

Dead Man's Party – Cali on the day after

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Still all new words in the type-in revision. Today was a brand-new Chapter Eight.

Five, Six, and Seven were three different takes on the same event – the point where things go from “wow, that was pretty bad” to “okay, the world has now officially fallen apart.”

Chapter Eight brings in the character who WAS my primary protagonist in the first version, now named Cali (folks who have taken [How to Write a Novel](#) will know her as Amanda).

Today, I got to play around inside her head a little, to see how she's been coping after the Fall, and to see how she's planning on dealing with the novel's Big Bad (nod to Joss Whedon for the term).

I like what I got.

Personal stuff is still chaotic.

The only way out is through. So I'm head down, pushing through.

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DMP Revision – Friday, and I'm running long... by an estimated 30,000 words [FRIDAY SNIPPET]

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I knew this would happen.

The raw first draft of the novel was 50,718 words in length.

I figured during my read through revision that I'd add 10,000 words (because in revision, I always end up adding words – my first drafts are thin).

So I thought, *Hey, I'll shoot for 60,000, but I'll give myself a little extra elbow room on this one, just because.*

So I set my top limit plan at 70,000 words.

As of today, if I continue as I'm going, the novel is going come in at 81,000 words.

Eighty. One. Thousand.

My line-for-scenes build-out gave me 34 chapters, same as the raw first draft.

But this time I know what's going on from the very beginning, I know the world I'm writing in, and a lot has to happen in each chapter to get me where I'm going.

I'm contemplating eliminating the three POV scenes for the villain – but that's still on the table. If I don't show him from his own POV, it's going to be significantly tougher for readers to understand WHY he's doing what he's doing.

Word count for today: 254 words. It meets my one-chapter-per-day revision schedule.

Those 254 words comprise one full scene from my villain's POV. It's my compromise for now. I'll do the villain POV scenes, but keep them short, tight, focused on his actions.

When this goes out to my bug-hunters, I'll get feedback on him, and work from there.

FRIDAY SNIPPET (this is my current opening to the novel).

[The Snippet Disclaimer: This is raw first draft, Copyright Holly Lisle and All Rights Reserved. Do not quote, review, or bug hunt. The contents of this snippet are subject to change, and during revision I will not see any problems you find here.]

In the beginning, there was the Hero. And the Hero moved Heaven and Earth to create a place of Joy and Excitement, a retreat from the Suffering and Toil of Humanity. And the Hero declared that access to this Second World beneath the World – this glorious Underworld – should be made a human right given regardless of race, color, creed, or ability to pay to every human being on the planet.

And so it was done, and all of Humankind rejoiced.

Introduction to The History of The Underworld: The Authorized Edition, by Nathan Ardement

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Dead Man's Party Revision – Wednesday, and the NEW character arrives.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Today, just like Monday and yesterday, was 100% new words. 2115 of them at final count, probably about twice that many that I actually wrote to get the ones I kept.

Everything I wrote today required new settings, new names, a completely different starting point – every single word was brand new.

So what makes this a revision, rather than a different first draft?

The fact that this time through, I know exactly where I'm going and why, what I have to accomplish with each chapter to get it to the end that I know is coming, and what each scene has to do.

I have my provisional outline, the weight of an entire first draft and entire write-in revision and the brutal crucible of the week spent in the Monastery building my focus outline.

All the crud fell away from the story when I did that, and what I'm writing now is stronger. Better.

Still going to have to have a deep edit by Matt, still going to have to be bug-hunted by my bug hunters.

But... even though every word is new, this is pure final revision, and I've been here before with other books.

So...

Today, my Goddess of the Underworld had help from the new secondary character I realized during revision I was going to have to bring in to show the world through the eyes of a normal human being who had been one of those most harmed by the world before the Apocalypse.

I ended up writing about twice as many words as I kept. Had to keep tossing out the "As you know, Bobs" that tried to creep in.

But it was a good writing day.

Now onto the next stuff.

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DMP Revision Tuesday – 3038 new words, brand-new second chapter started and finished

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Today was another good writing day.

100% new material, but it flew because in this revision, the whole thing is now growing out of everything I discovered in the read-through and write-in revisions of the first draft.

Added a couple hundred words to yesterday's chapter, but everything I wrote yesterday still worked this morning.

Everything else was the start to finish of Chapter 2.

My Line-for-Scene outline is holding together. My characters are stepping up, doing more in this version than they did in the first one. They're deeper, have more going on, have actual pasts.

And this version of the story is starting darker, meaner. I think this is happening because now I know what brought all of them to this point... and because I'm starting at the exact right point, in the instant before "the way things are now" collapses and all hell breaks loose.

