

# FRIDAY SNIPPET: The Stowaway

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

I'm doing Hawkspar copyedits today, so this snippet is fresh in my mind.

This is from Aaran's POV (Aaran is by this time captain of his own beat-up ship and on his way to rescue Hawkspar). Some of the men have caught a young stowaway on board, and locked him in one of the ship's cells. Aaran has come in to interview him. This is a middle slice of a much longer scene.

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*"You'll want to talk to me. I'm captain of this ship, so there's no higher authority from whom you can beg mercy, and I'm not in a mood to be patient with thieves. We're in warm waters, now. Sharks in plenty here, and other things that would find someone like you tasty."*

*The kid crossed his arms over his chest and turned his face away from Aaran.*

*"Well, see," Aaran said. "That's why I sent the sailor away. I don't want him to see what I'm going to do to you if you don't tell me who you are and why you're on my ship."*

*"You can't do anything to me worse than what's already been done," the kid said. He spoke Tonk, though, not trade. But he wasn't Tonk.*

*Was he?*

Aaran grabbed the kid's left hand and pried the suddenly-clenched fingers open. No clan mark.

Spoke Tonk with a good clean Hyrian accent. And yet wasn't Tonk. Tonk was no common tongue for the non-Tonk to learn. People spoke their own language, they picked up Trade, and they'd learn one or two regional pidgins to get them through the tricky bits.

But this kid spoke Tonk like someone who'd been speaking it for years.

"There's where you're wrong, you see," Aaran said, switching to Tonk. "So far you're still breathing. But I have the right to make that not so. After all, we're at sea, and all you've shown me so far is that you're trouble I don't want to have."

The kid looked him straight in the eye and said, "If it makes you happy, kill me. You still can't hurt me like they did."

Aaran sat on the bench opposite him. "Who?"

"If I tell you that, you'll take me back, and I'm not going back."

Aaran laughed. "I'm not taking anyone anywhere. We're not on a pleasure cruise, boy. We're going to war, and I'm in a hurry to get there. I might dump you at the next civilized port if you act decent—from there you could go wherever you wanted. But there's no way I'll take you back where you came from. I haven't the time."

Arms crossed, body rigid. "Beat me. I won't talk."

"You think so, do you?"

"My father beats me. My uncle. Some of their friends."

"Why?"

The kid was quiet for a long time. Then he said, "Because

they like to.”

Aaran knew about drunks who liked to beat their children. They grew up to be wharf rats, and then ship’s runners, and then sailors. He had a good double handful of such men onboard.

Aaran looked at the boy, wearing his too-big shirt, sitting there on the bench. And he realized the kid had no reason to trust anyone. If a child couldn’t trust his own father, who could he trust? The name of the kid’s father didn’t matter.

He said, “All right. I won’t push you for details about what happened to you. But if you ever want to talk to me, you can tell me.” He propped his elbows on his knees and rested his chin in his hands. “So. Here you are, and you’re going to have to have food, and clothes to wear, and if you’re going to be eating, you’re going to be working. You want to get off at the next island we pass that has a town on it?”

“Not very much,” the boy said. “I want to go a long way away.”

Aaran said, “How old are you?”

“Ten.”

“I swear ... hearing starts to fail when you get to be twenty-five. I didn’t hear you very well, I’m afraid. A boy can sign papers to work on a ship if he’s twelve years old. How old did you say you were again?”

The kid looked downtrodden for a moment, and then hopeful. “Twelve?”

“You’re pretty puny for a twelve-year-old, you know?”

“Yessir. I’m small.” He nodded.

“But twelve? You’re sure about that?”

*"Oh, yessir. I'm twelve."*

*"You have a name?"*

*"Um ... what is a good Tonk name?"*

*Aaran grinned at him. "You speak good Tonk, kid, but you don't look Tonk. You've got no clan mark, you wear your hair short and ugly, and I bet you haven't chosen your saint yet, either."*

*"Can you make me a Tonk?"*

*"Only Jostfar can make you Tonk," he said, and laughed. But the kid didn't laugh. Didn't have any idea who Jostfar was, of course. "We'll see about you becoming Tonk. It's not easy, but it's not impossible, if you want it enough. First, though, we have to make you not Marqallan. All right?"*

*The kid nodded, puppy-eager.*

*"You can be Eastil. Anybody can be Eastil, and sometimes that seems not such a bad thing. For now, we can call you Eban. That's as much an Eastil name as anything. Eban ... Coopersson. The Eastils have as many Coopers and Cooperssons as they have everything else combined. And you could pass for Eastil, once we shave off that idiotic hair-cut and put you into a sailor's clothes. I'll let you sign papers to work on the ship as a ..." He looked at the kid. Aaran had been almost ready to tell him he could be a rope rat—but the kid looked too frail. Within a month, rope-rats knew the language of a ship, how to climb and how to fall, how to hang on, where to run when things got nasty. This kid's hands were as soft as a girl's. Or a keeper's. He'd spent a lot of time being hurt, not a lot of time running outdoors in the streets with friends. He'd toughen up in time, no doubt. But Aaran didn't want him to die in the process.*

*"You want to learn how to be Tonk, you think?"*

*"Yessir."*

*"Right. I'll sign you on as Assistant Keeper, then, and you can work with my cousin Tuua. You'll be on rope-rat half pay until Tuua says you're worth more to him."*

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# Friday Snippet—A piece of the rat scene from Hawkspaar

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

This is a very short section of an enormous scene in HAWKSPAR, in which the heroine of the story, not yet Hawkspaar, is being put on trial for the implied sins of her mentor.

