

The Emerald Sun: In the hills before trouble

written by Holly
February 19, 2019
By Holly Lisle

Got 1017 words on *The Emerald Sun* today, my best day so far.

Genna had a revelation just a few minutes ago – she got herself and the other kids out of danger just in the nick of time... but danger is following along in their wake, and danger is waiting ahead.

And that's where I ran out of time in the writing, because now I have to move on to *How to Write a Novel, Lesson 25*.

The fact that my Muse does this to me regularly – running me up to a cliffhanger right at the point where I have to stop – is both kind of mean, and kind of helpful.

Because I really want to know what it is that she just figured out that she was getting ready to tell me. And I'll be eager to show up and get my words tomorrow morning so I can find out.

Onward.

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The Emerald Sun: Tiny Sneak Peek of the FIRST DRAFT Story Start

written by Holly
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Got 753 words on The Emerald Sun today. Not the thousand I was shooting for, but I'm having to step back into a world I haven't lived in for over a decade, and finding my way is tough.

But, in FIRST DRAFT (which... **DISCLAIMER: May contain bugs, which WILL change in revision, and for which I do not need any notice of typos or other errors, because first draft is not the place where you deal with those**) this is how the story starts.

When you're safe and comfortable, when you're warm and dry and well-fed, time has a way of slipping away from you. Of drifting through a day, and then a season, and if you're not careful, through a whole life.

In the Audiomaerist's house, it was easy to feel safe. I got to eat delicious food, to listen to the dragon telling stories of the days when the skies were darkened by mighty flocks of creatures like him; to work in the garden planting and harvesting the Audiomaerist's food; to know that the woman-shaped creature who gave shelter to Yarri the nightling, Doyati the mystery, my brother Danrith, the cat who is not a cat, and me – for the dragon needed no shelter – could keep us safe.

And through a span that wrapped a summer, an autumn, and a winter in it, we lived in her high house away from everyone, and earned our keep with chores and our skills – I spun yarn and knitted her a sweater as fine as any Mama could have made, Danrith tended her accounts, Yarri went out at night and brought back items she requested, and the cat killed her mice.

But... one spring morning I woke and smelled change.

The smell became a tiny dread that crawled up my spine and down into my belly, that woke me and sent me shivering out of my bed, rolled me to my bare feet on the cold floor and into my clothes, and then into silently waking the others.

It's easy to fall into comfort, and hard to willingly fall out, but when Danrith started to protest that it was dark and he was sleepy, I shushed him and in his ear murmured, "Dress. Make no sound."

When I shook Yarri awake, I said simply, "We have to go. Now."

The Cat had been asleep on my head, so he did not need to be told. He simply waited by a wall, watching me, saying nothing.

My brother and Yarri dressed hurriedly, silently.

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The Emerald Sun: Walking with Genna this morning

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My hour (plus) this morning did not yield a massive wordcount.

556 words total.

But in that 556 words, Genna and her voice came back to me, and Genna immediately broke what I'd planned for the first chapter, and did what I did not expect her to do.

She lied to the Audiomaerist, in whose house she and her companions had been staying, and hurried them all out without even saying goodbye, and started toward someplace I'm not sure about yet.

She did this because her gut told her she and her friends needed to get away from where they were as quickly as possible.

And the Cat, when he caught up with her, simply confirmed that something was wrong.

What's wrong?

I don't know. This has been my experience with writing Genna – and in the years since I wrote her last, she clearly has not changed. I plot something, she looks at my plot, and immediately does something that breaks my planning, but that still gets both of us to the right place eventually.

My path would have been cleaner, calmer, and considerably less messy.

