

Streamlining During Chaos: Fiction? YES.

By Holly Lisle

Nothing is yet cast in stone... but in about a week the full force of this particular Chaos Storm is going to hit. The Current Chaos™ is pretty close to becoming the Big Right On Top Of Me Chaos – a state that could last from a best case of one month to a worst case of maybe three.

(See me bravely ignoring the “Wanna bet on that worst case?” utterance from my Muse, who has ridden this train before.)

I can't accomplish everything I want to do and still do what I need to do. So I have put some things on hold for a while in order to accomplish anything.

My brain turns to fiction when things get rough, stressful, difficult. It always has – reading when I was a kid, writing when other people's worlds stopped being what I needed.

I won't complain. Being able to fall into fiction when things are hard is a Big Damn Advantage when you're a novelist. I've decided this time to play to my strengths, and to NOT try to do everything.

So from today until we're out the other side of this, my writing is going to be exclusively fiction.

Objectives:

- **WRITE:** Complete the first novel in The Ohio Series and get it into its month of cool down. (I'm only a couple chapters from the end, so this is a small goal.)
- **REVISE:** Finish the write-in and type-in revisions of Dead Man's Party and get it out to beta readers. (I'm

most of the way through the write-in revision, but still have a significant type-in ahead of me, and I do a LOT of on-the-spot revision and adding things during type-in, so thing is a BIG goal.)

- OUTLINE AND WRITE: The Emerald Sun first draft. (And this is a big goal, too.)

I'll do a worksheet or two for the podcast as we need them.

I will NOT be starting into the Canary Revision of *How to Revise Your Novel*. until after I'm through the biggest part of the coming mess.

My plan had been to pick that up on Monday and do it as an after-fiction thing. At this point, by best-case scenario moves that to early September.

Absolute worst case, the first part of next year. (Never start a massive project in December.)

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Dead Man's Party: Wrote the SERIES ending...

By Holly Lisle

DEAD MAN'S PARTY

Last week I wrote a stand-alone ending for Dead Man's Party.

This week, because I had one week and one chapter left, I wrote a series ending, and showed how I built out pieces of story that do not exist in the first draft, but that, if I

decide I want *Dead Man's Party* to be the first book in a series – (all perhaps with titles of songs by Oingo Boingo...) – I could do that.

The writing went well, and now the novel, completely finished in first draft whether I want to write it as a stand-alone one-off or as a series, **gets a 30-day (or slightly more) breather** before I head into revising it.

Which means Monday is now an open fiction writing day.

Wednesdays through Fridays are all The Ohio Series, Book One.

Tuesday is going to stay Marketing Tuesday. I need it. A lot.

Monday, though...

THE EMERALD SUN

Starting next Monday, I'm rereading and annotating Moon & Sun – both The Ruby Key and The Silver Door, and out of them pulling the characters, worldbuilding, and conflicts I need to resolve in book three, which WON'T be called The Emerald Sun, but which I'll be calling that for now, until I've finished the first draft.

Once I have that done, I'll start writing M&S III on Mondays. It won't be finished terribly quickly. But this way, it will finally get done.

HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL

The completion of my demo novel ALSO finishes the writing portions of my **How to Write a Novel** class.

This week I'll be building Lesson 38, in which I show folks who have finished their first novel how to streamline and adapt the processes in the course into their own personal, flexible, reusable novel-writing system.

And then I'll be building the Class Bonus. Still three days

left to go on the vote on that, and there are still some folks who have not voted.

And the voting for the top few possibilities is CLOSE.

I'll be building a lot of the other suggestions as inexpensive paid workshops or little classes. Not all. But there were a lot of really good ideas folks came up with in suggesting what they wanted as their included bonus, and I think a lot of other folks might find them helpful, too.

Not going to say anything that might influence the voting (like hinting what the leaders are at the moment).

HOWEVER... This is everything on the ballot

- How to brainstorm and create bonus stories to promote a novel or series
- My personal Getting Shit Done daily writing system, in detail
- Behind the Scenes: DMP and the No One True Way novel-writing process
- 25 Alternative Idea-Generating Methods for Novels
- How to Resurrect and Complete Your Hard Drive Zombies (So They Stop Eating Your Braaaaaainz)
- How to Turn a Stand-Alone Novel into a Series
- Tutorial: Getting Your Novel Into Print
- The Conflict Resource: The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of Great Conflict
- Interweaving Multiple Story Threads in Big, Complex Novels
- Alternatives to and Adaptations for the Provisional Outline

And these were the five suggestions that were more broadly applicable that I kept off the ballot. I will probably to them as stand-alones.

