

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 WARPAIN, 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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A thoughtful post on Christian/Muslim reconciliation

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

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 **Hawkspär**.

Thanks to Jim for the link.

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HAWKSPAR copyedit done

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

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

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

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

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

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 .

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
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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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Yipes! It's Friday [Snippets]!

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
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Time flies when someone is wrecking your book. I can't believe it's Friday again.

Here's Aaran (that unnecessary male) when he makes his first appearance in HAWKSPAR. Second scene—the entire second scene, not just a snippet, so it's really long. (Hence the **more** note two paragraphs down so that I don't kill the important shipping notice for international Book Giveaway folks.) This was one of about fifty scenes ripped out “in your and the book's best interest.”

Yeah, I'm still pissed off. This scene should be restored in the version that goes to press, but I still haven't heard anything.

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Aaran av Savissha, tracker for the Haakvaryn pack of Tonk

wolf-ships, sat on the higharm, legs wrapped around the foremast, hands clutching ratlines. With his eyes closed, he tracked the fleeing slaver. "Two degrees north-west," he bellowed over the scream of the storm.

The runner slid down the ratlines, careened across the deck to Captain Haakvar, and repeated Aaran's direction. Within moments, he was back on the ratlines, and Aaran felt the Windsteed aligning itself with the slaver. "Dead on," he yelled to the boy, a child who was one of the captain's multitude of nephews, and the boy gave him an excited smile. Then the child clambered back into the riggings and settled below Aaran on the lines, waiting the next message to the captain.

Aaran, his eyes once again open, squinted through the sheeting rain that battered him. He watched the Windsteed climb up one towering wall of water and slide down the next. They were close to their quarry. He hadn't caught sight of the slaver since it ran headlong into the storm, but he knew from the tracking spell he'd cast within the Hagedwar that the enemy and its cargo were less than half a league in front of them.

On deck and up in the lines, the sailors fought the storm—but it was less a storm than the slaver fleeing them struggled through. The Tonk wolf-ships had an advantage. Aft in the steersman's castles, the windmen kept the worst of the storm at bay. The Windsteed's windmen, bending the air with Hagedwar magic, surrounded the ship with a shield that filtered and channeled the storm—keeping the gale always behind and the sails always filled; smoothing the surface of the water, if not by much; making the waves the Windsteed fought less vicious than those ridden by the slaver.

Every advantage the windmen could confer brought the Windsteed closer to the hold full of captured, chained Tonk children bound for slaver markets in Sinali and Bheki.

Aaran and the trackers on the other three ships conferred within the Hagedwar—how best to bring the pack in for the attack, how to coordinate with the windmen for the safest arrival.

Then, bound by magic to his enemies, Aaran felt the slaver ship suddenly founder. At the same time, the tracker on the Long Fang gave the urgent message that they had men overboard from a rogue wave; that tracker stayed linked to the other three trackers, but his attention diverted to locating the men for the Long Fang.

Aaran shouted to his runner, “The Sinali mainmast has torn away, and we’re closing fast! Tell the captain we’ll be on top of them in minutes.”

The boy launched himself down the lines again, and just a breath later, Aaran heard Haakvar shout the “Ready to board” order. The marines streamed up out of the lower decks and formed up, crouched at the center of the deck with boarding grapples and swords at the ready. Sailors reefed in the ringsails, snapsails, and squaresail, and the Windsteed slowed and crawled up the next wave on pillar and fansails. She crested to find herself almost on top of the slaver, a modified three-masted Sinali war frigate that was fighting to keep its prow to the onrushing water, with broken main and fore masts and sheets dragging through the sea like anchors, pulling the ship’s starboard side toward the waves and dragging her port side upward.

Aaran could see sailors aboard the slaver fighting to cut the lines.

