

Marketing Tuesday: Finished with my survey results (and a game)

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

So, for as long as I'm doing Marketing Tuesdays, I've made myself a little image – with Scary Halloween Lettering, because for me at least, trying to wrap my head around marketing is scary.

But I have the most amazing readers. I had a massive response to my three-question quiz. Thank you to every single reader who answered – there's a story that will be coming your way once it's written.

The results were compelling, consistent, and very, very revealing.

- **My readers like what I write**, and are not looking for me to switch up genres or be any less... er... *challenging* in my willingness to drag all sorts of characters, conflicts, and genres into the stories I tell.
- **My readers, however, know a lot of writers** who write things similar to what I write, and these other writers are not marketing their work as hard SF, or high fantasy, or space opera, or crossover fantasy.
- **These other writers who write in the genre I've been writing since I started** market their work as urban fantasy. Werewolves, spaceships, stepping from one world into another, magic in modern settings or strange settings. I've gone extensively through their work, bought a lot of it, am reading a lot of it.

So I'm going to have to do a bunch of stuff over the next months.

Get or make new covers that accurately reflect the contents of my work.

Change titles on some work: It was noted by a number of respondents (and my husband) that both *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood* and *Warpaint* are dreadful titles that are not even marginally reflective of the contents or genre of the stories they contain.

Create new editions, making sure that the books contain their previous titles so there's no confusion or accidental double-buying.

Write new cover copy.

All of this while still working on the current novels, *Dead Man's Party* and *The Wishbone Conspiracy*, which I'm just letting you know right now is another awful title and is as of today relegated to the status of Working Title That Sucks, and That I'll Fix In Revision.

In Other News...

Was talking to my older kid, Mark, last night, and he mentioned that he was writing a text adventure using software named Twine. I was knitting while talking on the phone, and made a smartass comment about my software being called Yarn, but after he gracefully bypassed my dumb joke, he described what he was doing, and I realized that Twine would allow me to build the text-adventure game that I already tried to make once – and that failed badly – a game that would let folks play through finding everything they want and nothing they don't on this ridiculously huge site with all the different stuff that's on it...

And I started building that game today.

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Lost Words Found: I'm having a strange and disturbing morning...

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

I think in general we as human beings like to think we're on top of things. That we have a pretty good bead on not just where we are, but where we've been, and where we're going.

I'm working on Lesson 16 of *How to Write a Novel* this morning, which is about voice and tone, and to show writers what I'm talking about, was digging through my fiction backlist for demo material for the lesson. I'm adding and then discussing the first couple of paragraphs of various published novels to demonstrate how changing voice and tone changes reader expectations and why mastering this is a crucial skill...

How could that go wrong?

Well, more like, "How could that go sideways?"

So this morning, the jury's back, and the verdict on that whole "on top of things" business is: Nope. **Not so much...**

Because I came across not one, but two really good Cadence Drake novel starts that I completely forgot I'd written.



And we're not talking about running a thousand words up a flagpole to see who salutes.

We're talking 13,000 words on one..., 8000 words on another... and when I found these, I remembered a third that had five or six chapters in it and that I now can't find, but I do remember that it featured the story of who Tangerine, the cheerful hairdresser in *HTCB*, really was.

Can't find that one, of course, but finding the two I completely forgot, I now also have the third one in my head as a story I just have to tell.

Lost a chunk of time on the lesson hunting through my hard drives and backups. Getting back to work now. But after I write *The Wishbone Conspiracy*, I have some really solid starts for THREE more Cadence Drake novels.

Sheesh...