- How to Find Your Home Genre

- Writing at Production Pace
- How to Work Around POV Limitations
- How to Foreshadow and Misdirect in Fiction

And this thing I think I'll just do as a freebie for everyone:

- My Favorite Writing Tools, Services, and Stuff

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The Ohio Series, Book One, and The Emerald Sun planning

By Holly Lisle

I've spent the weekend and the last couple of days trying to figure out my writing schedule. I ran out of *The Wishbone Conspiracy* before I planned too, and that has to sit in a corner being quiet for a month, resting and getting cold so I can get an objective look at it when I do the revision.

I have not had time to read through and build out the backstory details for *The Emerald Sun*, because I've been simultaneously writing first drafts of two novels plus the biggest writing class I've ever done. *How to Write a Novel*, of which I'm starting Lesson 35 as soon as I do this post.

So I had writing time today, and nothing I'd planned to write that I COULD write. Because of that, I started the first book of what is NOT going to be called *The Ohio Series*, but which is going to be set in Ohio.

And to my amazement, the novel started in a condo in South Florida with a young woman who, when an old dude showed up to

tell her that her grandmother had left her a house, and who countered with, "I never had any grandmothers."

And got weirder from there. By the end of the first scene, magic had happened, and I was hooked.

Got 1834 words by the time I finally pulled myself away. Not as many as my goal when I set up a stock template for 70,000-word novels last week, but way more than I'd expected to get starting cold.

On now to HTWAN Lesson 35: Writing Endings with Multiple Antagonists and Multiple Climaxes. Or what I call *Playing on Hard Mode*.

Oh, yes. Over the next several weekends, I will be reading and noting and worldbuilding from the first two books in the Moon & Sun series to get the voice of the protagonist back, and to plan out the final story. At the point where I finish the first draft of *Dead Man's Party*, which will be in three more weeks, I'll be ready to start writing *The Emerald Sun*, which I'm considering changing to *The Emerald Sky*.

And I'll have a space in my schedule ready-made for it. It can, as suggested by my daughter while we were working together today, become my next Monday novel.

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The Wishbone Conspiracy: 2027

words, and a Change in the 3-Novels Experiment

By Holly Lisle

Got pretty decent words today on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*. 2027 new words, taking me to a total of 23,873 words in the novel.

I mostly like what I got, though I had a bit of a hard start.

And that's what I want to talk about today.

The "Write on three different novels each week" experiment worked very well. Until it didn't.

I was writing first draft of *Dead Man's Party* on Mondays, first draft of **Moon & Sun: The Emerald Sun** on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and first draft of **Cadence Drake: The Wishbone Conspiracy** on Thursdays and Fridays.

Getting 1515 words or better on Mondays, about 1500 words on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 2000-ish words on Thursdays and Fridays.

BUT...

It required a big mental shift, and rolling through three very different projects back to back to back started taking a toll on me.

I kept going... but then I started research in improving the marketing I've done – or in many cases haven't done – on my work, and current methods of increasing Amazon sales, and experimenting with copywriting and cover design and split testing and...

Along with writing the three novels, and writing a new lesson every week in my new **How to Write a Novel** class, and answering

student questions, and working with Dan on getting the final pieces of the HollysWritingClasses.com website out of beta, plus spending time with my family...

Well, the fiction broke down just a little. And I hit what I have come to recognize as the "trying to do too much at once" wall.

Dead Man's Party has to stay. It's my demonstration novel for *How to Write a Novel*.

My writing on *The Wishbone Conspiracy* is still running smoothly.

But the writing on *The Emerald Sun* hit a wall.

This is a book I need to be able to throw myself into exclusively: to NOT be writing other fiction at the same time. It has a specific voice and some specific worldbuilding and a place it's going that is very different from other things I write. It has a deep world that I have not been writing in recently, characters who have become strangers to me, and both Tuesday and yesterday, my mind simply balked. Refused to work on *Emerald Sun*.

Was real damn happy to offer up copywriting, cover design, threw ideas at me for both *The Wishbone Conspiracy* and *Dead Man's Party*.

But it dug in its heels on what was supposed to have been the work of the day.

Had all my fiction crashed on me, I would be taking a different approach than the one I'm taking starting today, but two of three books – the one with NO previous worldbuilding, and the one with a ton of worldbuilding, but in which I've been writing regularly for the last eight or so years – are still fine.

