

The Wishbone Conspiracy: 2027 words, and a Change in the 3-Novels Experiment

By Holly Lisle

Got pretty decent words today on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*. 2027 new words, taking me to a total of 23,873 words in the novel.

I mostly like what I got, though I had a bit of a hard start.

And that's what I want to talk about today.

The "Write on three different novels each week" experiment worked very well. Until it didn't.

I was writing first draft of *Dead Man's Party* on Mondays, first draft of **Moon & Sun: The Emerald Sun** on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and first draft of **Cadence Drake: The Wishbone Conspiracy** on Thursdays and Fridays.

Getting 1515 words or better on Mondays, about 1500 words on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 2000-ish words on Thursdays and Fridays.

BUT...

It required a big mental shift, and rolling through three very different projects back to back to back started taking a toll on me.

I kept going... but then I started research in improving the marketing I've done – or in many cases haven't done – on my work, and current methods of increasing Amazon sales, and experimenting with copywriting and cover design and split testing and...

Along with writing the three novels, and writing a new lesson every week in my new **How to Write a Novel** class, and answering student questions, and working with Dan on getting the final pieces of the HollysWritingClasses.com website out of beta, plus spending time with my family...

Well, the fiction broke down just a little. And I hit what I have come to recognize as the “trying to do too much at once” wall.

Dead Man's Party has to stay. It's my demonstration novel for *How to Write a Novel*.

My writing on *The Wishbone Conspiracy* is still running smoothly.

But the writing on *The Emerald Sun* hit a wall.

This is a book I need to be able to throw myself into exclusively: to NOT be writing other fiction at the same time. It has a specific voice and some specific worldbuilding and a place it's going that is very different from other things I write. It has a deep world that I have not been writing in recently, characters who have become strangers to me, and both Tuesday and yesterday, my mind simply balked. Refused to work on *Emerald Sun*.

Was real damn happy to offer up copywriting, cover design, threw ideas at me for both *The Wishbone Conspiracy* and *Dead Man's Party*.

But it dug in its heels on what was supposed to have been the work of the day.

Had all my fiction crashed on me, I would be taking a different approach than the one I'm taking starting today, but two of three books – the one with NO previous worldbuilding, and the one with a ton of worldbuilding, but in which I've been writing regularly for the last eight or so years – are

still fine.

So now I enter Phase Two of the experiment.

This is pretty simple. Monday will still be *Dead Man's Party*, and still 1515 words or thereabouts each week, followed by working on HTWAN, answering questions in the forum, doing the help desk tickets that require me, working with my moderators, working with Dan on the site, answering emails, and other daily task.

With *Dead Man's Party*, I have to have this amount, and JUST this amount, for my class and to make sure I'm applying the material from the various lessons as I write. So I can't just write ahead and be done with this particular novel. Each chapter has to be written along with each lesson.

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, I'm going to be shooting for 2000 words per day on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*.

That will give me six-thousand first-draft words on that book each week.

I currently have 23,873 words total, and with a 90,000-word target for completion of the first draft, need another 66,000 words (rounded) to hit my target.

So some book math. At 6000 words per week, I'll have the first draft finished in about eleven weeks. Figure I'll have it done around May 17th.

This is nobody's fastest pace on a novel ever, and if it were the only thing I was doing, I could get it done a lot faster. But it isn't, and what I'm looking for at this point is...

SUSTAINABLE FICTION CREATION.

A system that I can put into action and stick with, that will allow me to maintain my nonfiction work while creating regular publishable new fiction.

Now...

Those of you who didn't get sidetracked by the book math are going, "WAIT A MINUTE!!! What about Tuesday?"

Very good.

Tuesday, my first two to three hours will be focused on marketing my current backlist and learning how to do a better job of launching my front list.

It will also give me a clean break between Fiction Project One and Fiction Project Two.

And it will carry me to the completion of Fiction Project One AND Fiction Project Two at about the point where I also have the class **How to Write a Novel** completed in the Splinters version.

At that point, I'll have two finished novels in need of revision, editing, covers, marketing, bug hunting, launching, and publication.

And at that point, I'll figure out what happens next. I'll probably dive all the way into *The Emerald Sun* at that point.