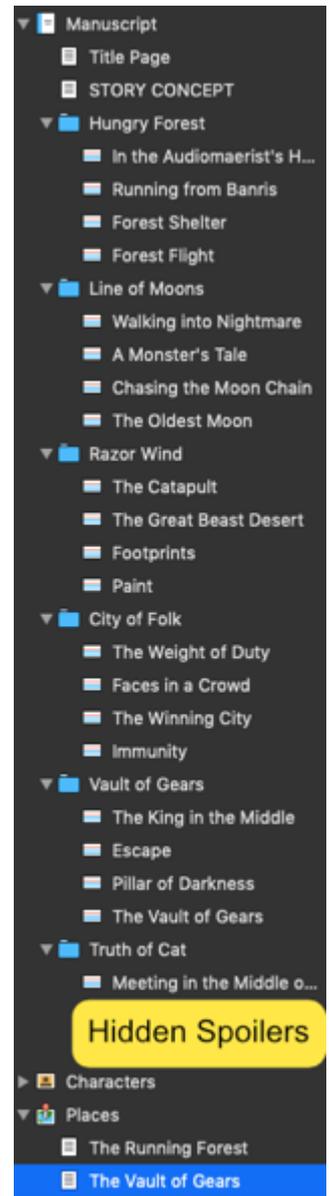
From the perspective of adventure, however, hers is going to be a lot more interesting.

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Moon & Sun 3: Sketching with words

written by Holly
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I started out my workday this morning looking for (and finding) a sketchbook among my many notebooks and blank project books.



Followed by staring at the blank pages, with an array of drawing tools in front of me, and with my Muse going, “No, no, no, no, no...”

“I need to see these things,” I muttered, and Muse said, “I already see them. Let me show you.”

So I sat, pulled up my Emerald Sun Scrivener document, and opened a page in Places, and my Muse said, “Tell me about the Running forest.

So I did. Rather a lot.

And then the Muse said, “Okay. Now what’s the story with the Vault of Gears?”

And I started answering the question, and discovered SO much more story.

I didn't have pen lines or shapes for what I was seeing, for what I was discovering – but I had a lot of words, and the words divulged secrets, and the secrets made me hungry to get started on this book.

So.

Next Tuesday, I'll start writing the actual novel. I might from time to time need to slow down to sit with my Muse and sketch more words...

But this story has been waiting a long time to be born, and all of a sudden, it feels like it's in a hurry.

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Outline Finished! The Emerald Sun moves forward...

written by Holly
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By Holly Lisle

Short post today. Took a couple hours, but I was on a roll, so I just stuck with it.

And I'm delighted to announce that I've finished the line-for-scene outline of **Moon & Sun 3: The Emerald Sun**.

Tomorrow I'll take a day off from writing fiction, and instead work on building some of the locations that exist in this

story so I can see them. I'll just a sketchbook for this, not Minecraft Mapping.

Once I know I have a decent feel for the locations, I'll do a couple of character interviews – but after that, I'll be ready to actually start writing the book.

I thought it would take me a lot longer to get to this point than it has. So I'm going to find myself writing on three separate novels each week for a while – and I honestly don't know if that will work.

I'm not having any problem right now with two novels, and *Dead Man's Party* is past the halfway mark, with the first draft planned for completion at the same time that I finish up the last lesson of *How to Write a Novel*.

I'll confess, though, that even to me it seems excessive.

But worst case, it'll make an interesting experiment in exploring my limitations as a writer.

Best case, I'll get to write on three separate novels each week, and will have as much fun as I'm having writing two.

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Moon & Sun: The Emerald Sun. It begins...

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Today is my first day of actual story brainstorming (a combination of plotting, doodling, and talking to myself) on The Emerald Sun.

(Reading and noting is done with the books and sticky notes. Brainstorming requires your butt in the chair and your fingers on the keyboard with a sketchpad on the desk in front of you – at least if you're me.)

Because, as I frequently did during my commercial career, I planned the series to run long – in this case, seven books – and because I have to finish the series now with Book 3, I find myself once again rethinking where I wanted to go with the story, and digging through the core principles of what I'd already built, and how these worked.

I'm going through the characters...

- The Cat
- The Dragon
- Genna, Danrith, and their humanoid allies
- The Audiomaerist, a woman who listens to what the roads tell her

And the settings...

- The abandoned ruins of a different civilization
- The forests that grow so quickly they can outrun fleeing humans
- The paths along the Moonroads, and what lives there

And the conflict...

- The single act from the past that is still destroying the present

And the question...

- How can some kids, a Cat, and a dragon save a dying world adults have lost the will to save?

I'm trying to find my way through.

I have the ending I'm NOT going to write (what I call "the ending to beat").

I have my Octopus Map, which sets out the obstacles in my path.

Now it's a case of plotting out a path to follow (or again **in my case**, to beat as I go).

