

"C" is BACK!

written by Holly

May 9, 2008

By Holly Lisle

Every writer needs to have a secret project, I think. Something that you're revved about, something that drives you completely crazy, something that you keep on the hard drive and tinker with and dream about and work on when you're stuck on the things that are paying you money.

I've had a number of secret projects. One became **Fire In The Mist**, one became **Glenraven**, one became **Midnight Rain**.

And this one is "C". They always have to have a code name, you see. That's part of the fun. The code name, the sense of mission, the fact that this is something that you're writing just for you. (Though of course you'll try to sell it when you're done; let's not get crazy.)

Well, "C" has been sitting on the hard drive for a good long time now, ignored while I wrote to deadlines and wrote courses, and I'd pretty much forgotten about it. And then...

Two days ago, I went into the bookstore to wait while my guys went shopping for a Mother's Day present for me. I didn't want to read anything, though, didn't want to look at books, wandered up and down the aisles feeling restless, not seeing the covers of anything on the shelves, just pacing and trying not to be too obtrusive about it. I landed in front of the blank book section, on a whim picked up two large Moleskine notebooks (Hemingway used them, you know, and they won't ever let you forget it, either.) Have never owned a Moleskine notebook—my usual notebook costs about a buck and a half at Wal-Mart.

But I went over to the little sit-around-eating-expensive-

pastry section of the bookstore and bought a bottled water so I wouldn't be taking up one of their tables without spending any money on their stuff, and peeled the plastic wrappers off my new notebooks, and opened them up. Sniffed the pages. (Yeah, I'm a page-sniffer.) For the record, Moleskines smell better than Wal-Mart notebooks. For the price you pay, they damned well ought to.

Got out a pen. No clue what I was going to write, but I wanted to put ink on paper. The restlessness was very sure this was what I wanted to do.

And the little voice in the back of my head whispered "C".

I thought, *Why not?* It was stuck, it had gone silent on me, but there was still something about it that itched between my shoulder blades and right behind my eyeballs, and I had to think there was something about that story that was worth writing.



So I started with a cluster diagram.

And I started with a question. I got a lot of ideas.

These converted into the better part of one written outline done sitting at that little table at the bookstore, and then a complete second draft outline, very different from the first one (and from the stuff I clustered, which is why I'm willing to post that) which I wrote down in a two-hour white heat yesterday.

I never knew the middle of the story before. I had vague ideas about the ending. Now I have all of that, and I know HOW and I know the REASON WHY. And I can see all the pieces, and how all the pieces interlock.

“Excited” does not begin to describe me at the moment.

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