

Discord and Rhyme: My Cowboys Have Always Been Heroes

written by Holly

July 31, 2008

By Holly Lisle

My husband has a new column at The Escapist. Take a look.

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Not Dead. Definitely Swamped

written by Holly

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I hadn't planned on the week following registration for How To Think Sideways being a week of troubleshooting all the many things that broke on the system software; thought we'd tested everything, but you only think that until a course goes live and real students start taking it.

Anyway, this week I'm playing catch-up writing lessons. Didn't get a newsletter out yesterday, didn't get a handful of other things up and running, either. And am 600+ emails behind again. That's probably going to get worse before it gets better.

The lessons are wonderful to write, though, so my work process for the next few months is all stuff I love. And thanks to copious notes, I'm making steady progress.

C has started nagging at me though—I have to write that book. Soon. It's gotten so good inside my head I *have* to tell it.

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The Dark Knight

written by Holly

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How often does Hollywood get it right?

Having paid to see movies this year I'm now ashamed to confess I saw even in previews, as well as some that I held in desperately high hopes only to be saddened by the lack of heart/ stupid story/ flat-lined characters/ idiotic excess of gimmees (the gimmee is, you know, the ONE thing for which you'll willingly suspend disbelief, which dies the instant it becomes TWO things for which you must suspend disbelief, and is diced into a thousand tiny bits, cooked on a barbecue, fed to the neighbor's dog, and recycled coming out the other end to be spread on toast when it becomes a DOZEN gimmees—Indy I'm looking at YOU on this one), I was about to say that Hollywood poisons everything it touches.

So who made **The Dark Knight**, where did they hide while they made it, and how did they keep their masterpiece away from the idiots responsible for Jar-Jar Binks, anything starring Mike Meyers or Adam Sandler, the skip-the-movie-buy-the-action-figure **Hulk**, and scenes starring aliens, shaky cameras, and Central Park?

It's as if... as if... as if someone actually read Frank Miller's

brilliant **The Dark Knight**, and not only read it, but GOT it, and not only GOT it, but then transferred the heart and the soul from those drawn pages to the screen. And then beat all corporate-bean-counting-soulless-hack movie execs with baseball bats repeatedly and brutally until they left their sticky “put-a-cute-action-figure-in-for-the-kiddies” mitts off.

It's brilliant. Heart, soul, meaning, characters, thought, emotion, philosophy. No one is dumbed down, no one is softened, and none of the rough edges have been sanded off to make it palatable or inoffensive to those easily offended. We are who we choose to be, **The Dark Knight** says, and we must claim both our victories and our failures. Viktor Frankl showed us that circumstances do not excuses make, that in the end we decide not what happens to us but who we are when it's done. **The Dark Knight** has more special effects, but presents the same truth.

And it left me with a line seared into my mind. “Sometimes, people deserve to have their faith rewarded.”

Sometimes they do. So go. See it.

Once in almost never, Hollywood gets one right.

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Think Sideways Launches On Tuesday

written by Holly
July 31, 2008

By Holly Lisle

I meant to mention this here yesterday, but I'm swamped getting everything ready for the Think Sideways classes to start next Tuesday.

Last night, after uncountable (and unspeakable) attempts to explain the course, I FINALLY figured out the right name for it, the name that describes what Thinking Sideways actually is.

How to Think Sideways: Career Survival School for Writers

The cutoff date for pre-registering is Sunday night at 7 PM.

Registration will start (for pre-registered members ONLY) on Tuesday, July 22, at NOON EDT.

Pre-registering will make you eligible the Charter Student benefits, and folks who are pre-registered for the course also get a 24-hour head start on getting in.

I hugely expanded my seating limit (from the 50 seats planned) to 300 seats per class. And I decided to allow 600 folks to pre-register (guaranteeing them the charter student price as well as head-start registration for both the first and eventual second classes).

So this all sounds nice and leisurely and roomy, right?

Not so much. I just checked a second ago, and there are now 549 folks pre-registered. That means I have 51 pre-registration spots left. I'm pretty sure that when registration opens, I'll have a full 600 people in line for the first class's 300 seats. Now, any of those 600 people who don't get into the first class will get a full day's head start to get into the **second** class. This means in theory there

won't be any seats available publicly until the third class. It does suggest in fact that there won't be very many.

Furthermore, the course itself runs six-months, and I'm not sure how often I'll offer it—I do have books to write, and I have no idea yet how much time running the course will take. Right now it's all-consuming, because I'm writing and creating lessons, setting up boards, hunting bugs, getting the website and classroom all put together, and a laundry list of other things that boggles my mind. I've woken up between 3 and 4 a.m. every day for a week now (without an alarm) and started work, just because there's so much I have to be sure is ready.

I keep reminding myself that it isn't always going to be this hectic. The first class won't be a true test, either, because I'll still be putting together later lessons while students are taking earlier ones. At least I'll have some idea, though.

Anyway.

51 pre-registration slots remain. No. Just checked. An even 50 now.

If you would like to see exactly what the course is (it's much meatier than I'd originally planned), and if you'd perhaps get one of those last fifty spaces, here's the link to the last-chance pre-registration page.