He closed his eyes—like most Tonk trained in the foreign magic of the Hagedwar, he could work within the patterns of sphere, cube and tetrahedrons with open eyes, but coordinating with other trackers required deeper, more intense concentration. The Sea Hawk, running even with the

Windsteed, had planned to board the slaver from forward starboard while the Windsteed boarded from forward port. Sea Hawk could not approach on the starboard side, though—the sails and masts that were sinking the slaver would foul her. The Ethebet's Dagger would board at aft portside, but like the Sea Hawk, the fourth member of the pack, the Long Fang would not be able to take her place on the aft starboard. But the Long Fang was still chasing down her missing sailors. With luck, she'd catch up quickly, but the tracker was sure the lost men could be saved.

The displaced Sea Hawk angled down the crest of the wave and fought her way to the port side of the Windsteed and the Dagger. When the Sea Hawk came even with the Windsteed and the Dagger, her marines crossed decks—a risky maneuver in bad seas.

The marines—tough, nimble men, went up the tall side of the frigate like spiders up their webs. From his viewpoint atop the crow's nest, Aaran could see them swinging over the top onto the deck. This was always the worst point—the place where the most men were lost—but because the slaver was foundering, few of its men could be spared for fighting. Most of the crew was cutting lines to free themselves from the broken mast and tangled sails.

The marines killed those few who opposed them, but most slid to the listing starboard side fast as they could and began working with the enemy to cut away the entangling lines, while a handful of the nearly sixty men who boarded went belowdecks to find the captives and free them.

The marines knew where the captives would be. Sinali slaver ships—even the modified ones—followed the same basic design. And that design kept chained slaves lying flat in a lightless, low-ceilinged hold one floor above the bilge.

Knowing where to find the stolen Tonk children wasn't the

problem.

Getting them to safety was.

Just as the marines belowdecks located the captive children, the marines and Sinali sailors above succeeded in freeing the slaver from the deadly tangle of masts and spars and sheets and lines, and slaver righted itself—lower in the water than it had been and taking the waves badly. But upright for the moment at least.

Aaran, his job done, sent his runner down to the captain, who would most likely send the boy into the Haakvar's quarters to wait out the storm. Aaran began to slide down the lines to offer his own services to the captain, whether to fight or to assist the windmen aft in keeping the storm at bay.

It was at that moment, hanging halfway down the ratlines in the midst of a gale, that pain screamed through the Hagedwar—sucking pain that almost pulled Aaran and the trackers of the Ethebet's Dagger and the Sea Hawk down with it.

He didn't have time to think—only time to react. He broke away from the connection he shared with the other three trackers to save his own life. And, unguarded, wide open, unprepared, he fell to a wave of magic unlike anything he'd ever felt. It blasted through the Hagedwar that enveloped him, slamming him in lungs and gut and heart all at once. A cry, unearthly and powerful, rose up out of the sea and wrapped itself around his brain, blinding him to all but the space between the worlds in which the Hagedwar lay. Aaran found himself in the danger zone between the relatively safe Feegash magic of the Hagedwar and the deadly magic of his own people. He hovered at the point where protected space bled into the View, where the siren songs of eternity flowed through him. The faint, fragile buffering of the Hagedwar shield didn't keep them out—they called to him, luring him

toward solitary ecstasy and annihilation. Over their sweet music, which was nothing less than the breathing of the universe, a trail of desperate rhythms, of terror and pain and despair, pulled him north and east.

A captive Tonk girl begged for rescue, and—bound to her by blood and pain—countless others cried out in wordless horror.

The girl's plea was cast by intent, though, and it was clear in his mind as a dagger drawn across flesh: "For the love of Jostfar, by the hands of the Five Saints, save us before we perish."

She was Tonk.

Enslaved.

Doomed.

Desperate for rescue.

Aaran shook himself free of the powerful spell she'd woven to find that he hung upside down in the ratlines, his legs tangled in rope, while two sailors and his cousin Tuuanir fought to free him.

"I'm all right," Aaran yelled over the screaming of the storm. "I'm all right. Av Yaddar, the tracker on the Long Fang is dead, though—he bound himself to one of the men overboard so he would not lose the lot of them, and he didn't pull back in time when sharks hit them and the man he'd marked died."

"Tracked him into death," Tuua asked.

Aaran nodded.

They got Aaran down quickly, and he steadied himself as best he could in the churning seas and vicious winds. He dragged himself by steady-rope and rail to the captain. "I've located

more slaves," he shouted, and the Haakvar, at the tiller holding the ship tight to the struggling slaver, stared at him in dismay.

