the thing making those wet, crunching, smacking sounds...and then Dan passed me and Yarri shot past Dan and I was the one at the back.

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