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NEW Fiction, BARGAIN price: The Longview Chronicles and The Owner's Tale

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

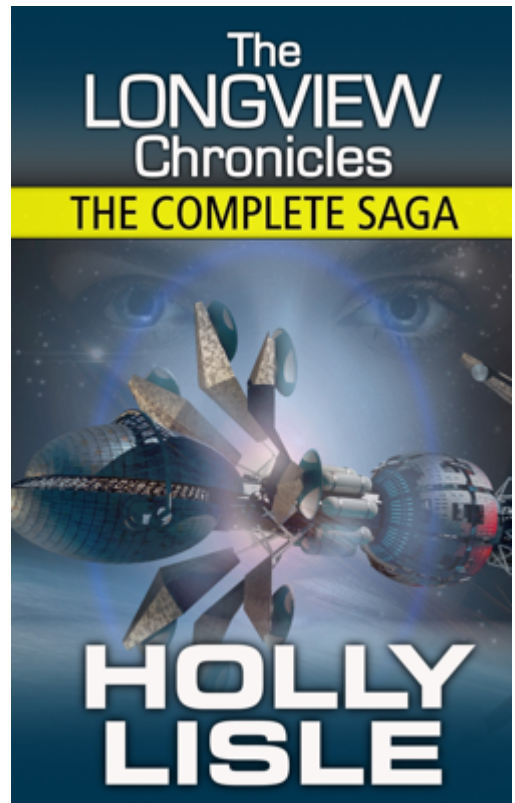
By Holly Lisle

I'm delighted to announce that *The Longview Chronicles*, the complete six-book series in one volume, **is on sale through Friday for \$2.99**— *regular price will be \$7.99* for the complete series in ebook form, but I wanted all of my folks to get the whole series for the price of one episode.

For folks who are wondering, Cady is in the series (as is Herog), and this is the (very big) book that fits between *Cadence Drake: Warpaint* and the next novel, *Cadence Drake: The Wishbone Conspiracy*, and shows you what's happening during and right after the end of *Warpaint*.

When the trusted are monsters, one monster becomes a hero...

In the vast reaches of Settled Space, everything is legal, or at least obtainable privately... for a price.



Science has created near immortality, and the wealthy and powerful are buying it to make themselves gods. But these gods require—and create—an endless procession of manufactured criminals who become human sacrifices for their amusement...

Until one twisted creature born to be a sacrifice discovers the truth. This escaped slave declares a secret war against corruption, enslavement, and the wealthy, powerful men and women who have declared themselves gods, and made their whims law.

THE COMPLETE SERIES IN ONE VOLUME

- Born From Fire
- The Selling of Suzee Delight
- The Philosopher Gambit
- Gunslinger Moon
- Vipers' Nest
- The Owner's Tale

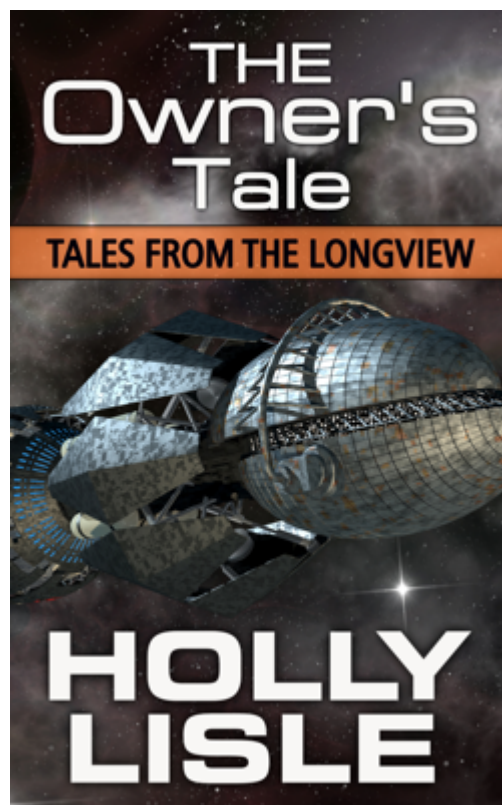
Get this book from your favorite bookstore.

(And if you love it, please leave a review...)

And for folks who already have the first five, for the rest of this week, *The Owner's Tale*, the brand new concluding episode, will be on sale for \$.99.

When the truth comes out, who is left standing?