And look at possible new writing classes or workshops I could create.

But as always...

This plan is subject to revision as I experiment and figure out new definitions for what I want to accomplish, and new

ways to accomplish my objectives.

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Writing the Novel: Developing the Yes/No Relationship

By Holly Lisle

Between migraines, three days of being unable to sleep, and actually being sick for the first time in a long time, I did not have a great weekend. Or get anything done.

But I'm set up to write now. I'm starting at 4915 words, and shooting for 1500 tonight. And I want to develop the conflict between the hero and the heroine.

I already know it's big. I've outlined the whole thing on screens full of index cards. But it has to start big. I hate trite. The stupid misunderstanding, the disagreement over the trivial—to me, if you have two people that you want to have end up together and a part of the story is about the conflict that is keeping them apart, that conflict has to matter. To both of them. They both have to know what it is, they both have to understand the terms, and it has to be something big enough that they won't bend their principles.

They have to earn being together, by building the thing that fixes the conflict. Not a patch, not he gives in to get her, not a compromise. A real fix.

So tonight, I'm laying the groundwork for that big conflict. It needs to start with both of them telling the truth—and

discovering that their truths put them on opposite sides of a great divide.

Yes, they are attracted to each other.

No, they aren't going to pursue this relationship, because they would be wrong for each other. Events will then clobber hell out of them while proving them wrong...but that's then. This is now, and tonight is all about Yes/No.

Onward, then.

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Building Rome In A Day, or How Not to Move

By Holly Lisle

Somewhere along the way, someone told me something was impossible.

Actually, I know exactly where and when.

It was my first day of seventh-grade art class, and my art teacher told me that the gray in the center of the color wheel, that color representative of what you got when you mixed all the colors, could not actually be made without the use of either black or white.

I said I bet I could do it, and she said if I could, she'd give me an A for the year.

I set out to prove her wrong, mixing colors madly, and ending

up with a very nice gray.

Of course, I realized later, I had mixed it all on white paper, so while I got extra credit for the day for having taken on the challenge (and ended up earning an A for the year anyway), I discovered to my chagrin that I had failed to conquer that challenge.

I haven't tried it since. Some part of me is holding on to the, "Oh, yes, I can," of that moment, and not wanting to believe it can't be done.

I hate the word "impossible." To me, it means both "oh, yeah, just watch me," and "just one more attempt and I'll have this."

So I figured that we could do a quick, painless, efficient move, and I'd be back up and running at full steam in a week. I gave myself two weeks just as a buffer.

Nobody I had ever known had done this, but I was willing to bet I could.

Ha!

We started the move on February 23rd.

TODAY is the first day that I can actually sit down at my desk and write.

So, for those of you who might be considering a move, here are ten DOs and DON'Ts to help you achieve the rumored-to-be-impossible... the quick and painless move.

- **DO assume that the one thing you need the most when you get where you're going will be the ONE thing you cannot get done with any kind of speed, no matter whom you tip, bribe, beg, or hire.** FOR EXAMPLE: If Internet is your single biggest potential point of failure, scope out every Internet cafe, internet provider, and Internet

alternative you can BEFORE you move, and don't rely on the people you hired to provide it doing so in anything resembling a timely manner.

- **DON'T assume that the place where you want to rent your truck will also have boxes**—in fact, figure that you will have to travel to at least five different locations to scavenge boxes because the Air Force Base in your area is in the midst of a major personnel transition, and boxes cannot be had for love or money unless you have a secret source.
- **DO cultivate black-market sources of boxes.** Former employers and former employees, friends, neighbors, and places where you notice a lot of Fedex and UPS deliveries but not a lot of pick-ups are all possibilities.
- **DON'T think you're brain will be able to do anything creative while you're moving.** You're stressing about bills, mailing addresses, transferring all your catalogues, magazines, and mail, stuff breaking, stuff getting lost, packing, unpacking, throwing things out, work, school, and food. Any plotting you do will be limited to figuring out how to get your house wired for internet. (Or whatever YOUR big disaster turns out to be.
- **DO realize you're going to forget something major that you need.** For me, it was the special ergonomic keyboard tray with which I'd modified my desk. We brought two of the three desks in the house. The one we left behind was mine.
- **DON'T think you'll be able to replace that major thing you need in a simple or sensible fashion.** The keyboard tray I own is no longer manufactured. I did manage to find another one, but whereas I'd paid \$30 bucks for mine at Office Depot (about the same price I paid for my desk), I discovered that when you can finally find it, the only alternative that now exists costs \$114, which is simply ridiculous.

