

Vacation OVER! New story, bigger maps, and starting Create A World Clinic today. #wabwm

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I enjoyed my vacation, which is to say that I slept through the end of 2012, and woke up in 2013 feeling human again.

So over the last couple days, I put a novella I wrote years ago (**REWIND**, which is the precursor to **C-The Secret Project**) into Kindle and ePub format, and I'll put that up on Amazon, B&N, and my site later today. I ENORMOUSLY expanded the Cadence Drake Minecraft map, and that's already available for download. [I made the Cadence Drake "Goodies Page" open to everyone without membership](#), and fixed the broken links and missing content. So you can get both the HTCB theme song and the Minecraft map there.

Margaret and I tested the software she's been building for me that will allow me to offer HTTS as a complete sequential course again, while also allowing affiliates to offer it along with every other product in my shop from one link (something we've been working on for about two years now, so this is a BIG deal for me. :D). She'll install it into the live classroom for me in the next few days, and I'll start rebuilding the course. This will take a while: How to Think Sideways is an enormous course with a LOT of pieces, and each piece has to be created as a separate product, tagged, and added to the appropriate page. It will be available as quickly as I can manage it, and when it is, HTTS LEGACY students will be able to upgrade for a small one-time price to get all their lessons in Kindle and Nook versions.

(This allows me to only have to build ONE version of the course, and moves Legacy students who want to be there into the new version, so they'll be eligible for new-version upgrades. It also puts HTTS back into the queue as a live course to which I can add upgrades and expansions.)

But the big news today is this...

I've opened up the Create A World Clinic document in Scrivener, and I'm starting to write that now.

About time, too. :-/

So if you're playing Write A Book With Me, this is my entry in the game.

I'll post stats later. Right now, I want to get writing.

P.S. I have more news, but it'll have to wait for another post.

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WABWM: New story finished over the weekend

[By Holly Lisle](#)

8:06 AM

Finished the short story **Long Road Home** yesterday (was **Do-Over** on my weblog progress bar, but the working title sucked).
Sentence: A woman who's lost everything makes a deal with the

devil to relive her life, only to discover the deal didn't work the way she thought.

First draft came out at about 10,000 words, but this is something that has been in bits and pieces on my hard drive since 2004. I probably only did about 1500 new words (and a lot of cutting and piecing) to finish it.

I discovered I needed a short break away from **Warpaint**, but still wanted to do something with fiction. So I'll have Single #2 to bring out in November, along with **Warpaint**.

On that, book started with just over 80,000 words.

I'm now 26,000 words into the write-in, and the manuscript total is up to 87,000 words.

Kick ass on your words, and write with joy.

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Light Through Fog

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I worked all weekend, and have been working nights for a while, in addition to working on the course. See, around the same time that I was getting ready to take How To Think Sideways live, I got this request for a short story from an editor who was putting together an anthology. That's basically the only way I do short stories, and the timing on this one was terrible, because I knew I'd be working on the course.

But. I loved the subject matter, I got an idea for the story very quickly, and even though the money and rights were not

great, well, I loved my idea. So I decided I'd use the writing of the story, from pre-idea through final edits, as part of the course. Which I've been doing.

And over the weekend, I finished the story, titled **Light Through Fog**, did my revision, and at 6:30ish this morning sent it off to my editor. Have already heard from her that she's received it. It was due today. ☐ I work very hard not to miss deadlines, but I do sometimes hit them right on the very, very edge.

Anyway, the story is done, and I'm very happy with the way it turned out.

And writing fiction again was wonderful, and made me hungry to do more.

I'm working on Lesson 12 now, which means this week marks the halfway point on the official course. I'm seriously considering doing a couple of student-requested lessons at the end as a nice bonus, but I'm going to work hard not to extend beyond that.

The next Moon & Sun book is calling me, and so is "C."

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Not Dead. Definitely Swamped

[By Holly Lisle](#)

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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Bombarded by Writing

[By Holly Lisle](#)

C Breathes

So I was sitting in the cafe in Books-A-Million waiting for my guys to finish doing Manly Things at Best Buy. I'd forgotten to bring knitting. I'd forgotten to bring my Think Sideways planning notebook. I'd forgotten to bring my "C" planning notebook.

