

Cadence Drake and the Darkness

written by Holly

January 23, 2012

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Cady and Warpaint

I'd originally set **Cadence Drake: Warpaint** (my current work in progress) three years after the events in **Hunting the Corrigan's Blood**. I did this because I wanted to get back to Cady's story after she'd beaten the darkness from the first book, after she had found her way back to being a whole human being again.

But over the weekend, I realized that in doing this, I was missing the big picture and a huge, powerful story—the story of how Cady reclaimed her soul.

So on Saturday and Sunday, I put aside everything I'd already done with the draft I'd been working on. I'll save that draft as a possible later book in the series.

And I redrafted a new, forty-scene outline for **Warpaint** the way it needs to be told: Cady the Weapon of Vengeance goes to

war against hell and wins her way back to being Cady the Human.

I know I'm on the right track this time. How do I know?

Because *this* is the Cadence Drake book I'm terrified to write.

People who don't write novels generally can't imagine why writing one might be terrifying. I'll explain. My process includes living inside my character's head while I'm writing. Cadence Drake is the person I would be if I were her—to borrow a description from Lawrence Block—and to write her honestly, I have to slip inside her skin and live through everything she goes through. And I have not given Cady an easy life.

But there's more to this, because Cady is also the character I created who ended up fighting through an alternative version of personal darkness I was facing when I wrote her. I didn't want to go back to the place where I left her, and I didn't want to look too closely at why I didn't.

It turns out I hadn't fully answered for myself the questions I'd left her with—questions about how and why you choose to live; about how you pick your fights; about how you decide in a world in which darkness is falling and where no good answer is easy, what is right and what is wrong. It would have been much simpler and less painful to have just blown by those questions with a quick “Three years later...”

Only I hit a point in the draft I was writing where I had to look at Cady's questions anyway, and ask myself how she'd come through that hell, and what price she'd paid to win back her soul, and how she'd stepped out of the darkness.

And...no good answer is easy. The good answer doesn't scream “Here I am!” at you. The *good* answer whispers, “You're going to have to fight to find me and earn me.”

This weekend, in brief form, I fought, and found in the good

answer the true story of **Warpaint**.

This is the story I *have* to tell.

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