"More?"

"Yes, Captain. I cannot be sure of precisely how many, but nearly a hundred. Possibly more. One of them has a good grip on the View. She's used it to send out a rescue call that near knocked me senseless when we floated through its current."

"Her plea ... has a current?" Haakvar frowned, clearly bewildered.

"She bound magic to the sea. I do not know how she did it, or how she holds it together, but it's a powerful current. We've passed it now, but I marked it before we moved beyond it. I could get us back to it again. We could find them."

Up on the deck of the slaver, Tonk marines fought with Sinalian sailors. In the Windsteed's rigging, half the sailors hung from the ratlines, acting as a secondary force of archers, taking clear shots at the enemy when offered. In the slavehold below, other marines were gathering the freed children below the aft hatch that opened onto the archer's platform. No archers occupied the platform because while they fought with their masts and rigging, the Tonks deployed their smaller but better-trained forces.

When the fighting finished, the marines below-decks would move the rescued children to the four waiting ships, and would strip the slaver of any worthwhile cargo it carried, as well.

Aaran said, "We could let the other three ships take captives and cargo from this slaver, and go after the slaves to the north on our own. They're desperate—something horrible is about to happen to them."

Aaran couldn't ignore the look of dismay Haakvar sent in his direction. "Aaran, lad, think about it. Can we, alone, run north, perhaps near the Fallen Suns, certainly across Sinali shipping lanes, to rescue more than a hundred slaves from their unknown situation? We've taken storm damage, we've lost men, we'll have injuries. How am I to tell these men risking their lives right now to forgo their shares in the loot from this ship, or their share of the reward for the successful rescue of the captives, to run up north into Jostfar knows what?"

One massive wave crashed over the deck of the Windsteed, and everyone grabbed lines or masts or rails lest they be washed into the ocean.

The captain clung to the crew companionway rail, holding his footing. Rya Haakvar was a good man, but practical. He saw not grand goals, but the obstacles that stood before them; not a bird's wings, but its feet. He patted Aaran on the shoulder and said, "Am I to take tired and injured crew and exhausted windmen into the northern hells without a re-supply, rest, or a chance to stand on dry land? What sort of Captain would I be if I did that? Saints' sorrows, what sort of man would I be?"

Aaran sighed. He knew that Haakvar was right—that he stood on firm moral ground in refusing to chase Aaran's newest trail.

But Aaran could still feel the girl's desperation vibrating beneath his skin like the metal of a hard-rung bell. He couldn't stop feeling her. Just as her pain and terror had bound itself to the water, so it had bound itself to him.

He clung to the rigging and stared to the north. "I understand," Aaran said. "But I can feel edges and shards of their situation. I don't think they have much time."

At the back of his mind was the thought, never absent, that Aashka might be among them. That she might be almost out of

time.

Haakvar said, "When we're on our way back to port with the children tucked away safe, come into my quarters and we'll chart your trail out and see where it leads. It might be that we can take the pack after these slaves you've found as soon as we've had a chance to resupply and refit. But perhaps not. No matter how desperate the situations of those who need us, we cannot save them all. We are too few, and those in need of rescue are too many."

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And on to saner things, plus Book Giveaway update

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

The GREEN MAGIC I proposal left at the beginning of the week, unmentioned and unlauded, but done at last to my satisfaction. HAWKSPAR is unresolved—I won't know anything more about it until I hear back from my agent, Robin.

And I am in the midst of happier—much happier—things. THE RUBY KEY, you see, felt short to my Scholastic editor, and since the thing I wanted most when I sent it in was more room to write it, and since all the things she asked if I could expand were things I had kept very tight for length reasons

originally, I'm now coming up with cool, exciting ways to get all the stuff in there that I had to leave out initially.

BOOK GIVEAWAY UPDATE

Along with that, I got the last two US book boxes out the door this morning. My one paid-for foreign box will go tomorrow. The plastic things came in, **finally**. Turns out I had to have them, but because I do the postage online, I didn't need the freakin' forms.

