

Do I still recommend John Locke? No.

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle



Cheaters and
Liars

Back at the end of June, 2011, I read a book that succeeded because of a lie, and I turned my entire life upside down as a result of that lie.

The book was, of course, John Locke's **How I Sold 1 Million Ebooks in 5 Months**.

Like a lot of other writers, I let myself be suckered in.

I bought the pretty lie hook, line, and sinker.

The writer, John Locke, had the bestsellers that seemed to prove the validity of his approach. I didn't like them, but I'm not everybody's reader. He had the seeming endorsement of Amazon, which had sent out a single-title recommendation of his book.

And mostly, I WANTED to believe.

Sadly, his whole house of cards rested on the unspoken promise

that he had actually done what he said he'd done—wrote a blog post a month, hung out on Twitter, talked to people, and wrote good books.

I know I write good books. And I desperately wanted to get back to fiction, which I'd put on hold after a couple of nightmare experiences.

One nightmare was with an editor at Tor (now an ex-editor) disemboweling HAWKSPAR, a novel that I then had to fight like hell to get returned to *my* version, which still included both main characters.

The second was waiting six months for Scholastic to pay me, after having approved the book...and watching my finances circle the drain while I waited.

WHILE my finances were circling the drain, I started self-publishing nonfiction (**Create A Character Clinic** was my first onsite self-pub project), and I did very well at that. Well enough that I started creating other writing courses, and put fiction aside for a few years.

But I love fiction, and saw John Locke's method as my opportunity to revive my Cadence Drake series (which was only ever a series to me, since Jim Baen refused to reprint HUNTING THE *CORRIGAN'S BLOOD* after it hit Locus bestseller lists two months running, and sold through its initial printing in four months).

I know I'm repeating what a lot of you already know. I'm sorry. I have a point.

Based on John Locke's lies about how he hit bestseller lists, I ditched a whole long list of planned nonfiction courses, and revived my fiction career. I'm now a couple weeks out from finishing the first draft of my second Cadence Drake novel: **WARPAINT**.

I've planned the revival of another series, MOON & SUN.

I have a list of partially completed novels that have been sitting on my hard drive that I want to finish.

HOWEVER...

First, I recommended this asshole. I'm very sorry about that. I'm sorry if you bought his book on my recommendation, and I'm sorry if you—like me—thought he was telling the truth.

Second, I took a MAJOR financial hit for stopping writing course production to focus on fiction. I paid, and paid, and paid some more, and told myself it would be okay, because I write good novels, and using Locke's method, I'd come out all right.

But I won't. At least not anywhere near as well as what he suggested was possible. Because I won't buy reviews. I won't do what MAKE A KILLING ON KINDLE author Michael Alvear suggests either, and make a bunch of fake Amazon accounts so I can review my own books.

I've never cheated at publishing, and I'm not going to start now.

Did anything good come out of the wreckage I've wrought in my writing business?

Yes.

1. I'm about done with WARPAINT, and I love it, and I know I'm never walking away from my fiction again.
2. And... And... No. That's it. Just the one thing.

I'm picking up the teaching. Resuming creating courses, offering them exclusively on my site again—though I'll still do Kindle and Nook versions of everything. And of course I'll leave the HTTS Direct version available on Kindle, Nook, and

Apple (still haven't uploaded the last lessons, but I've been scrambling and doing damage control for a while now). Maybe it will eventually take off in those versions and make the expense worth the massive time and effort it took.

So what happens next?

First, I'll write fiction every morning, because it remains joyful and wonderful—and moreso because I know some publisher or editor won't manage to wreck the joy of it.

Second, I'll create more writing courses. I'll teach and create courses at a slower pace, because from now on, fiction gets the first few hours of my morning every day.

The plan now is, in other words, to work hard, create the best stuff I'm capable of creating, and count on quality to keep a roof over my head.

This is one of those times, though, when I wish my blog was still titled **REAL WRITERS BOUNCE...** because after falling for a liar's lies, you bounce or you fail.

If you bounce, you pick yourself up, figure out how to put yourself back together, and you go on.

I'm a real writer. I know how to bounce.

RESOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE:

New York Times

Karen Woodward

Three Percent

Tales from the Sith Witch

Jane Friedman

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Back To Fiction

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I've had to take a bunch of days off, and I don't see that changing anytime soon.

However, when I've been up to it, I've been working. On **Rebel Tales**, on **NovelWritingSchool.com**, and also on fiction.

I was doing pretty well with **TalysMana**, but my daughter has some scheduling problems right now, so we're having to put that on hold until she gets her schedule worked out.

Meanwhile, I'm putting together some shortish serial fiction for **Rebel Tales**. The current piece is **Help Wanted**, introducing a new heroine in a new SF world. I also want to write some Cadence Drake shorts for Rebel Tales. And I'm considering what I could do in the way of Tonk short stories for Rebel Tales Fantasy—probably not Talyn, probably not Hawkspar.

You can watch the progress on the progress bars to the right.

ADDED LATER: Got 581 words on **Help Wanted** tonight.

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Halloween Tonk

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Got an email from a reader who loved **Talyn** and wanted to make herself a Tonk Shielder uniform.

She used **Talyn** as her basic reference, and got a lot of the rest of the details from the Tonk Stuff I've posted online.

She asked me a few additional questions, though, I provided details, and she sent me her Halloween pictures, along with permission to post them here. I thought this was really cool, so I present to you, EJ, Tonk Shielder.

Start with the clan mark tattooed on her left hand. You can find ALL the Tonk Clan Marks here:

https://hollylisle.com/images/tonk_clans_&_clan_symbols.jpg

You'll note that EJ is Clan Berdaa, (pronounced bair-DAY-ah) one of the New Clans.

