

# Beta day

written by Holly

January 22, 2003

By Holly Lisle

I spent three hours this morning putting together my beta reader copies and getting them out the door. I got to switch over the work in progress listed in my community signature from **Gods Old and Dark** to **Midnight Rain** – I finally get to get back to it and do that last few thousand words, and then jump into the revision. I'm so excited about **that** that I almost can't type.

And I'm doing career assessment this week. Big stuff, and not a lot of fun – trying to figure out where I am and where I want to be and how the hell to get there. I've now finished off the last of my contracted books, and it's time to see where I stand, with twenty-five books written and twenty-three sold. If I'd had this same career twenty years ago, I think I'd be farther along. But much as it's pleasant to think about that, it's pretty pointless – I have my career now, and the issues writers face now are the ones that I have to deal with.

On the 25th, I'll get my quick-turnaround beta comments back, and on the 26th I'll collate them and get to work fixing the manuscript so that I can have it out the door by the 30th.

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# **I'm done!**

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

I'm done, I'm done, I'm done! 106,000 words, and I like the ending. Hah! I think I like the whole thing. I'll package it and send it to my beta readers tomorrow, but tonight, I'm just going to celebrate. Hot chocolate and pretzels and maybe a sappy movie.

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## **Down to the last two scenes**

written by Holly

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I'll finish sometime today!

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## **Four scenes**

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The big finish is going well. I got four complete, brand-new scenes done this morning, and I love what I got. Manuscript is right at 108,000 words, though after I finish the climactic scenes, I'm going to have to lop off the old ending – so I figure it'll go down to about 104,000 or so. But then I'll still need to write a couple of new wrap-up scenes. If I got froggy (and managed a nap this afternoon) I could conceivably finish the thing tonight. More likely, however, I'll work on it tonight, and tomorrow, and do the final words on Wednesday. I don't want to rush, but I really am getting good flow through this leg of the run, and I want to stay with it and stay in the story as much as possible. I'll see how it goes.

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## Howling toward the end

written by Holly  
January 22, 2003  
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Writing yesterday went beautifully – I got three scenes. Today it is tearing along, too – I'm excited. The end is in sight. I'm doing the climactic scenes now; it's all new stuff because I really hated what I had, and what I'm getting is gorgeous. It ties in everything that came before, and it grabs me and twists. Another couple of days and I'm finally, finally, finally going to be done with **Gods Old and Dark**. I haven't had a post-book celebration in a while, but I think I'm going to celebrate the finish of this one.

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# Triumph of the Dog's Breakfast

written by Holly

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So – I feel somewhere between the dog's breakfast and underdone death. Nevertheless, I decided to write today. Desperation hath limits, but clinging flu ceased being one of them. And because I've been stalled out on the climactic scene, which I have rewritten and discarded too many times now – at about three thousand words a pop – I decided to start writing earlier today by just writing some notes to myself.

I did this rambling little piece about how I couldn't figure out the point of view for the scene, and how I needed these specific actions from each of the characters, and how I wanted to see particular challenges and character development for a couple of them. I pointed out a personal struggle Molly is having.

And 'click'. The scene – or rather, the three scenes that will replace the one scene I kept crashing over – fell into place. Much to my elation, the words are coming, and the first scene of the new triptych is filling out, and we win one for the dog's breakfast, which would really like to go lie quietly in a corner somewhere except that my overdue deadline is getting deader and deader.

Onward, then, with triumph in my heart and and a touch of nausea elsewhere.

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# Hack, cough, wheeze, groan

written by Holly

January 22, 2003

By Holly Lisle

Still sick. Did not write yesterday. Am not writing today. Going back to bed immediately after posting this, and staying there until I feel well enough to write.

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# Arrgh

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

Today did not go well, writing-wise. I'm hoping tonight will be better.

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# A moment for appreciation

written by Holly

January 22, 2003

By Holly Lisle

I'm up – writing this morning in spite of the fact that I feel like hell. Doing a Baanraak and June Bug scene, and a Rekkthav scene (poor Rekkthav – junior dark god with “Kick Me” painted on the back of his carapace and a problem with bosses that just makes you want to weep) and feeling like crap, I am still having a whole lot of fun. The pages are rolling, the music is going, and this is what it's supposed to feel like. (Except for the fever, but ignore that.)

I'm in a mood to wax effusive. It isn't the fever talking, either. I think I made enough noise about my loathing for the whole Microsoft Windows XP concept (“pay big bucks to be our spyware/bugware OS beta tester, and call MommyRedmond to get our permission to reinstall your already-paid-for OS every time you change configurations or reformat your hard drive”) and about my search for something to save me from upgrading to anything Windows ever again that the fact that I've switched operating systems will elicit an eyeroll and an ‘oh, yeah, big surprise’ from most of the folks who read this. I kept looking for a Linux version that I could get to run on my old configuration – I wanted Linux because I loved the idea of open source software.

Well, I'm running Unix instead, of which Linux is an offshoot, and running straight Unix open-source software seamlessly and side by side with Apple software on my new iMac – the Christmas present that has had a bigger effect on my life and the pleasure I get in the physical aspects of my work than any present I've ever received or any purchase I've made myself. As a thoughtful gift for your resident writer, an iMac just friggin' goes off the scale.