- **DO have your truck lined up well in advance of your move date.** Otherwise you'll discover that a large military population shift has made trucks harder to find than boxes.
- **DON'T move prior to doing your taxes, especially if the tax deadline is upon you.** I spent two days after we got here frantically tracking down all the boxes in which I'd put all my tax stuff, and eight hours a day for three days organizing the mess into something I could take in to my accountant.
- **DO rent a dumpster before you move and throw out everything you haven't used in a year or more.** DO give away or get rid of 5000 lbs of your 10,000 lbs of books. You're going to have to carry all those suckers down one set of stairs and up another, and if you only keep the books you love madly, adore endlessly, and can no longer replace, your back, your legs, and all those bruised spots on your arms will thank you. DO give Goodwill half your yarn. Are you even going to live long enough to knit up the other half? DO realize that psychic space and physical elbow room are the things you will yearn for most when you are navigating your way between boxes, and the fewer boxes you take, the fewer you have to unpack.
Less is a whole lot more when you're moving.
- **DON'T kill, maim, or batter anyone in the first month after the move.** Sooner or later, everything will be hooked up and working, and your sanity will come back with it.

As much as you had to begin with, anyway.

So, no, moving is not impossible. Having fun while doing it may be. Doing it in the timeframe you allotted for it may be. But prepare for everything, assume nothing, and remember that redundancy is nature's way of ensuring survival and have

redundant support for everything critical. You'll get through it.

Finally, here's my Rome—not built in a day, but worth the effort.

My New Office



My New Window



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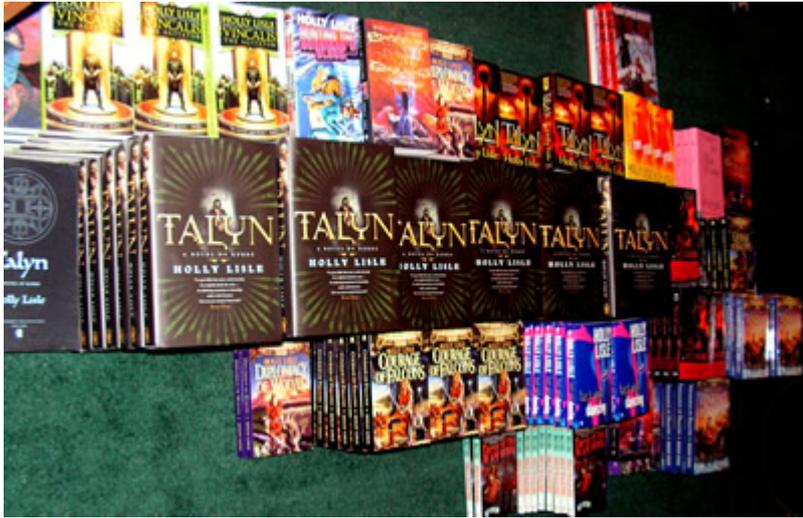
A Book Giveaway (sort of)

By Holly Lisle

Lots of my novels for free if you'll pay the postage.

SUNDAY ADDITION:

I underestimated the extent of my problem. And I do have a few copies of some of the later Baen books. And I found the missing **Vengeance of Dragons** copies. Lots of them.



Any more volunteers?

Also, much to my amazement, I have no remaining copies of the historical thing. Many apologies. Holly

P.S. The scary thing is, I suspect there are still more books hiding in corners. I'm afraid.

SATURDAY: The Original Post

I have a bunch of copies of my own work I need to get rid of.

- I'd have one massive contest and winners galore, but I can't afford the shipping for that many books.