This is a post-apocalypse in which the folks in the middle of it don't yet realize that the Apocalypse has come. That's the second shoe.

Right now, only the first shoe has dropped.

And this time through, the story means more to me. It's scarier, closer to the bone – because this time, I know how it ends, and I know what has to happen before it gets there. This time, there's no writing into the dark, no guessing.

This time, I already know how dark the darkness is going to get.

Things happen in ways that I don't expect, but they're pieces of a puzzle I've already seen.

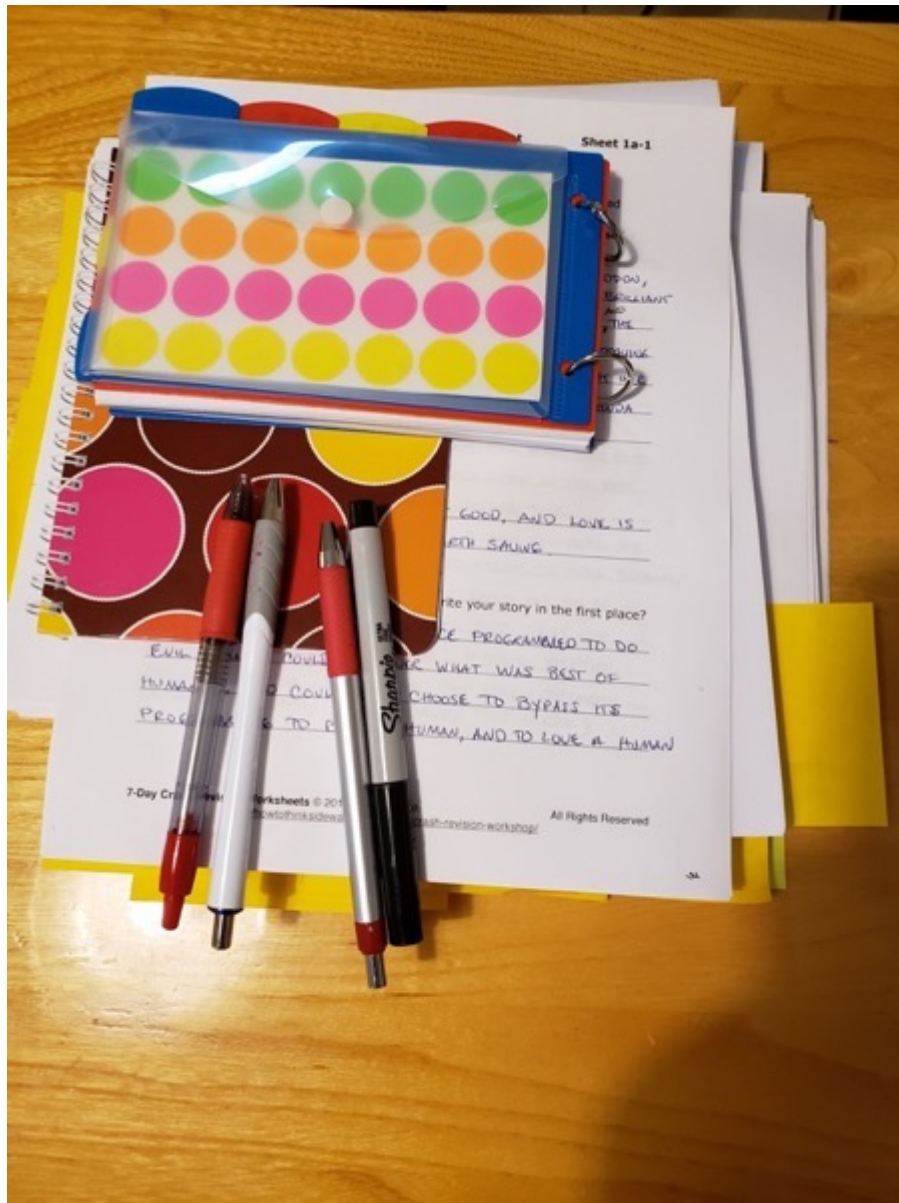
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Dead Man's Party – The Write-In Revision is done.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Have been working on the read-through/write-in revision of Dead Man's Party for the past month or so. Finished it today after a four-hour hard push.

So the next step, which starts tomorrow, is to build the color-coded index card line-for-scene, which is my PLAN for



FIXING IT.

That should anywhere between a day or two and a full week of

heavy lifting.

