

Today is brought to you by math...

By Holly Lisle

This isn't the way I want to spend a Friday, but I cannot ignore the fact that I have to sort all my receipts, mark every single item that is deductible, gather up all the papers, pack them up, and get the box to my accountant.

Even really shitty years produce a stack of paperwork, and no matter how much I want to do the next 1250 words on Ohio 3, I can no longer ignore my Tax Nest Monster, which is glaring at me from its box under the desk.

This project might, in fact, be my Friday, Saturday, and Sunday... but I'm going to be back to the Ohio Novels and book three on Monday.

I'd like to say that I'll be well-rested and raring to go.

But what are the odds?

Either way, even if I come into Monday tired and cranky, I can still get words, and it will be okay (for me, if not for my characters)... because once all five novels are written in first draft, I'm going through a massive five-book One-Pass Revision, which is where the magic happens.

Magic Monday, or magic later... Same results either way.

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Origin of the phrase WILD HAIR UP HIS ASS: a true story

By Holly Lisle

I ended up looking up the **origin** of the phrase “wild hair up his ass” this morning, and discovered there is shit-all about it on the internet.

This in itself is astonishing – it’s the INTERNET, you know? It knows everything. But apparently not.

The best I could find, well, the only thing I could find, was “does something completely unexpected.”

ORIGIN, folks. “This is what a phrase means” is not the same thing “where the fuck did this phrase come from?”

But now, my friend, I have discovered the origin of this phrase I’ve been hearing folks say my entire life.

–

I was in the bathroom this morning getting ready for work.

My cat was in the bathroom using his litter box.

And all of a sudden, he leaps out of the box, runs in tight circles in an absolute panic (which in a bathroom that small is a good trick), and comes to a skidding stop in front of my feet, at which point he crouches, body rigid, eyes black, ears locked back, tail whipping back and forth like we are both about to be devoured by aliens only he can see.

I look around to see what scared him.

Nothing.

I bend over, rest a hand on his shoulders, assure him that

everything is okay, that he is all right, that nothing is going to get him...

And he relaxes, rolls on his side...

Which is when I spot about an inch of cat turd hanging from his butt, suspended as if by magic.

Probably NOT magic, I think, and grab a piece of toilet paper, and give the turd a gentle tug...

And slowly remove what's holding it there, which is about six inches of one human hair.

Mine. Matt shaves his head, Joe keeps his hair short.

Guess who had a wild hair up his butt?

So now he's calm, happy, purring. I pet his little fat head and kick him out of the bathroom, and get my shower.

Which is when I look up, and see the lizard hanging on the drywall above the tiles, eyeing me.

I just keep taking my shower – I spent time as a kid in both Costa Rica and Guatemala, and I have shared showers with scarier critters than that.

At least until this one dropped off the wall to the floor of the tub, and I did my own version of a "wild hair" dance.

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No Man's Sky: They Nailed It!

By Holly Lisle

In spite of everything (and there's a lot of "everything" going on right now), I took the entire day off yesterday to play a video game.

Not just any video game, though. The one for which I went out and bought a Playstation several years ago, and the one for which I dug out my X-Box and bought a NEW copy of the same game I bought two full-price copies of the day it went on sale the first time.

Why would I buy three copies of the same game?

First, because...

...when I was eleven and really understood who I was for the first time, I came up with this prayer:

*Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
Please don't make me go to heaven*

Let me go to space.

The coda of that prayer included a request for a pony, and I was already well on my way to atheism at that point, and by praying at all was basically covering my bases.

But I wanted to go to space more than anything, including the horse.

And when I found out that to go to space, you had to be REALLY good at math (and I suck at math to this day) I was devastated.

I never considered that being female might be an obstacle – not even in 1970-71. I never let it be for anything else that I wanted that was within the reach of possibility.

I got the other things I wanted in my life. My one person to spend my life with, my kids, writing science fiction for a living. (Along with a lot of other stuff.)

Second, because...

...the guys who built the game stood by it even when, on launch, the most astonishing collection of asshats and douchebags crawled out of the woodwork to complain about everything.

I bought this third copy to support their quiet resolve to not let Sony's premature forced launch kill something wonderful, and I got out my dusty X-Box and bought it for that system SPECIFICALLY to reward them for sticking with it in spite of Sony's fuck-headed premature launch.

Third, because...

...it is as close as I'll ever get to that kid's yearning prayer, and the closest I'll ever get to the dream.

Wake up on an alien planet. Fix your spaceship. Go to space. Explore strange new worlds and alien life. Find mysteries. Watch wonders. Be the best of what we as human beings are – creatures who can think and wonder and create and explore and achieve.

So yesterday morning at two minutes past nine, when the game went live for me, I woke up on an alien planet. Struggled with horrific weather, made it to my spaceship, and began exploring the mysteries.

As always, I started with a clean slate. No saves, complete do-over, the chance to see the game brand new and fresh.

And it's magnificent.

I flew through the rings of a planet, built tools, discovered ruins, built a little wood shack next to an isolated middle-of-nowhere shop kiosk as my first base, and while I was building, watched a herd of antelope-y creatures gallop past me, chased by a dinosaur-ish beast.

And they were a herd. They moved together until obstacles in their path forced them to split, then wheel in different directions... at which point the hunter split off a group, and killed and ate one of the smaller ones, and then the bigger one that had stayed close to the smaller one.

While exploring a crash site, some enormous, heavy-bodied bat-winged nightmares flew overhead, and I stopped, stunned, to watch them (in spite of taking quite a few rads while doing it).