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*We reached the cage, and two of the leather-clad rat-keepers undid the heavy locks that would keep closed the iron gate.*

*I wanted to scream, "Don't put me in there!" I wanted to beg for rescue with everything in me. I did not.*

Hawksparr had said, To the damned, courage is better than truth. She had sent that message to me at who knew what risk. I had done my best to interpret it. I had made my choice. I had chosen the path of courage—or madness—and it was too late to turn from it. Why, then, shame myself and Hawksparr before I had to? Screaming would not save me, would not change a single second of my fate. It would only offer comfort to those who wanted my death. They'd have their comfort soon enough, when the rats dropped onto me and began to gnaw. I'd scream enough to satisfy them then. The women fed to rats always did.

All I could do as the Onyxes slid me in and my bare skin touched rough, cold metal was close my eyes and pray. To Jostfar, who did not know me, who was the god of a people who had once been mine.. I had been born Tonk, and I would die Tonk. And if I did not shame myself, perhaps my mother would know me as her daughter in whatever place or form in which we might exist after death was done with me.

When I lay with my knees jammed into my chest and my head barely inside the box, the door closed behind me, and I heard the sickening click of the padlocks.

The beating of the drums quickened their pace. All four ratkeepers marched to the cart, and each picked up four rat cages. They returned, set down three of their four cages at their feet, and placed the connectors over the openings that would lead into my cage. Each placed a hand on the lift-up door that would permit the rat inside to move from the back of his cage into the front portion that contained the connector.

The drums beat faster and faster, but never as quickly as my own heart. It hammered against my ribs as if trying to escape.

And then, at their peak, the drums abruptly fell silent.

*Hawkspar's voice echoed throughout the arena. "On my command ..."*

*I clenched my jaws closed, squeezed my eyes as tight as I could—as if those feeble attempts would keep the rats from my eyes or my tongue—and silently begged my mother to find me. "... first rats now!" Hawkspar said, and I heard the scraping of four metal doors, and the squeaking grew to screeching as claws skittered down four metal tubes.*

*Four heavy bodies dropped onto me. Sharp points dug into my skin and scrabbled over me, and I felt cold, wet noses press against my flesh, and greasy fur sliding across my breasts and belly and face, and scaly, heavy tails draping along my skin.*

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# Finally back to work

written by Holly  
June 8, 2007  
By Holly Lisle

Writing of any variety hasn't been going too well the last few days. Stress doesn't go away when things start looking better, because the possibility that they'll get worse again always exists. But I'm making nice progress on the type-in of the Green Magic proposal right now. It feels good to be writing again.

I finally got a desktop client to work with my weblog, too—the WordPressDash widget. I’ve never bothered with widgets—always found them kind of silly and pointless. But WordPressDash makes it possible for me to post to the weblog without having to open anything or log in. The reason I had so many posts the first year I started blogging was because I had my desktop client open and I reported progress as I was writing. It was a lot of fun, and kept me going. I might find myself sliding back into that format.

Oh, and I know what next Friday’s Snippet is going to be. An excerpt from the Starving Rat Scene in HAWKSPAR.

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# Missing Time, The HAWKSPAR Copyedit, and a fine line-for-scene

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

So we have the heroine breaking the hero out of prison, and the hero getting shot and being half an inch from death, and stuff I’m not going to tell you about, and more stuff I’m not going to tell you about, and then the heroine telling the hero that’s when she killed herself, and after that the synopsis. I’m feeling pretty good about the proposal now.

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# Belated Friday Snippet: Hawkspar

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

It's been a grim week. Got most of the writing done, but it's been hard. Snippet this week is from HAWKSPAR. Apologies for being so late with it.

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Before me stood Oracle Tower. Unlike the gray stone from which the rest of the Citadel—from walls to halls to temples to outbuildings—had been built, the founder of the Ossalene Rite had built that tower entirely of deep green volcanic glass, carved at the base to mimic vines climbing its surface, and farther up, to show the faces of men and women peering from between the vines.

The faces often seemed alive, and always seemed to be watching, peering down on us from their high vantage. I'd noticed more than once that they never seemed to be in the same place, either. I hated walking past Oracle Tower, nor could I think of a single slave or penitent I had ever known who did not. The air surrounding it tasted like pain and fear.

It is a part of the magic of the tower that only when someone who belongs within is present does it have doors. It is an

otherwise-solid mass of glass—no army could force its way inside uninvited, for there would be no inside to the tower. Nor could any who had no business there pass. The slaves and penitents have all heard this, as I had heard it. Yet I did not understand what that meant until the Obsidians pushed me forward.