So now I enter Phase Two of the experiment.

This is pretty simple. Monday will still be *Dead Man's Party*, and still 1515 words or thereabouts each week, followed by working on HTWAN, answering questions in the forum, doing the help desk tickets that require me, working with my moderators, working with Dan on the site, answering emails, and other daily task.

With *Dead Man's Party*, I have to have this amount, and JUST this amount, for my class and to make sure I'm applying the material from the various lessons as I write. So I can't just write ahead and be done with this particular novel. Each chapter has to be written along with each lesson.

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, I'm going to be shooting for 2000 words per day on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*.

That will give me six-thousand first-draft words on that book each week.

I currently have 23,873 words total, and with a 90,000-word target for completion of the first draft, need another 66,000 words (rounded) to hit my target.

So some book math. At 6000 words per week, I'll have the first draft finished in about eleven weeks. Figure I'll have it done around May 17th.

This is nobody's fastest pace on a novel ever, and if it were the only thing I was doing, I could get it done a lot faster. But it isn't, and what I'm looking for at this point is...

SUSTAINABLE FICTION CREATION.

A system that I can put into action and stick with, that will allow me to maintain my nonfiction work while creating regular

publishable new fiction.

Now...

Those of you who didn't get sidetracked by the book math are going, "WAIT A MINUTE!!! What about Tuesday?"

Very good.

Tuesday, my first two to three hours will be focused on marketing my current backlist and learning how to do a better job of launching my front list.

It will also give me a clean break between Fiction Project One and Fiction Project Two.

And it will carry me to the completion of Fiction Project One AND Fiction Project Two at about the point where I also have the class **How to Write a Novel** completed in the Splinters version.

At that point, I'll have two finished novels in need of revision, editing, covers, marketing, bug hunting, launching, and publication.

And at that point, I'll figure out what happens next. I'll probably dive all the way into *The Emerald Sun* at that point.

And look at possible new writing classes or workshops I could create.

But as always...

This plan is subject to revision as I experiment and figure out new definitions for what I want to accomplish, and new ways to accomplish my objectives.

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The Emerald Sun: Lost some time to the world

By Holly Lisle

I got 879 words today – not the 1500 I'd planned.

But Genna found herself at the end of the world, and it took me a while to figure out how to get that part of the scene right.

The dragon and his many voices has rejoined the party, and the cat had a terrible scare.

I love what I got.

It simply took me much more time than I'd hoped to get it.

Tomorrow, maybe I'll be able to make better progress.

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The Emerald Sun: When in doubt... CLIFF

By Holly Lisle

The scene I'd had outlined to write today looked boring in the light of dawn. So I looked at the NEXT scene I was going to write, and asked myself, "What is the most interesting way I

could get myself to *that* scene...

And discovered that Genna was going to find a cliff.

Not just any cliff – though. She’s currently leading her handful of allies toward something she as the future Sunrider can feel, can sense. She doesn’t know what it is, but she knows she has to get there, that whatever she finds there is going to help her become the Sunrider.

And she just got there... and saw a boulder float into the air.

Tomorrow (in the next scene and in the next chapter) she and I will find out WHY.

1558 words written today, so just a few more than I needed to hit my target. And I’m very happy with what I got.

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The Emerald Sun: Banris the Flea wins a battle

By Holly Lisle

Genna, the cat, Doyati, Yarri, and Dan are in the right place at the right time to see a human army winning their war against Banris... until they aren’t.

I had to spend about half an hour setting up my Scrivener file for the new deadlines and writing objectives I’m now working toward – more on that another time.

But with my new deadlines set, my document set up to allow me

to make the best use of my time, and my ten-minute timer going, I got 1604 words on the story today, and ended up with a nice realization about the current conflict, and how it will play into what's coming.

And the cat was busy in this scene, though he manages to make himself scarce right at the end.

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The Emerald Sun: Chasing the unknown

By Holly Lisle

Today was a tougher day from the storytelling perspective.

I don't actually know what Genna and Dan and Yarri and Doyati and the cat are going to find.

They're running west, and something is waiting, and because of the way my Muse works, I'm going to see it when they see it, and not before.

We're not there yet – but they're not having an easy time, and are having to stay hidden because they have trouble behind them, and trouble in front of them.

I got 897 words today, and I know next Tuesday, when I pick this back up, they and I are going to go over that last hill and discover what's on the other side.

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The Emerald Sun: In the hills before trouble

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

By Holly Lisle

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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