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Becoming Piers Anthony: The Not-Impossible Dream of 3 Books A Year

written by Holly
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A couple of things have changed in my life recently, one of which has been the writing of *Dead Man's Party*, my demo novel for the writing class I'm currently building, **How to Write a Novel**.

I've been dedicating one concentrated hour or so a week to the writing of the first draft (and a bloody awful first draft it is, too), but the bones of the story are solid, and it's going in a great direction, and it's turning funny on me all of a sudden.

And I've been reading through *Moon & Sun*, and taking notes,

but they were not being very helpful notes.

Then, while Becky and I were talking about going back through the first two novels of my *Moon & Sun* series in order to pick up toys I'd left on the floor for the third book, I realized that I had not done an Octopus Map for the series.

So I built the Octopus Map (a core technique in my How to Write a Series class), and something that I mention in the upcoming **Episode 29** of *Alone in a Room with Invisible People*.

Once I remembered to do it, it took me about half an hour to get the overall bones of the final story figured out. I still have to do all the reading and the finding and identifying of essential toys, and some scene-by-scene plotting, but I know what the story is now. That's big.

So...

At the moment Patreon is covering me for one hour of fiction writing a day, and the income from my fiction isn't currently enough to run beyond that.

And I'm writing the How to Write a Novel class, and the demo novel, and doing the podcast, and reissuing some of my novels, and getting others ready to go live...

But I've discovered from my writing of *Dead Man's Party* that I can get a lot of actual written fiction done in an hour, and I want to be seeing more progress than I'm seeing.

Because almost all of my hours have been eaten up by research for *Moon & Sun*, I haven't been seeing a lot of progress.

But this morning I was standing in the shower and my Muse said, "Piers Anthony said he worked on THREE books at a time."

And then I thought, "I have five hours a week, and *Dead Man's Party* is only taking one hour, and I could limit my current reading and noting in the *Moon & Sun* series to two hours,

which would let me do... What?

“What third project?”

At which point, my Muse practically screamed in my ear, “The Wishbone Conspiracy!!!” With a muttered undertone of *you idiot*.

As I’ve noted elsewhere, my Muse and I have an interesting relationship.

With *Wishbone*, I already have the world, the characters, the opening chapter, and even a bit of the plot worked out.

So I’m going to do this:

- Two days a week I’ll be working on *Moon & Sun 3: The Emerald Sun*
- One day a week I’ll be writing *Dead Man’s Party*
- And two days a week I’ll be working on Cadence Drake in *The Wishbone Conspiracy*

If my Patreon funding can go up to two hours a day, or if I can get my fiction income up by other means (which I’m also working on), I’ll be able to increase that. Top level would be three hours a day, which would still leave five (plus the occasional evening) for creating **How To Write A Novel** plus emails plus forums...

I think even at top funding, or with a much-increased readership of my fiction, this will still work.

Monday I start finding out.

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IT'S A SIGN!!! – Moon & Sun Book 3: The Emerald Sun

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A long time ago (back in 2006-2008), I wrote two novels I loved and younger readers loved.

The Ruby Key: Moon & Sun Book 1

The Silver Door: Moon & Sun Book 2

I'd started work on the third one, **The Emerald Sun: Moon & Sun Book 3...**

And then Scholastic told me they weren't going to continue the series. It would end with Book 3, and they would only want the third book if I took a massive pay cut.

I couldn't afford to take the pay cut. We were already just squeaking by.

So I stopped working on the series, and wrote a bunch of writing books instead. *Mugging the Muse: Writing Fiction for Love & Money*, *Create a Character Clinic*, *Create a Plot Clinic...* and a long list of other books and classes I'm not going to name goes here, but that kept a roof over our heads and food in our bellies.

Meanwhile, however, I kept hearing from the kids who wanted to know what happened next with Genna, Dan, the Cat...

And now those kids are adults.

The rights to the first two books have reverted to me. Today I start the read-through of the first one to get back into the world, to get the voice back, and to find and take notes on any toys I left on the floor that I can pick up for Book 3.

And after I did the first run of reading, I got an unexpected gift.

During a Hard Drive Move (which is never anyone's favorite thing) years ago (which I think coincided with our move from Georgia back to Florida, I lost track of the Book 3 outline and early chapters.

My older computer had become massively obsolete. I moved the backups to a new computer, and when I did this, Moon & Sun had already become a dead project, so I didn't check to make sure I could find it.