So I picked up a cheap-o notebook, and a pen that didn't squidge all over the paper (discovered that my carry-along pen had started leaking), and sat staring at the blank page.

I didn't stare for long.

"There is no perfect day for a funeral," my character said in my ear, and I wrote that down. "There is no moment where the box can slide into the earth bearing the battered remains of the man who saved your life and made you whole and restored your faith in humankind and the world, and you can say, "This is good. This is right."

So began "C." I sat there scribbling as fast as I could put words on the page, and before the guys finished doing the Manly Things, I had the first chapter in rough first draft.

The first two lines don't win me over. They aren't right yet. None of it is as good as it can be, but it's alive. It's breathing, and I know what happens next.

But Smudge was born...

I woke up in the middle of the night a week or so ago with the vague idea that I wanted to write some sort of supernatural series with a hero who had a unique problem. No idea what sort of supernatural, no idea what sort of problem, just this nebulous concept that this was something I wanted to write.

Over the next few days, little ideas popped into my head, and I'd mull them over, then let them go. Nothing stuck. I liked some of the bits and pieces, but there was no connection between them. They all felt random. I let them float, not writing anything down, trusting that they would turn into something when they were good and ready. I was in no hurry. I have Think Sideways next on the table, and then the proposal for Moon & Sun III, and then C. I have no shortage of exciting, cool work.

So yesterday, riding into town with the guys, staring at the road, just being happy that I got SILVER DOOR done and in on time, all those unrelated pieces from the previous days

collided into one huge, winning, ready gestalt and exploded into my awareness—character, problem, purpose, series arc, main character arc, stories, villain, and underlying theme about life and death and life after death. It was like slamming my head into a cabinet corner. One instant, everything was creamy; the next, I was overwhelmed by full-body sensory overload. (Only without the pain, which was a very good thing.)

I rode along, full of doubt, testing for holes, asking questions, and every time finding the answers already there, waiting, and beautiful. The guy who woke up with the structure of DNA in his head could not have been any more amazed than I was by the structure of this whole story/ character/ concept/ world. Smudge is a working title, the character's nickname, and probably disposable three or ten times before I come to something I actually like.

But this one has to cook. I clustered all the elements yesterday in the OTHER Moleskine notebook I bought that day, and then set it aside. Because....

Think Sideways is keeping me awake nights

I've been writing and rewriting lessons and essays in my head and figuring out how to put the building blocks together in the most logical and usable structure, and visualizing the demos—how to SHOW the subconscious and how to SHOW turning bad ideas into good ideas and how to SHOW you how to train yourself to do the stuff I did to get Smudge, and that I'm doing with "C," and that I did with the best stuff I've written.

Having finished this post, I'm starting lesson one of [Think Sideways](#) now.

(Actually, I wrote this about 9 AM today, and got a bunch done on [Think Sideways](#) already. Our internet has been out all day. Freakin' internet.)

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More About “C” In Its Current Incarnation

[By Holly Lisle](#)

First a note on **“Genie In a Bottle.”** I got it wrong, but I was in a bookstore that didn't have the book, and I was working from memory.

I've never made any bones about the fact that I'll learn from anyone who can teach me. There's a screenplay writer named Blake Snyder who wrote a book called [Save The Cat!](#) It's strictly about screenwriting, it's about his method of categorizing screenplay genres and developing screenplays, and all of this fits within the rigid format of the commercial screenplay. If you read it thinking it applies word for word to writing novels, you'll end up wearing an unnecessary straightjacket while you write.

But if you remember that you as a novelist are not in any way constrained by the three-act, 110-page format with strict A and B stories screenwriters must follow (if they hope to sell), it becomes one of the best guides to good storytelling I've ever come across. And it was by sitting in the bookstore working out the beats of a screenplay from (admittedly poor) memory that I figured out how to redo “C” so that it would

work as a story.

Snyder takes you through ten genres he's come up with—ways of categorizing stories. Again, novels are MUCH more flexible than what he presents for screenwriters, but again, if you keep that in mind, you'll find that most of what you've written either fits pretty well into one of his ten genres, or you're stuck on it because it isn't working as a story.