Since I couldn't find any of my favorite index cards, I'm improvising with some plain white ones that I had in a neat little Oxford ring binder, and color tabs I located in one of my "Office Supply" drawers that I'll stick on the right edge.

*These colored tabs** indicate :

- **GREEN: No changes or small changes** – Up to 24% of the scene needs to change
- **YELLOW: Moderate changes** – 25% to 49% of the scene needs to change
- **ORANGE: Big changes** – 50% to 74% of the scene needs to change
- **RED: BRUTAL OVERHAUL** – 75% change up to toss scene, write something completely new.

I might have two or three green cards.

I already know I have three or four red cards.

In between, I'm going to be living in the yellow-to-orange zone, and I'm betting I'm going to end up with MORE orange.

I'll show you the card outline when I get it built, and give you the actual Scene Count and Damage Report. Being realistic rather than hopeful, it will probably take me the rest of the week to get this done, and MAY run over. I'm out of practice, and this is a process that gets easier the more often and more FREQUENTLY you do it.

Maybe the Inspiration Fairy will land on my head and hit me with its vicious little mallet. If that happens, this will go faster.

BUT...

The thing you want to avoid at all costs during your revision read-through and write-in is to make the discovery – after

your first draft has cooled off – that the novel is nothing you want to finish: that you don't care about the people, the conflict, the world, the twists.

And that didn't happen.

Even in the midst of the wreckage I love this. Love it much more than I thought I would. Revising it is going to be a big, hard, dirty job. But it's SO going to be worth it.

And this is the ONLY thing I'm going to be working on (excluding the necessary stuff of paying bills, answering emails, spending time on the forums, and dealing with the nearing Big Chaos).

This gets half or more of every workday until both the revision replot and the final type-in are done.

This part can take a long damn time. Or it can go quickly. And I am a lousy judge of which way any particular revision is going to fall.

I just know, though, that I'm going to love doing this one.

*The colored index card process is part of [How to Revise Your Novel](#).

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First draft of The Ohio

Series First Novel is DONE! Includes FRIDAY SNIPPET

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I did not expect to finish the first draft today. Thought it would take me a couple more days to get there, but while Becky and I were running ten-minute work sprints together, what had to be in there just clicked, two complete chapters flew off my fingertips, and all of a sudden, I have a done first draft in my brand-new Urban Fantasy world.

I wrote it using the same process I teach in *How to Write a Novel*, I had a blast doing it..

And now it sits in a corner of my hard drive for a minimum of one month while it cools down.

Because I need to NOT be wildly in love with it when I do the read-through. I have to be tired, and grumpy, and bored, and wishing I was someplace else. In THAT frame of mind, the good stuff with hook me in, but I will be unable to make excuses for the bad stuff.

But before I put it away for the requisite month (and possibly a bit more), I have the Friday Snippet for you.

The Snippet Disclaimer: This is raw first draft, copyright Holly Lisle and all rights reserved. Do not quote, review, or bug hunt. The contents of this snippet are subject to change, and during revision I will not see any problems you find here.

THE FRIDAY SNIPPET

Now here I was with a cookie junkie who'd just heard there was a new dealer for his long-lost favorite drug, looking at me with eyes that were shining with need, that said he was jonesing pretty hard.

People.

"I could get you the ingredients so you could make them," he said. "If you told me what they were."

"Didn't Grandma give you the recipe so that you could learn how to make them yourself?"

I was watching him. I work the streets, I know what addiction looks like, and I was seeing a guy who'd gotten a hit of something that had sunk hooks into him and dragged him out on a cold, mean day to a dead woman's house in search of cookies. Nobody does that.

Nobody.

Only the look people get when you've pulled them over and they think they're about to pull one over on you was on old Mr. Yeager's face, and that cop sense kicked in and all of a sudden I knew this wasn't about cookies. It was... but there was a lot more here, and for some reason I didn't know, it was important.

Really important.

In no universe are cookies a big deal.

So this was something else. Something was wrong with my picture.

When in doubt, poke the problem with a stick.

"I'm not going to be baking cookies here," I said. "I'm just

going to be going though the attic and the basement, clearing and cleaning, and then I'm going back home." When I said the word home, it sounded like a lie in my ears. No matter. I was watching his body, watching his eyes.

And I saw a whole lot of panicked crazy go skittering beneath the surface. "Could I buy the recipe from you?" he asked.

The answer to that question came out of my mouth unbidden, instantly, like someone had programmed it there. "Old family recipe," I said and shook my head.

And he hung his. "That's what she always said, too."

And though I could not understand what made me do it, I grabbed my metaphorical stick a little more firmly, and said, "Tell you what. Why don't you bring those papers by the house for me so I can look them over while I'm cleaning. If you do that, I'll think about making some more cookies."