In this final episode of the series, the Longview reveals its secrets, Herog finds the path to protecting the City of Furies, and Melie discovers the truth about the ship she captains and the owner she serves.



MEET THE LONGVIEW – An Ancient Spaceship Resurrected To Transport Conspiracy

Inhabited by a crew of misfits fleeing nightmare pasts, with a cargo of Condemned slated to die at the hands of the highest bidders, and with a passenger roster made up exclusively of people NOT who they claim to be, The Longview serves the

hidden agenda of an eccentric recluse bent on playing puppetmaster to all of Settled Space.

Get this from your favorite bookstore.

(And if you love it, please leave a review...)

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Grinding: Diablo 3, Knitting, Writing... LIFE

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

Problem: Not Enough Noro means I have to use a fill-in yarn



SOLVED: On November 3rd, I finished my Stained Glass Sweater, a project I'd been working on in small pieces since August 18th.

Problem: About two weeks ago (late in the actual season), I discovered that the Diablo 3 season had something I wanted. A Disembodied Hand pet.



SOLVED: Sunday night, I got my Disembodied Hand by finishing the first four challenge levels of the current season of Diablo 3.

Problem: Can I show my readers enough of who the Owner is to actually have them care what happens to him?



SOLVED: Yesterday the comments from my Bug Hunters for *The Owner's Tale*, the concluding episode of **Tales from the Longview**, started coming in. And they cared.

And it suddenly occurred to me that:

- knitting a sweater,
- playing a Season in Diablo,
- and writing a novel...

have an astonishing amount in common.

My bet here is that you're going to think I'm nuts. But watch this...

**The Common Ground of Knitting,
Diablo 3 Seasons, and Novel Writing**

They all require grinding.

Not familiar with the concept of grinding?

When you grind, you have a set series of achievable objectives before you that, if you complete them, will give you a reward.

Grinding always includes easier objectives and tougher objectives, and if you're smart, you do the easiest stuff first and work your way into the more difficult bits, gaining skills and technical prowess (and better armor and weapons, or tools and techniques) as you go so that you can conquer the bigger battles without getting your ass handed to you too often.

The first objective is always simply this... Figure out exactly and specifically what it is that you want to accomplish.

In Diablo, I wanted to win the pet – the disembodied hand that runs around while you're playing and picks up all of your gold so you don't have to. I love Diablo's weird pets, and the idea of that hand made me laugh.

With *The Owner's Tale*, my objective was to wrap up the entire series and answer the final mysteries, while presenting the Owner and having his story and his life matter to readers.

With the sweater, it was to figure out how to use some gorgeous Noro Taiyo yarn in a colorway that was no longer available, and which I didn't have enough of to make an entire sweater for myself. On August 18th, I came up with the little swatch below, and liked it enough that I didn't tear it apart to try something else.

August 18: Interesting, workable sweater concept, with Rowan wool worsted to use to fill out the Noro I didn't have enough of.



Well-chosen objectives are understandable.

With *Diablo*, I picked a Demon Hunter (had never played one of those before), and just started playing in the evenings when Matt was playing his stuff. My objective? Finish the Season, earn the Disembodied Hand pet and maybe some of the armor.

With *The Owner's Tale*, I identified as my objective that when I'd finished my story, my readers would actually meet the owner – from his own point of view, which I had kept them away from up to this point. And Keyr would show them who he was, why he did what he did, and would wrap of the biggest mystery

that has run since Episode 1 – what’s really going on in the *Longview*? And if I did it right, when they reached the end, they would care what happened to him.

With the sweater, I located a second yarn that went nicely with my bright Noro Taiyo, a nice, slightly flecky Rowan worsted wool that wasn’t quite black, but was almost.

And my test swatch looked like stained glass to me, and reminded me of windows my father built for churches and homes. I thought, yeah, that’ll work. And set my objective as making a sweater for myself kind of like the one I’d made for Becky, only different.

Well-chosen objectives are always recognizable.