Forward a bunch of years to when I wanted to find it, and I couldn't. Realize... Macs have excellent backup, and really good search, and I knew what I was looking for. And no search term I had brought me to those manuscripts.

Today, on the day I started this project, I dug into an unrelated folder looking for something else, and found the entire Moon & Sun project in *there*, including the start of Book 3. Wasn't where it was supposed to be, but everything opens, everything is readable, everything is usable.

It's a sign. Time to write Book 3, time to get the first two into print again, time to bring this world back to life.

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Just finished the first draft of *The Owner's Tale* – Moon & Sun 3 on deck.

written by Holly
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So. Just now the first draft of *The Owners Tale*, the LAST episode in *Tales from the Longview*.

Wrote the final thousand-ish words this morning and part of this afternoon, and for now, at least, I like the ending.

I've printed off the manuscript (in 12 point Courier, double-spaced and with large margins, of course) where it will sit on my desk for at least one week to cool off.

I like a lot of stuff when it's still hot that I can see problems with once it's cooled off.

After it's cooled for at least a week, I'll go in, do a read through and a revision, and then hand off to Matt, who will do my content edit. I want to wow him. He already figured out a part of how it will end (he's just that good).

But he doesn't yet know why. That is where I want to really bring this home.

This is a story I've been working towards for a long time, through a lot of books. This is the story I've pulled from dark corners and bad spots in my own life, from the lives of family, from the lives of other people who have not always had things easy. It's not personal, not any sort of roman á clef.

But through the fiction of the characters, I did manage to hit some things I've never been able to work into fiction before.

So here's the process once I get through the revision.

I hand off to Matt.

Matt points out all the places where I got it wrong, where I missed what I was going for, where I failed to give the characters the proper respect.

I go in and to an editor's revision.

I ask for a few folks to bug hunt THAT version.

I make corrections from the bug hunt.

I publish the final episode.

And then I start into *Moon & Sun 3: The Emerald Sun*.

Yep. FINALLY.

I'm not going to rush through writing the final book in the series. In the episode of *Alone in a Room with Invisible People* that Rebecca and I taped yesterday (Episode 13: Plotting VS. Pantsing, which will go live TOMORROW – Tuesday, Oct. 16th) I talk a little bit about why.

I remembered to mention:

- Currently writing my **How to Write a Novel** class demo novel, *Dead Man's Party*
- Whiles also writing the first draft of the **How to Write a Novel** class
- Brainstorming and doing the weekly podcast with Rebecca
- Doing the other stuff that has to fit in with these major activities, like spending time with my guys,

answering emails, paying bills, talking with folks on the forums, and doing the still-less-frequent-than-I'd-hoped blog posts

But the biggest thing about getting back to the series is this:

I haven't read the first two books in years, and I have to step back into that world. I'm a visceral writing. I write from inside my characters, doing my best to become them while I'm writing.

So I have reacquaint myself with the nuances of these folks, both good and bad. Walk through the concept map I drew for Book 3. Remember how to step back inside those characters, and become again the girl at the end of childhood who has had the weight of her world land on her shoulders, and who, with a brother she sometimes fights with, friends who aren't as reliable as one would hope, and a cat who's lying through his teeth about who he really is, has to save her people from destruction.

If she doesn't do it, no one will.

I'm hoping to be able to announce the start of the novel around or shortly after Christmas of this year.

I expect that I'll need about a year to write and revise it. I cannot GUARANTEE that's what I'll need, because I'm not just doing one book these days. I'm doing a book, classes, forums, and other things that are possible with the Internet.

Life was simpler in the days of just print publishers and just answering snail mail letters from fans a few times a year.

But cooking on a wood stove and dumping a honey-bucket in the midden downriver from your house were simpler, too. Been there, done that.

Simpler is not always better. *Vive la Internet!*

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Moon & Sun: I'm now clear to write in my world again!

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I didn't want to say anything about the fact that I was pursuing the removal of the non-compete clause from my contract until I heard one way or the other.

I got the news today. **The non-compete clause for my Scholastic contract is dead**, and I'm now free to write stories in that world again.

So now the issue becomes looking at my schedule and figuring out how and where I can start opening the world up again.

For a little context on my move to publishing my own work, read I've quit Big Publishing to publish myself.

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