- I can't sell them—that's in the contracts.
- I don't want to dump them at libraries; I'd rather give them to individual folks.
- I considered doing a **Books of the Wild** thing, where I'd send boxes of books to people who agreed to send all but one of the books out into the world to meet new people, who could then log into a **Wild Books Tracking Station** to note where they got their book, and where they passed it on when they were done with it, with rules taped into the inside front covers to let the readers know how to find and log into the tracking station, (I thought this would be particularly cool) but as previously noted, I don't have the money for all that shipping, and I can't ask folks to pay shipping and then only keep one book.

So...

I have at least a few of most of my more recent books (most of my post-Baen work) and a lot of a few of them. And I have some flat rate shipping boxes that ship to anywhere in the US for \$8.95. In order to cover PayPal fees and packing up the box, add an extra dollar—total US shipping will be \$9.95. Each box will comfortably fit 6 paperbacks, and as long as they last, one hardcover or galley. When I run out of hardcovers and galleys, I'll throw in three extra paperbacks. (These are likely to be duplicates. If I have to send duplicates and you didn't indicate that you wanted them, I'll let you know before you pay for the shipping.)

If you're willing to pay the postage, I'll ship you a box of mixed books. If you don't mind duplicates (to give to friends, for example), please note this in your entry. I have quite a few paperback **Talyns**, for example.

I'll autograph one book in each box—I hurt my wrists, the

right one especially, from too much knitting, which I've been using to deal with stress, and typing is painful and hand-writing pure agony. (Forget knitting. At the moment, I can barely hold yarn.) So give me your wish-list of three books you'd like to own in autographed form in order of your preference, and if I have it, I'll sign and include one of those three books in the box. If I don't, I'll pick what I think is the best book in the box and autograph that one. These books won't be personalized, just dated and signed. I apologize for this, because I usually personalize unless requested not to, but ... pain. We're not going to mention how exciting it is to type this.

I also have a couple of surprises (still my books, but special or odd in some way or another). No comment on those, but they'll ship in the first boxes to go out.

All books are new, unread, but some do have dings on corners or other flaws—the boxes seem to pass through punishment testing en route to me from time to time.

If you enjoy ancient historical fiction, note this and I'll throw in an unrelated book of which I happen to have a whole bunch of copies. If you *really* like it, I'll send a few extra (I have lots and lots of copies). Just ask.

Here are the rules:

- 1. You have to have some way of using PayPal**, whether through your own PayPal account, a debit card, credit card, or checking account, to do this.
- 2. Don't send any money until I've packed your box and contacted you** (and we've agreed on the shipping price if you're outside the US).
- 3. Special requests are first come, first served.**

4. **All book boxes are ALSO first come, first served.**
5. **If you have any books you already have and don't want to accidentally get another of (even to pass on), please list these.**
6. **The times on replies will serve as the final arbiter of who asked first.** I will religiously check the spam and rescue requests while this offer is ongoing. If you have fallen afoul of the spam-catcher, let me know right away at **holly AT hollylisle DOT com.**
7. **This offer is only good until I run out of books.**

The average value of a box of 6 paperback books with one hardcover will be about \$67. I can't guess the value of the galleys, but to collectors, I'm sure they're fairly valuable. Average value of a box of nine paperbacks without a hardcover or galley will be about \$63. If you're outside the US, keep this number in mind when figuring shipping. You don't want to pay more than the value of the books, and you'd probably want to stop at about half the value. For orders outside the US, we'll figure on a case-by-case basis. You're never obligated to buy—if shipping is too much for your budget, I can pack up just one or two books for you in a sturdy envelope or little box, or you can pass your box on to the next person on the list.

Make sure your e-mail address in your account on this weblog is correct, because that's how I'll contact each of you.

That's it. If you're interested, let me know here. The giveaway starts now.

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A Rethink Day on ISY

By Holly Lisle

I See You started meandering on me. I could feel it turning sideways, so rather than continue, I spent this morning doing a line-per-scene for the last 24 scenes of the book. I'm not quite satisfied yet, but I have enough to keep the boat sailing in the right direction while I get the last bit right before the ending (which I've known since I finished the proposal, and which will NOT need to be reworked). I'm still okay on time to finish this.

Now I need to get to work on **Hawkspar**, where I need a solid charge-ahead day. I'm in the middle of the Wall of Alarming Colors, managed to rip out two completely unnecessary red-card scenes and toss them [insert wild cheering here], and am facing the rest with grim determination. After this, a field of cool green revision awaits.