When you finish an objective, you have to know you’ve finish it.

Diablo is great for this. The game has little icons that show up on the bottom of the screen, all gilt-edged and shiny, that tell you, *Hey, you did SOMETHING good.*

Knitting has stitch markers if you’re working with really big pieces. If you’re knitting modularly (in little shapes that you then knit together into bigger shapes), you just count modules.

August 22nd: One Back Panel



In writing, you count words and scenes, and you write toward discovering your story's best ending, which is rarely the first one you think up.

Well-chosen objectives have a clear waypoints.

Diablo 3 is excellent at setting this up for the player. You have a series of four groups of objectives that move you to the first big reward. You'll end up doing the first groups of stuff by accident—just by playing the game. As you clear each objective, you get a bright red badge beside it, so you can see clearly how many you've done, and how many you have yet to

do.

You get a nice sense of progression, and you get absorbed in going deeper (occasionally looking things up on the Internet) so you can find and conquer the more obscure challenges and earn the remaining, more difficult progress markers.

With knitting, you're building pieces of a whole, and you try them on as you knit them to make sure what you're making fits.

August 24th: Progress on Second Back Panel



August 28th: Finished Back (stained class portion only)



September 14: Final MSU (Making Shit Up) workable idea for front pockets



MSU – Making Shit Up – is a technique I use in problem-solving

for both knitting and writing fiction. This requires a moment of explanation, and I'm going to discuss this from the knitting perspective.

I don't do pockets often. I'm sure lots of folks have come up with this way of making pockets in a modular sweater, but I didn't research "How to make pockets."

Instead, I thought about what I wanted them to look like, and how I wanted them to work, and then I tried different approaches until I came up with this one, in which the opening for the pocket is created by not joining the modules.

September 21st: Knitting in the pocket liner



And then by knitting in the pocket liner so nothing is sewn, and so the pocket will be sturdy. I'm sure lots of folks do this – but I get to claim this as **my** method (what Elizabeth Zimmerman would have called *unventing*) because even though a ton of other people have probably figured this out on their own, I figured it out on MY own. I invented this process for myself. This is what you do when you like your brain and want to keep it working. You push it to solve complicated problems every day.

As for writing fiction, Making Shit Up is one of my favorite methods for **Avoiding Research**. If you build the world, build the physics, build the languages, build the history, you don't have to research the world. At its best, Making Shit Up is figuring out what you want something to do, and how you want it to work, and then experimenting until you get that.

Well-chosen objectives have achievable rewards.

Achievable means “If you do the work, you will get the reward.”

This is where Destiny and Destiny 2 are very bad games, and Diablo 3 is a very good game.

If you do the objectives in Destiny or Destiny 2, RNG (random number generation) decides whether or not you will get the rewards, and absolutely nothing you do can ensure that you will get the thing you want. Ever.

Which is why I finally quit playing Destiny.

I'm willing to grind like hell to get something, but I don't like to have bait dangled over my head with “Yeah, you did all the stuff, but you still can't have the thing you wanted.” Destiny is like a shitty boss who says, “Guess what? You didn't get paid this week. But keep working. Maybe I'll pay

you next week. Or *never*. *Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!*”

Screw that. My time matters to me.

With Diablo 3, you know exactly what you’ll get if you do the specific tasks, and when you complete the last of those tasks, you get the stuff.

But you have to be persistent, because there are a LOT of tasks, and you’re starting out with a brand new, unlevleed character that you have to take through the whole campaign first before moving on to doing bounties and other higher-level stuff. But if you play a little every evening (and maybe binge a bit on the weekends), you’ll get your goofy pet.

Then you have more tasks you can play through to get more stuff. I’m willing to work really hard for cool stuff, but I do require getting paid for that work. Diablo 3 pays on time and in full.

In knitting, you have to be persistent, because knitting is slow, and finicky, and you have to do a lot of ripping back and trying new things if you don’t use patterns (I never use patterns – I always just make shit up). But if you stick with it, and knit a little every day, you’ll eventually finish your sweater. And then you have something cool that you wanted.