I was able to provide a good description for the insignia on the beret—I hadn't gone into detail on the battle ribbons, so EJ had to wing those.

And finally, the full Tonk Shielder uniform with cap and beret.

If you ever do a costume from one of my books, I'd love to see the pictures, and I'll be thrilled to post them here.

(With, maybe, an exception for the bodyart in **Hunting The Corrigan's Blood**. Nudity and all, you know.)

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A thoughtful post on Christian/Muslim reconciliation

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The writer of this is Quaker (I used to be) and a visiting scholar at Yale Divinity School. My personal take on **any** religion is “no, thanks,” but I am a firm supporter of *freedom* of religion. And of tolerance, defined as follows: I will tolerate you, your quirks, and your beliefs, if you will tolerate me, my quirks, and my beliefs, and if nothing you do imposes on the rights of others to life, liberty, and the pursuit of lawful happiness. I, in my part, will not impose on your right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of lawful happiness.

I will not pretend to be someone I’m not in order to have you like me under false pretenses. I ask that you return the favor.

And I don’t tolerate child molesters, rapists, murderers, or factions of religions whose only happiness can be achieved if I am subsumed into their religion, or killed for not joining.

This is, I think, a reasonable definition of tolerance. It may not be perfect, but neither am I.

And with that thought, I give you Sarah Ruden writing for the Wall Street Journal on Yale’s Christian/Muslim Reconciliation Conference.

Some of what she had to say made me think of **Talyn**. Some of it made me think of **Hawkspar**.

Thanks to Jim for the link.

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My Super-Secret Agenda Revealed

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Arconna said—The fact that Democrats accused Republicans of fiddling with votes and intentionally disenfranchising voters who had names similar to criminals is just as disturbing as Democrats doing the same thing. All that that proves is that no party has the interests of the American people in mind, just their own. Iâ€™m absolutely sick of this divide between parties.

YES! That's it. **That's** my secret agenda! I want the Democrats and the Republicans, people in any third parties, and those of us who have NO party that stands for what we think and believe, to work together for the good of the country, and the good of the citizens in it.

All the ceaseless bickering partisanship, all the Democrats Are Bad, Republicans Are Bad, We're Better Than You Are idiocy, is destroying all of us. The nation is too big to and to diverse to speak with one voice. But its varied voices need

to start talking to each other, rather than at each other.

The Romans invented “Divide and Conquer” and both Republicans and Democrats from the far edges of their respective constituencies, and we are a nation deeply divided, when most of us share the common ground of love of liberty, a belief in human rights and freedoms, the right to the pursuit of happiness, and the value of representative government made up of people who ACTUALLY REPRESENT US. Our divisions are taking all of that away from us, a piece here and a piece there, from both ends of the spectrum.

HUGE SPOILER WARNING FOR TALYN FOLLOWS—

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It's Out There (The Ruby Key is Live)

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I've been haunting the local bookstore, and **THE RUBY KEY** isn't on the shelves yet, so it didn't really dawn on me that people are already reading it.

But Tina already has a review up (and is giving a copy away), and I'm not ready.

I knit two pairs of Genna's socks to give away, and they're done, but not blocked, and I haven't done certificates of authenticity for them or anything. At the moment, they're just two teenager-sized pairs of woolly green socks.

If you spot the book, please let me know where you find it (in the store—YA, front of the store, in with the adult fantasy...I worry about where it's going to land), and when it lands.

Meanwhile, I'll get the sock stuff done for the giveaway.

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HAWKSPAR copyedit done

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Done, done, and done the way I meant the book to be. My editor should have that massive stack of pages in her hands tomorrow. I'm relieved, exhausted, and just a little bit jubilant.

The whole book is there. In June of next year, it'll be on shelves. Probably for about fifteen minutes, as was **Talyn**. But it will, by God, be mine, and not some butchered disaster.

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HAWKSPAR

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I'm doing the copyedit of HAWKSPAR right now. This time, everything is still there. It's a much more pleasant experience than going through your manuscript and discovering your editor removed your second protagonist, lemme tell you.

Have to have the manuscript back by November 1st, and it's a big, big book, so I'm going to be scarce for a while.

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At Last, Good News

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I heard from my Tor editor today that HAWKSPAR will be coming out at full length in one volume. The odds of Tor wanting REDBIRD, the third stand-alone in the world, are somewhere between slim and none, but at least the second book will be right, not ruined.

I'm very, very happy about this news.

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Mini-HAWKSPAR update and more.

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Basically, the news is, there is no news. The book's been moved back in the schedule to June, 2008, but what we do from there is still up in the air.

I'm exhausted. I can't stand even thinking about the book anymore. It is, I think, the best story I've ever told, and I can't bear to look at it.

I sat down and figured out my options. They are:

- It comes out at full length in one volume, prohibitively priced. It barely sells. I lose.
- It comes fifty-five thousand words shorter, not the story I wanted to tell at all, gutted, either by me or by someone else. Whether it sells or not at that length, it isn't the book I wrote, nor does it resemble the book I wanted it to be. I lose.
- It comes out in two volumes, causing readers to pay twice to read one story. The books sells poorly, because the two-book gimmick is a death knell. EVERYBODY—readers, publisher, AND me—loses.
- There is, as far as I can see, no fourth option.

My editors are all on vacation through the weekend, so I'm going to take a few days off to knit, spend time with my youngest, and breathe.

Air Force Kid got a date on shipping out. September. Not sure whether it will be Iraq or Afghanistan. He'll be gone for nine months, and in harm's way. This is a far bigger deal than the book. So my objective is to just deal with the fucking book, and keep my priorities straight.

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