ANYway.

FOREIGN SHIPPING

Deedlit
WritingAngel
lacysavage
shay

You can now use the PayPay button at the top left to pay the shipping on your box of books. Postage to England, Australia, and all other UK addresses is 36.15, which includes one dollar toward PayPal fees and tape and packing peanuts. Shipping to Canada is \$22.85, also including one extra dollar.

THE REST OF THE BOOKS

I have boxes. But now I'm waiting for packing tape and a big bag of packing peanuts in order to get everything else out the door, so it will probably be next week before I get any additional boxes packed.

HOW MANY BOOKS ARE LEFT?

Maybe enough to finish off the first list, but probably not. Barring some loaves-and-fishes miracle, not enough to get anyone who isn't on the first list.

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So. HAWKSPAR...long story short.

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It ain't all over yet, but here's what happened with HAWKSPAR, and where I am now:

Back in November-ish of last year, the editor working with me on HAWKSPAR (we'll leave names out of this) told me about 55,000 words needed to come out of the 190,000-word story if I wanted to have it printed as one book instead of broken up into two (breaking it up into two dooms the book in question). I didn't know where I could make those cuts and still leave the story intact, and said as much, and asked her to help me figure out where I could do the slicing. She agreed to help me, and I went on to write another book for another editor in the meantime. I got a couple of e-mails from her telling me it was taking longer than she'd thought, but she'd have the request for revisions to me by X date or Y date.

And then she quit her job to go elsewhere, and I still hadn't gotten my edit requests. I got an e-mail from the new editor—again, no names—saying “Hi, I'm your new editor, I'll be taking over HAWKSPAR.”

And then I got an e-mail forwarded through my agent asking how many galleys I wanted.

Now, a warier and more cynical person than I would have

smelled a rat, but I just figured the publisher had decided to go ahead with the book at full length, and **I got all happy.**

Then one day a few weeks later, the copyedits showed up on my doorstep, and the other shoe dropped. Hard.

My ex-editor had not passed the book on intact. Neither had she made sensible cuts in it (which she wasn't supposed to do anyway, but for now never mind that). She had not in any way, shape, or form edited the book. What she had done was absofuckinglutely unbelievable. **She had simply removed every scene from the hero's POV,** with no regard to continuity, missing information, missing storylines, missing characters, or anything else. This brought the book down to the length the publisher wanted, but left the manuscript an incomprehensible, reeking mess in the process. The hero, after all, carried half the story, half the love interest, and about 90% of one central, especially critical, storyline, as well as large parts in almost all of the rest of them.

This editor sneaked what she did past me, never letting me know she had cut the book, never letting me see what she had done, never sending me a copy of the manuscript, or an email, or anything. Instead, she sent the gutted HAWKSPAR on to a copyeditor and to galleys simultaneously as if it were finished work approved by me, before scooting out the door to her new life. And, when I hit the ceiling over what had been done to my book, she had the nerve to defend what she did in a way that had the new editor e-mailing me and telling me "I know that the book was cut with your and its best interest in mind."

I don't get angry all that often, but over this, I was livid. And I've been fighting for the integrity of the book since then. As of today, we're asking for an extension so that I can cut the 55,000 words in a sane fashion (won't be asking for the help of an editor again, though). If the publisher won't see its own editor's responsibility in this and give me the

time I've asked for, then the book will go out at full length, but in two volumes, where it will sell like crap (a fact the new editor admits), and sink into oblivion without further notice.

For all of you folks who think you want to make a living doing this, realize that although nothing like this little cautionary tale had happened to any of my previous long, long list of books, it happened to this one, and there's no guarantee that I'll be able to fix the thing.

And for those of you who are considering buying the book, check back. I'll let you know whether I'll be able to recommend it or not.

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HAWKSPAR problems

written by Holly
September 26, 2012
By Holly Lisle

Some significant editing problems surfaced during my revision of the copyedit of HAWKSPAR. I'm on hold on the revision while we sort them out. So this week I'll be finishing the type-in of the GREEN MAGIC proposal, and getting back to the revision concepts for RUBY KEY.

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