I have the baseline flat-screen model, which is like saying “I got the **little** Mercedes for Christmas”. Dropped an extra 256 megs of RAM in myself, a process that took three minutes from start to finish including opening and closing the case.

At rock bottom, it is just another computer, and just another operating system. The stuff you can do on OS X, the new Mac operating system, you can do on Windows, or Linux, or traditional Unix, or FreeBSD or anything else currently out there. You can process words and images and numbers, you can play games, and you can use the Internet, printers and other peripherals. Apple hasn’t found a way to make the thing write the words for you, so when you switch, you’ll have just as much work ahead of you to get the books written as you had before.

But my analogy to a Mercedes (the finest car I’ve ever ridden in, bar none) was not made lightly. You can get from New York to California in a Hugo, or you can get there in in an S-Class – the difference will be in how much you enjoy the trip. And, honey child, in the world of computing, I have been driving Hugos since 1985. I’ve written twenty-four novels on Microsoft systems, so it can be done. You have to get used to the feel of springs poking in your kidneys, and you have to be willing to forego air conditioning, and you have to plan ahead for frequent crashes and weary down-time, and sleepovers in bad hotels with giant cockroaches. You’ll hone your vocabulary of four-letter words to razor sharpness, and expand it into the realm of ten-letter profanity on bad days. But you can get twenty-four novels out on Win boxes. Only, if you don’t have to, why the hell would you want to? And now, for the first time, even if you’re command-line phobic and dread the unfriendliness of Linux, there really is a better way.

Everything is integrated in OS X. Frinstance ... If I want to move my music over from the disks that I laboriously made when leaving my Win box, I drop the the Windows-made disk into the CD-RW drive (yeah, the iMac will read your Windows-formatted

disks and files. Don't look for the same politeness from your Win box with your Mac stuff), and when its icon appears, I drag it into the open window of iTunes. The music is all instantly filed for me, sorted away, and added to the main playlist. I want to set up a few of my songs on a disk to take with me to keep the current book's soundtrack with me? I create a playlist by making a name for it, dragging the songs I want into it – and then I open my new playlist and click "Burn CD," right from iTunes. It burns in the background while I'm writing, and researching online. Wait for the machine to work? I don't think so. I'll have six or seven other things going at the same time, and everything will work anyway. Well ... every once in a while Word freezes up. (It is, after all, a Microsoft product. Crashes come with the territory, no extra charge.) But when Word dies on me, I get a little message – "Your application has unexpectedly quit. None of the rest of your applications have been affected." I re-open Word, fish out the saved copy the machine has thoughtfully dropped into the Microsoft User Data folder on my desktop, and go back to work. I have GIMP, a Unix image creation program open on my desk with OS X Dreamweaver MX and OS X Word all open together, everything running simultaneously, everything working together, and I can move stuff from the Apple programs to the Unix program and back without a glitch, a blink, a stutter. Everything works. And while I'm doing all this other stuff, my music runs in the background, smoothly and without stutters.

Blue Screen of Death, you say? No, Mercedes did not see the need to include planned breakdowns in its cars, and Apple, with OS X, did not see the need to include them in its OS. (Please note – I used Apple machines with earlier OSes – I **hated** them. I don't like mice, I don't like being constrained to mousing. I like keyboard commands – and OS X has them if you want them. I didn't like the frequent crashing, either. I thought, 'Hell, I already have that. Why change?')

The open-source community is working madly to bring Unix



applications to the Mac with OS X. Scripting is already here if you want to put the time into writing your own – or just plug and play the ones that come pre-installed. With your OS comes an amazingly generous complement of included, quality software that you'd have to pay through the nose for if you wanted something similar for your Win box. The command line is readily available if you choose to use it – I've poked around a bit, but, hell, I write books. For me, the command line is fun, but I'll never need it. Everything I need to do, I can do in the most gorgeous interface I've ever seen.

At some point, it becomes about comfort. About fit and finish. About being able to drop a BB at the top of the hood of the car and watch it roll all the way to the bottom without having it fall in anywhere. The flat-screen iMac and OS X have that comfort. That fit and finish. All the seams are smooth. The engine purrs, so softly it's just music. You can get from New York to California without having to mess with the radiator, fix flat tires, drop in a new transmission, roll down the window and eat dust when the AC dies.

This is a computer and an operating system combo with class. I haven't been excited about tech stuff in about ten years. I am now. I've just found a computer I can love.

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# **Disease Day in Deadline-Land**

written by Holly  
January 22, 2003  
By Holly Lisle

I'm down with something. Matt got it first, and has been sick as hell for about a week, but he's getting better. Now it's my turn. I woke up this morning feeling rocky, but put it down to not enough sleep. Got up, wrote, did okay – though I'm going to have to slice out about three thousand words first thing tomorrow, boy howdy, and I'm SO looking forward to that. But as the day progressed, I felt sicker and sicker and sicker, and now I rank my self high on the list of People To Be Avoided by the Healthy.

Coughing, aching, headache, more coughing, general malaise and overall wobbliness. I'm going to dodge into a hole and drink lots of fluids and hope this passes quickly. I'm one of those people I can't stand to be around when I'm sick.

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