So that's a long way of saying that my "Genie in the Bottle" note at the top of the page is my misremembering of his classification of "Out of the Bottle" stories, of which "C" is (more or less) one. "C", however, fuses elements of "Rite of Passage" stories (another of his genres), which I can do because I'm writing a novel, and which probably wouldn't work too well for a screenwriter because I have the glorious elbow room of 100,000 words in which to create A, B, C, and D stories, themes and subthemes, and because, writing a novel, I don't have to worry a bit about budgets, special effects, being rewritten by credit jumpers, or any of the other miseries that await screenwriters.

In any case, "C" does involve time travel. It knowingly breaks some very specific and nearly universal rules of time travel stories. Because I know the rules, and have a critical REASON WHY, I think I can get away with it, but we'll see.

"C" doesn't have anything to do with Cadence Drake or Badger. I haven't given up on them, but they're not what are keeping me up nights.

And... I'm having a wonderful time working this all out. Thank you, and thanks for letting me know about your secret projects. They're exciting stuff, and I hope you have as much fun with yours as I'm having with mine.

As for what I'm doing online at this hour on Mother's Day... we're under a tornado watch, and Matt stayed up for hours watching the weather. I'm standing watch now so he can catch a

few hours' sleep.

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"C" is BACK!

[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 (Hemmingway 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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So now that I'm done...

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Okay. The Mac *sending mail* sound has just echoed across the computer, which means the finished **Ruby Key** is on its way to my agent, Robin. I'm pretty wiped out, but very happy with the book. It wrapped at 63,000 words, which was well within my target zone, the new ending worked beautifully, (though I was revising and adding and changing things right up until the last word).

I'm done. It's sort of starting to sink in. I'm done. (Until the revision requests, anyway.)

I have to do income tax stuff next—never fun, and that will take me about three days, I'm guessing.

And then?

Well, the **Create A Plot Clinic**.

Revising chapters two and three on the **Green Magic** proposal, and sending that back.

Hawkspar, when I get the revision requests.

Outlining the sequel to **The Ruby Key**.

A couple of Cadence Drake novellas or novelettes.

C.

The **Sympathy for the Devil** screenplay, which will probably undergo a title change to **The Devil and Dayne Kuttner**.

Lots of things to do. Figuring out priorities and scheduling all of them will be...interesting.

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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.

She'd left her purse in the car she'd abandoned a mile back. All her ID was in it: credit cards, driver'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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Updating the Schedule

[By Holly Lisle](#)

So around June, I had everything planned out. And then I needed to write one book a full year earlier than it had been planned. And I did. But doing so wrecked every other item in my schedule. Obliterated. Toasted. Annihilated.

Turns out, I could do the insane [“everything at once” provisional schedule](#) only for a few days, and then my brain shut down, and I had to step back. I got the **Language Clinic** and **NIGHT ECHOES** written. And will finish the write-in of NIGHT ECHOES today, and the type-in in the next couple of days.

But that leaves a lot of stuff languishing. I have a student thing that's been hanging fire; that's next. Then the final **HAWKSPAR** edit, a lot of which is done—that had a lot front-end problems that went away by the end of the book, so having most of the front-book issues already finished, I'm thinking (just thinking here) that the rest of that will go more or less smoothly.

And then what?

Create A Culture Clinic (Worldbuilding II)

The Ruby Key (Moon and Sun I)

Create A World Clinic (Worldbuilding III)

Project Blue

Create A Plot Clinic

Moon and Sun II

Storyshowing Clinic

C, the Secret Project

Finish the Book Clinic

And more stuff after that...God willing and the creek don't rise.

NOTICE: The Surgeon General has declared that creating schedules can be detrimental to your health and sanity, and that schedule dependence has been linked with weight gain, weight loss, hirsutism, hair loss, nervousness, nausea, vomiting, auditory hallucinations, angina, GERD, hypertension, hypotension, insanity, and death. Pregnant women, women who might become pregnant, persons with preexisting liver or kidney or heart conditions, and people with eyelids should avoid scheduling. If you experience side effects from scheduling, stop immediately and consult your doctor.

DISCLAIMER #1: This schedule is subject to Life, which happens while one is making other plans.

DISCLAIMER #2: (Marine Adage) No battle plan survives first contact with the enemy.

DISCLAIMER #3: (Yiddish Adage) Men plan, God laughs.

DISCLAIMER #4: (Nursing Instructor Adage) CYA

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