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More On the Midnight Rain Sale

By Holly Lisle

Okay, I know a little more now. The manuscript for **Midnight Rain** will be due April 15, 2004. Probably will be on the

schedule in 2005, but I don't know exactly when yet and won't for a while. Contracts are on the way, which is very, very fast.

So. My writing schedule looks like this. 135,000 more words on **Talyn** by Nov. 15, revise from Nov. 15-December 13, print on Dec. 14, mail on the 14th or 15th. Take off until Jan. 1. Start the revisions of **Midnight Rain** then, hand in a segment of around 70-100 pages by Feb. 1st, hand in the completed novel by April 15th. (I'm hoping to do this part of the schedule faster, frankly.)

Gods Old and Dark should land on the shelves right around then, so that will be my new book in 2004.

Then, as soon as **Midnight Rain** is in the mail, I'll start on **Tor II**. Have to conceive, outline, and write 250,000 words on that one by Nov. 15, 2004, and have the final draft mailed in by Dec. 15, 2004. Take off until Jan. 1st, 2005. Start in on **Mainstream II**, which I've just contracted, with a submittable draft due by, I think, June 2005.

Steady work. I'm really excited about this.

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When In Doubt, Drop Back and Punt

By Holly Lisle

I'm making real progress again on **Talyn**. Got a 1500 word net gain yesterday in spite of removing a solid chunk of text. I

did it by going back to exactly the point where things went badly wrong, and writing the scene I should have written the first time. Sometimes I can pretend I got it right and just keep going, but this time I couldn't get the brain to play along with the fingers.

So I actually fixed something in mid-first-draft.

I left in everything that I know that I'll eventually have to cut, too – I know this is cowardice on my part – the equivalent of pretending the badly damaged net under the tightrope is better than nothing – but I'm hoping that as I work my way through I'll find something salvageable in the material that has to go. Any part of that hundred pages that I don't have to discard will be to the good.

And just to add to the excitement, now I have to finish the galleys for **Gods Old and Dark** and get them back to Diana promptly, something that I'm going to have to do sitting on the couch in the afternoon while the kidlet is building Bionicles.

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Finished Editor's Revisions on Gods Old and Dark

By Holly Lisle

:: celebrating ::

Tomorrow I print, the next day I mail. In the meantime, I'm going to get into that line-for-scene thing for **Talyn**.

Down to the last new scene in Gods Old and Dark

By Holly Lisle

I've been plugging away on editor-requested revisions for the better part of the month, and I'm finally down to the last new scene that I have to write (and in fact when I quit today I was halfway through it). After completing it, I have two more scenes total to revise – I think I'll be able to finish the whole thing tomorrow. I'm relieved. This has been a revision done with a tremendous amount of outside stress, and it has consequently taken a lot longer than the two weeks I estimated for the project.

This starts me out a bit behind where I wanted to be with **Talyn** but I'd built enough padding into my schedule that I should still be able to catch up fairly well. I'm guessing that I'll be ready to start the actual writing on the new book next week (still a bit out line-for-scene outlining that remains to be done before I leap into that.) It'll be good to get into something new.

Ack, ack, ack, eeeuww!

By Holly Lisle

Every once in a while, working your way through a revision, you'll notice that you've reused a phrase two or three times, or, if you really weren't careful, more. In **Gods Old and Dark**, I had six – count 'em, **six** – instances of 'sad smiles', which has to be a recent record for pounding a phrase into the ground.

Goddamn. This is the sort of thing that isn't so obvious when you're writing the book, because you're doing the writing over a period of months and individual words and phrases fade into the fog as you fight to come up with your next batch of pages. But when you're reading it, you start hoping for the horrific deaths of all these sad smilers.

Well, none remain. Not a single one. It's a boring image anyway. Ah, yes, the poor woman with her sad little smile, screaming 'pity me' from the slump of her shoulders to her big, woeful eyes. I did not take a flamethrower to the characters, though after about the third sad little smile I was ready. But I did replace all that pitifulness with better imagery and a bit more punch.

Thank God for revision.

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