October 17th: It took me seven tries to figure out
a way to do the sleeves that I didn’t hate,
but with this, I finally came up with something I liked.



October 23: Here you can see the sleeves coming together..



With writing, you have to be persistent. It, too, is something

big made up of bunches of small parts. Tens or hundreds of thousands of words, dozens to hundreds of scenes, possibly dozens of chapters.

And if you show up regularly and do the work, you'll create the small pieces that make the bigger parts that eventually finish the whole.

You do "X number of words per day" and you make that a number small enough that you CAN hit it every day you write. You don't keep raising the number. You can write more on any give day, but your low, achievable number is your success number. So that on SHITTY days (and you will have them), you can still hit the low number, can still have a successful day, and can then go curl up on the couch with a good book and a cup of coffee and make Real Life go away for a bit.

Well-chosen objectives have to end with guaranteed success.

You set a goal you can reach, and you work to that goal.

I have my Disembodied Hand, and I get a kick out of watching it skitter around the screen picking up gold off the ground.

I have my oversized, warm, pockety sweater. All the ends are sewn in, the buttons are on, the button band came together perfectly, the Kitchener stitching on the waistband, collar, and cuffs turned out beautifully, and it's as bright and pretty as I hoped it would be. Now I just need some cold weather so I can wear it.

November 3rd: Finished the Stained Glass Sweater



With *The Owner's Tale*, I finished the story. I finished the revision. I finished the series. I made the owner of the *Longview* someone understandable and in some ways sympathetic. I wrote the story I wanted and needed to write, and in that, I succeeded.

Everything beyond that is out of my control, so *nothing beyond that can be an objective for me.*

I cannot make the story sell well. I cannot get it listed on best-seller lists. I cannot make it matter to anyone but myself. But it matters to me.

Well-chosen objectives have to matter to you.

I really wanted that hand. It's gross, but it's funny.

I really wanted that sweater. The more I worked on it, the more I could see what it could become if I did it right, and I wanted to wear it, to have that little tribute to the part of my father that I liked and respected, and to have something

that was just that bright and cheerful and pretty.

With *The Owner's Tale*, I could feel the power of the story building as I discovered the owner's life before he started rescuing slaves on the *Longview*. I needed to know more about him, needed to discover why he gave a shit, needed to know why, when he got filthy rich, he didn't just take his money and make himself a god. **And I wrote the story I needed to read.**

That's what you're looking for when you set objectives.

What you need in your life, step by step, with the end result that your life is better in big or little ways.

You cannot do everything. Cannot have everything.

But if you can identify achievements that matter to you, and can build out the steps that you can take to reach goals you can achieve on your own, *and if you're willing to then grind*—to do the work, to show up in your own life and put in the effort and the focus — you can have *that*.

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**Just finished the first draft
of The Owner's Tale – Moon &**

Sun 3 on deck.

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

So. Just now the first draft of *The Owners Tale*, the LAST episode in ***Tales from the Longview***.

Wrote the final thousand-ish words this morning and part of this afternoon, and for now, at least, I like the ending.

I've printed off the manuscript (in 12 point Courier, double-spaced and with large margins, of course) where it will sit on my desk for at least one week to cool off.

I like a lot of stuff when it's still hot that I can see problems with once it's cooled off.

After it's cooled for at least a week, I'll go in, do a read through and a revision, and then hand off to Matt, who will do my content edit. I want to wow him. He already figured out a part of how it will end (he's just that good).

But he doesn't yet know why. That is where I want to really bring this home.

This is a story I've been working towards for a long time, through a lot of books. This is the story I've pulled from dark corners and bad spots in my own life, from the lives of family, from the lives of other people who have not always had things easy. It's not personal, not any sort of roman á clef.

But through the fiction of the characters, I did manage to hit some things I've never been able to work into fiction before.

So here's the process once I get through the revision.

I hand off to Matt.