When it came out of my mouth, I knew it was a mistake. No lawyer would say yes to that. There was no guarantee, there was no promise, there was nothing to pin down. It was an utterly one-sided deal.

"All right," he said, and sighed.

And that gut thing I had going said, Ding, ding, ding. We have a winner. Whatever Mr. Yeager is, he is not a lawyer.

The Ohio Series – 2842 words, and a series-anchoring question

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Yesterday, I discovered the dark secret in Tori's past. It's grim, harsh, and leaves her with some questions she's been fighting the whole rest of her life to answer.

Today, I discovered the long line of dark secrets in Duncan's past. This over a breakfast he and Tori share.

Everything flew, came together, answered some earlier questions in the book for me, and set up one of the BIG questions that will be asked only implicitly for most of the rest of the series.

It was a damn fine writing day.

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The Ohio Series: My main character's past gets darker.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Still hanging with the objective of 2000 words per day. Hit

2084, and with them, something I did not know about my MC. Something dark and grim and gory – because far be it from me to write a main character who's past was full of sunshine and fluffy bunnies.

I'm 64,012 words into this now, with my objective being to hit 70,000, I'm discovering that I might have to run a little long to tie this novel off.

It's planned as the first in a series. I cannot wait to find out what happens next.

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Streamlining During Chaos: Fiction? YES.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Nothing is yet cast in stone... but in about a week the full force of this particular Chaos Storm is going to hit. The Current Chaos™ is pretty close to becoming the Big Right On Top Of Me Chaos – a state that could last from a best case of one month to a worst case of maybe three.

(See me bravely ignoring the “Wanna bet on that worst case?” utterance from my Muse, who has ridden this train before.)

I can't accomplish everything I want to do and still do what I need to do. So I have put some things on hold for a while in order to accomplish anything.

My brain turns to fiction when things get rough, stressful,

difficult. It always has – reading when I was a kid, writing when other people's worlds stopped being what I needed.

I won't complain. Being able to fall into fiction when things are hard is a Big Damn Advantage when you're a novelist. I've decided this time to play to my strengths, and to NOT try to do everything.

So from today until we're out the other side of this, my writing is going to be exclusively fiction.

Objectives:

- WRITE: Complete the first novel in The Ohio Series and get it into its month of cool down. (I'm only a couple chapters from the end, so this is a small goal.)
- REVISE: Finish the write-in and type-in revisions of Dead Man's Party and get it out to beta readers. (I'm most of the way through the write-in revision, but still have a significant type-in ahead of me, and I do a LOT of on-the-spot revision and adding things during type-in, so this is a BIG goal.)
- OUTLINE AND WRITE: The Emerald Sun first draft. (And this is a big goal, too.)

I'll do a worksheet or two for the podcast as we need them.

I will NOT be starting into the Canary Revision of *How to Revise Your Novel*. until after I'm through the biggest part of the coming mess.

My plan had been to pick that up on Monday and do it as an after-fiction thing. At this point, by best-case scenario moves that to early September.

Absolute worst case, the first part of next year. (Never start a massive project in December.)

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The DMP Revision, and the WRONG End of the String – Family and Brain Surgery

[By Holly Lisle](#)

The string in the title is CHAOS, and in the little image on my blog, we are currently not in the neat and spiffy central spiral, but in the dark tangle out at the end.

I'll start with the happier stuff. Today was Revision Monday, and I got just over half of the remainder of the write-in revision of *Dead Man's Party* finished. Seventy-six pages revised and noted. Only seventy manuscript pages remain, and my hope is to be able to finish that on my next Revision Monday, whenever that might be.

The type-in revision is going to be a bitch, but I discovered that the stuff I wrote for the character who is going to be eliminated in the final version is actually excellent, contains very good conflict plus active worldbuilding for the story world, set in the near and deadly future, and can be given to the new male lead in the new version as the first couple of chapters of the novel.

The other news is more chaos, but *not* the good and happy chaos we've been in for the last couple of months.

My brother-in-law is back in the hospital following seizures, and has discovered that the parts of the brain tumor that his previous doctor couldn't get out some years ago because they were attached to the brainstem have grown in the interim. Are now causing weakness in his extremities, seizures, some other

not-good things.

On the bright side, brain surgery has improved a lot in the last half a decade. On the dark side, it's still *brain* surgery.

SO... He has big brain surgery pending. This is not a little deal. It's currently planned for Thursday, but that might change. So the next couple of weeks might have me gone a lot.

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