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A Wish For Wings That Work

written by Holly
July 31, 2008

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Forty-seven years old, and THIS week I discovered something about myself that I never knew. I yearn for wings that work.

I'd used the metaphor of wings as ideas in a lesson I was writing. And then noticed that I'd made references to flying in another lesson outline. And then discovered that an anecdote I'd written about being five on my first day of kindergarten, which referenced having my wings clipped, also listed the REASON I got my wings clipped by Mrs. Quimby, kindergarten killjoy.

1966, when girls still had to wear dresses to school. I wore shorts under mine.

My first day of kindergarten, I:

Ran from one end of the teeter-totter to the other fast enough that the other end of it was still in the air when I got there, giving me the most wonderful sensation of weightlessness in the few instants before it crashed to the ground... and I elicited a scream from Mrs. Quimby... ("Never do that again!")

And...

Launched myself from the swingset into midair at my swing's apogee (and these were old swingsets with very long chains and impressive height from earth at their highest point)... and I drew a shriek from Mrs.

Quimby...

("Are you trying to kill yourself?" "...No... ")

And...

Slid down the very tall galvanized sliding board standing,
wearing my smooth-
soled Mary-Janes , shooting weightless through the air at the
bottom to
land on my feet at a dead run. Beating snowboarders to the
punch of that
particular thrill by a good thirty years...

... and Mrs. Quimby and two other teachers on playground duty
rushed up
to me and told me I must never, ever, ever do that again,
because I could
be hurt and what if the other children did what they saw me
do?

First day of kindergarten, three separate times when I got
chewed out
for doing something I did all the time—I lived within walking
distance of
the school and and had played there off-hours since we moved
there.

And all three times, I'd been flying in my own way.

When I wrote about my brief and pathetic career in track, I
wrote about
flying.

When I was nineteen, I looked into getting a pilot's license,
and only
the fact that I made \$99/week at my job kept me from doing it.

When my family traveled by plane, I begged the window seat.

And when I write and the writing is flowing, it feels like

flying.

Wings that work.

But I never put it all together. Never realized until I tripped over a series of metaphors hidden in different places how much I have yearned all my life for this thing I cannot have.

I don't want a plane. Don't want a hang glider. Don't want to parasail, or parachute. I want wings that work. Somewhere down deep, it is part of the core of who I am, and who I have always been.

Look through your own writing, and study the metaphors you've used. See if you can discover the part of you hiding behind everyday life, duty, obligation, routine...

I'm willing to bet there's something magical in you, something you don't even realize is there.

And if you find something, drop me a line and let me know.

Here's to your wings, in whatever form they take, and to your magic.

(I took this from the most recent issue of my Writing Updates newsletter. I don't often crosspost, but this particular discovery hit home for me, and I'm wondering what you'll discover about yourself, too.)

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First Part Of Section One of Week One... [cough]

written by Holly

July 31, 2008

By Holly Lisle

The folks pre-registered for the course have had about a week to look over this. I figured I'd have a little fun now and demonstrate a mild improvement in my video skilz. ☐

This is the first third of the video component of the Week One **How to Think Sideways** lesson.

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Writing A Paranormal Romance Short

written by Holly

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So my agent's assistant sent an e-mail to me, letting me know that I'd received an offer to write a paranormal short—that they already had a contract and the details on the money, and that it was for a reputable anthology with one previous volume already out.

I was delighted. I love cool offers.

Of course...during the time leading up to the deadline, I'm still going to be writing the lessons for How To Think Sideways, and those are hugely time-consuming.

You say, "Ahhh, conflict."

And I say, "Hah! Live lesson material, and proof in action that thinking sideways works."

I sat down, planned to have a story idea, got up and went about my business...and had the idea I could use in four hours. Lesson Three has that as the demo. "How do you DO that?" ☐

Lesson Four will use this story, too.

And I get to write a cool paranormal romance with paranormal elements that haven't been written to death.

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300 Seats in Think Sideways

written by Holly

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I'd intended to make 50 seats available for each Think Sideways class. Huge interest (about 290 folks already pre-registered), and being able to handle the number of questions and e-mails from a group that size have convinced me to go ahead and increase class size to 300 people.

(If I get swamped or overrun when things go live, the next

class will be MUCH smaller.)

This has two benefits for you. The first is that with more seats, more folks will have a chance of getting in.

The second is that I've been able to revise my planned price downward. I'm still debating price, and I don't want to announce a price and then change it. So I'm still a few weeks off from taking that public. I'm still planning on taking the course live in late July.

However, though certainly not all of the folks who are pre-registered will register in the first hour (when the course goes live), a lot will. Enough that it makes the chance of seats coming open publicly for the first class pretty iffy. And if the price I'm now considering is as good as I think it is, figure that any seats that do go public will be gone very quickly.

If you'd like to guarantee your best shot of getting a seat, go here:

<http://HowToThinkSideways.com>

Sign up, confirm your subscription, and you'll get the info you need to pre-register.

By the way, when you pre-register, you'll find the opening part of the Movie One movie. I've gotten much better at doing these, and the sound quality is now acceptable throughout.

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