Matt points out all the places where I got it wrong, where I missed what I was going for, where I failed to give the characters the proper respect.

I go in and to an editor's revision.

I ask for a few folks to bug hunt THAT version.

I make corrections from the bug hunt.

I publish the final episode.

And then I start into *Moon & Sun 3: The Emerald Sun*.

Yep. FINALLY.

I'm not going to rush through writing the final book in the series. In the episode of *Alone in a Room with Invisible People* that Rebecca and I taped yesterday (Episode 13: Plotting VS. Pantsing, which will go live TOMORROW – Tuesday, Oct. 16th) I talk a little bit about why.

I remembered to mention:

- Currently writing my **How to Write a Novel** class demo novel, *Dead Man's Party*
- Whiles also writing the first draft of the **How to Write a Novel** class
- Brainstorming and doing the weekly podcast with Rebecca
- Doing the other stuff that has to fit in with these major activities, like spending time with my guys, answering emails, paying bills, talking with folks on the forums, and doing the still-less-frequent-than-I'd-hoped blog posts

But the biggest thing about getting back to the series is this:

I haven't read the first two books in years, and I have to step back into that world. I'm a visceral writer. I write from inside my characters, doing my best to become them while I'm writing.

So I have reacquaint myself with the nuances of these folks, both good and bad. Walk through the concept map I drew for Book 3. Remember how to step back inside those characters, and become again the girl at the end of childhood who has had the weight of her world land on her shoulders, and who, with a brother she sometimes fights with, friends who aren't as reliable as one would hope, and a cat who's lying through his teeth about who he really is, has to save her people from destruction.

If she doesn't do it, no one will.

I'm hoping to be able to announce the start of the novel around or shortly after Christmas of this year.

I expect that I'll need about a year to write and revise it. I cannot GUARANTEE that's what I'll need, because I'm not just doing one book these days. I'm doing a book, classes, forums, and other things that are possible with the Internet.

Life was simpler in the days of just print publishers and just answering snail mail letters from fans a few times a year.

But cooking on a wood stove and dumping a honey-bucket in the midden downriver from your house were simpler, too. Been there, done that.

Simpler is not always better. *Vive la Internet!*

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AIARWIP Episodes 4, 4.5, and 5: Brainstorming (with worksheets) & more

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

Because of a certain amount of chaos in my daily life right now, I forgot to mention LAST week's TWO Alone In A Room With Invisible People podcasts.

In the Brainstorming Workshop, Part 1, Becca and I develop idea pieces from scratch (using the free, no-opt-in downloadable worksheets linked from the podcast page).

In the mini episode, we go over the problem writers face as **readers**, and what you do if, as a writer, you're not enjoying reading fiction in your genre anymore.

And in THIS week's podcast – the Brainstorming Workshop, Part 2, – we take Becca's raw ideas from the first half of the workshop, and do a second brainstorming session in which she takes the material from the worksheets and turns it into a solid story idea that fits in her world and that she wants to write. (You can download the *Brainstorming With A Partner hints and rules* for this episode without an opt-in, too.)

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1021 words on The Owner's Tale, and Lesson 7 of How to Write Short Stories

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

I'm writing *The Owner's Tale* a little little differently than I usually work.

I generally just do my first draft from beginning to end, but this time, because of the complexity of this story, I worked out the stages in the life of the *Longview's* owner, and am having the owner tell the story of each stage as one short chapter.

When I get this story told, I'll go through and add in interstitial chapters for Herog and Cady, Melie and Shay, and show these in counterpoint to the story the owner is telling.

I might possibly add in a couple other folks, too, though I have mostly wrapped up the stories of the other people in this series.

But I now have 5,524 words of what I'm planning as a 30,000 word story, and a got 1021 of those words today.

And I like what I got.

So, on to Lesson 7 of *How to Write Short Stories*, where I'm 2260 word into demonstrating by dissection the process of working huge amounts of time into short stories, and have the stories still hold together. I'm having a lot of fun with this... except for the parts that keep making me cry.