"Touch the wall," one said.

I touched cool, smooth glass, and felt a vibration beneath my fingertips.

The glass curled away from me, shaping itself into an arching doorway. Light began to glow within the tower, and by it I could see stairs forming themselves in front of me, spiraling upward around the inside of smooth, glossy walls. I took a step back, frightened—the air that rolled out from the tower had a stink to it that drove like a spike straight into my brain. Something obscene waited inside the tower, and I would have offered anything to be spared walking through that arch or up those stairs.

One of the Obsidians behind me said, "We may not pass."

The other said, "I was instructed by the Oracle Hawksparr to give you a single piece of advice. Hawksparr said: To the damned, courage is better than truth."

I turned to stare at her. "What does that mean?"

"I could not say," she told me. "You'll have to discover its meaning on your own." And then she put her hand to the small of my back and shoved me forward. "Go. You are to wait until the Oracles join you. You would be well-advised to pray."

I stumbled through the arch just as the seru rang the bells of Basmam, third quarter of dark, and I felt the doorway suck itself shut behind me. I refrained from turning only out of sheer willpower; I knew if I saw there was no longer a door

behind me, I would panic. I would run. In the faintly green-glowing darkness of Oracle Tower, I sensed that panic would have consequences I could not imagine, and would not desire.

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## News on HAWKSPAR

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

I can barely believe this, and I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop.

But...

Tor is printing out galleys now for HAWKSPAR, and will be sending a few to me.

Without cutting the book in half and printing it as two books. Without me cutting 60,000 words from the text.

According to Robin, it's to be printed in one volume and intact.

I can't believe it. I'm jubilant.

I don't have a release date yet. I'll see if I can get one.

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# So now that I'm done...

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

Okay. The Mac *sending mail* sound has just echoed across the computer, which means the finished **Ruby Key** is on its way to my agent, Robin. I'm pretty wiped out, but very happy with the book. It wrapped at 63,000 words, which was well within my target zone, the new ending worked beautifully, (though I was revising and adding and changing things right up until the last word).

I'm done. It's sort of starting to sink in. I'm done. (Until the revision requests, anyway.)

I have to do income tax stuff next—never fun, and that will take me about three days, I'm guessing.

And then?

Well, the **Create A Plot Clinic**.

Revising chapters two and three on the **Green Magic** proposal, and sending that back.

**Hawkspar**, when I get the revision requests.

Outlining the sequel to **The Ruby Key**.

A couple of Cadence Drake novellas or novelettes.

C.

The **Sympathy for the Devil** screenplay, which will probably undergo a title change to **The Devil and Dayne Kuttner**.

Lots of things to do. Figuring out priorities and scheduling all of them will be...interesting.

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## On HAWKSPAR

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

On my fifteen-minute stretch break, so this will have to be fast. Got news this morning that Anna Genoese is leaving Tor on the 20th, and that I'll have a new editor. Anna says she'll finish the edits on HAWKSPAR before she leaves, but obviously I won't be able to finish them by the end of March (the previous due date), so at this point pretty much everything is up in the air.

I can't say when the book will be out. Once my new editor and I have had a chance to talk, I'll know more, and will pass on what I can.

..... strange karma continues .....

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# Quick Update

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

Deadline 1: Got the GREEN MAGIC proposal off to Robin a couple days ago, heard back from her yesterday with revision requests (very small—overall, she was excited about the proposal), made the revisions over a couple of hours yesterday and resent the complete package, and that will go off to the editor, possibly today.

Deadline 2: I have Writer's X's manuscript (very good story) down to one small final section, and then I'll do the overall crit letter. I'm still good to have that in the mail on the 15th.

Deadline 3: Next comes completion of THE RUBY KEY. I've been dreaming segments of this lately, always a sign that my subconscious is ready to play nice. I'll start into that on Tuesday, and with that, will resume more regular posting, chronicling the progress of the story, plus the usual off-topic stuff.

Not looking any farther forward than Deadline 3 at the moment. I know **4: Hawkspar rewrite**, and **5: 2nd 60,000-word YA**, are out there. But for the moment, everything is giving the pleasant illusion of being under control and on time, so I'll just enjoy that while I can.

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# The rewrite has been all-consuming.

written by Holly

June 8, 2007

By Holly Lisle

The first draft of the **Green Magic** proposal went quickly. The second draft took another two days of massive work, because, well, I'm picky as hell and I ripped the first draft to shreds.

It's done, it's a bit longer, and I'm doing type-in now, and will be working late into the night.

The rest of the week will go to the Writer X novel crit, which I need to have in the mail on the 15th in order to have time to finish writing THE RUBY KEY and getting that into the mail by the end of March, which has to be done by then so that I can do the re-revision of HAWKSPAR before it's too late to keep that book on the schedule (but the edit letter hasn't arrived yet, so I may still have a wee bit of time on that. (And there's one on-spec proposal that has to be fitted into all of this, yet, and the possibility of the completion of an in-progress novel. Before the end of April.)

My office is still a mess.

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