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Vipers' Nest is live

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

The book went live about a week, week and a half ago. Maybe longer?

I've been buried in getting the HollysWritingClasses.com site done, getting the affiliate program live, and it has been wall-to-wall, morning to night work for the last couple weeks.

So while I did remember to publish the story, I missed mentioning my own book launch. Anywhere. To anyone. <beating head on desk>

But this time I went wide, and part of what I've been doing was taking as much of the rest of my stuff wide as I could.

So here are the WIDE links (which means you can find these books in a bunch of different stores for the first time).

Longview 1-5 IN ORDER:

Born from Fire: <https://books2read.com/born-from-fire>

Suzee

Delight:

<https://books2read.com/the-selling-of-suzee-delight>

Philosopher

Gambit:

<https://books2read.com/the-philosopher-gambit>

Gunslinger Moon: <https://books2read.com/gunslinger-moon>

NEW! Vipers' Nest: <https://books2read.com/vipers-nest>

If you read it and love it, I'd deeply appreciate a review on

your bookstore of choice.

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Vipers' Nest bug-hunts: DONE!

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

What I thought would take one day has instead taken over two weeks and more than six butt-in-chair fully focused hours a day each day of those two weeks.

And I know that I will have introduced some new bugs in fixing the old bugs.

It happens. ALWAYS.

But I have to quit now. HAVE to.

This is as good as I can make the book (and at 38,000 words, it's just under the low-end cutoff for a novel, so I'm not even uncomfortable in calling it a book instead of a story) in the time I have and with the resources I have.

I now have to move on to *How to Write Short Stories* lessons and *How to Write a Novel* class planning.

In a perfect universe, everyone would have infinite time and infinite resources in order to create infinite perfection.

My clock ticks loudly, though.

So I'm going to put the book together in Mobi, ePub, and PDF

formats, and put it live on all the places I can. Today.

Like I said, I'm going wide from the very beginning with this stuff from now on. Will post a link as soon as I have one for those of you interested.

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Vipers' Nest Homestretch – I hope...

written by Holly

March 26, 2019

By Holly Lisle

So... here it is Friday morning, July 6, and I have been working steadily for six hours a day on the bug-hunts for Vipers' Nest every day but Monday...

Granted, as I'm getting into the bug hunts from my later folks, I'm getting a lot of repeat finds.

But I have not had one bug hunter who hasn't found at least half a dozen "uniques" – errors no one else spotted. And I've had several readers who have asked smart and thoughtful questions that required me to rethink and rework portions of the story.

Result?

The story was about 32,000 words in finished revised "final" draft. Before I touch it this morning, it's already 38,473 words. If I end up adding a smidge over 1500 more words, the damn thing becomes a novel.

And I still have five bug hunters to go.

I've been pulling out words, too, but they're losing ground to the ones I'm adding.

Why?

Because the writer who gets an intelligent question about something in the story that isn't answered (because the writer assumed prior knowledge) cannot ignore the question by saying, "Well, to find that out, you have to read the previous stories."

Because here's reality.

The reader *doesn't* have to read the previous stories. The reader can go read someone else's stories that don't assume prior knowledge.

So as lightly as I can, I'm including the tidbits of prior knowledge readers would need to bring in from the previous four stories, **WITHOUT** tipping off the reader to what happens in those stories.

The fun part of this is that, because of the way I plot, I can put in some things that some characters believe to be true (even though other characters know they are not true) so that I'm not cheating in hiding details while still making sure I don't spoil the earlier stories for readers who **DO** go through them out of order.

But it's slow and careful work, and what I thought I was going to fly through in a day or two is now at the end of my second week of doing just the story **ALMOST** full time.

And I already know that I'm going to have to go through this when I'm done, read it out loud, and do a final *Bug-Hunt* bug-hunt to eliminate new errors I've introduced.

You'll be getting a better and richer story out of this. Just not this week.

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