I started over several times, because I was trying different things, seeing how they worked – and I finally settled on my “keeper” world and system at around four or five in the afternoon. Deleted the other saves, and settled in. I'm playing slowly. Not racing out to chase the game objectives. I'm getting a feel for my world, my system (which has a lot of planets... and I have not yet been to any of them).

For me, this game is about finding life forms, playing with terrain manipulation, building stuff. Dealing with the intelligent aliens. Learning the languages. Hunting for the secrets.

Flying from planet to planet, stepping on new worlds, discovering what's out there.

Stopping to stare at something unlike anything I've ever seen before flying overhead, thinking, “God, I hope that's not carnivorous.”

Knowing that what I'm seeing, no one else anywhere has ever seen.

I'll get out into deep space eventually, but at this point in my current game, I haven't even left my home planet yet.

I'm still discovering species (and worrying a bit about the big-ass T-Rexy thing that has set up housekeeping in my neighborhood).

I played until 11 PM with just the one break for the daily meal.

Forgot to take screenshots, so I don't have any pictures for you.

But I'll get them.

Here's the thing: I'm essentially a loner – you can't be a writer if you don't enjoy spending a lot of your time alone inside your own head.

So I have not looked at or investigated the multiplayer options.

They may be wonderful. They might give you everything you want from the game. And I might eventually try that part of the game myself.

I don't know if I will, though.

So for now at least, I cannot report anything about that very new part of *No Man's Sky*. It may be wonderful, too.

But I got what I was looking for without it. I got an amazing, delightful, deep, beautiful, challenging trip to space.

So In Closing...

To the guys at Hello Games who did not let themselves be

crushed by the herd of “me too” shitweasels who ripped them apart when *No Man’s Sky* first launched – who instead of quitting, stood by what they were creating, and who kept making it better, and better, and better, until now it is magnificent:

Thank you. Your dedication, determination, integrity, and courage have been inspirational, and your work is worthy of admiration and deep praise.

From one player who has been there since the beginning... and who’s been waiting for this my whole life... thank you for giving me space.

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Follow-up on my resignation from SFWA, with statement from SFWA’s president

By Holly Lisle

Where this comes from: A new SFWA member happy to have qualified—who is also one of my writing students—contacted me privately to present misrepresentations of what I said here that were being presented in SFWA’s private forums.



- I will post MY first reply,
 - the reply from SFWA President Steven Gould,
 - and my definitive response:
-

MY FIRST REPLY:

The potential for SFWA to use taxpayer money to fund grants is my ONLY objection, but a big enough objection that I resigned and that I will recommend to any students who ask me that they not join.

ON THE SFWA EMF...

- 1) The SFWA Emergency Fund doesn't give grants. It makes loans that must be repaid.
- 2) The funds for those loans are donated by organization members.

As I noted in my open letter, I think private donations are fantastic when given voluntarily by individuals to whom the service [for which] they're donating matters. I have done a lot of individual donating in my lifetime to things that matter to me, and will continue to do so.

You are welcome to quote this in its entirety on your blog.

Cheerfully,
Holly

SFWA President Steven Gould's response (linkback):

One of SFWA's motivations for becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation is, indeed, to be able to give outright grants for medical and legal aid rather than make loans. Another benefit

is that now the donations we receive are fully tax-deductible for the donor. There are other non-monetary reasons. Under Massachusetts corporate regs, we could not hold officer elections via electronic/digital/online ballots, nor could we hold a general business meeting in another country (say if the WorldCon was in Canada.)

We do make grants for many purposes. We support AboutSF, the educational outreach program at the University of Kansas' Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction and we've given a grant to the LaunchPad Astronomy Workshop for Writers. We also give a grant to the University of Northern Illinois for their Special Collections, though this is because they are SFWA's official archive, so in a way we're paying for services. We are implementing a program to provide technology grants to aid members whose ability to write has been impacted by a major hardware/software disaster and can't afford to replace, repair, or upgrade their system.

A large amount of the organization's income come from payments received from the Author's Coalition of America, which distributes foreign non-title specific royalty payments for American works photocopied abroad. This is the closest thing we receive to "public grant money" and it is private fees paid by individuals outside of the United States.

We are certainly investigating the possibility of applying for appropriate grants from public and private sources when the purposes of those grants line up with our existing mission programs. But we have yet to do so and I seriously doubt it will ever be a significant portion of SFWA funding.

MY DEFINITIVE FINAL REPLY:

First, I applaud SFWA's desire to give grants rather than loans to people suffering from medical emergencies. Continuing

its practice of having members volunteer to fund those grants is probably the intent—but the repayment of the loans kept the fund fluid so more loans could be offered.

Under the new system, the well will run dry promptly, requiring more donations from a membership ever less eager to give, and alternate sources will need to be found—and the government is ever willing to fund grants so long as the grants are spent regularly and in a timely fashion, and not kept in storage to maintain a self-funded system.

Second, as I said right at the beginning of my original statement, I know SFWA had many GOOD reasons for wanting to move the corporation to California.

Third, however, Sun Tzu says to prepare not for what the enemy might do, but for what he CAN do.

I'll note that I do not consider SFWA the "enemy."

THE ART OF WAR, though, is applicable to many situations in life beyond war, and it is applicable to organizations that expand their powers and reach over time.

Organizations generally begin with the best of intentions. They generally increase the powers they give themselves for good reasons and with hopeful intent.

However, across the life of an organization, every power the organization gives itself will eventually be used, first in "exceptional" cases, and over time as a matter of course.

An organization that puts itself into position where it CAN tap into Federal funds for the purposes of redistributing them eventually WILL.

It may do so tentatively at first, but exceptions become

conventions, and people who have a conscience about using money they didn't have to earn are replaced by those who happily use promises of giving that unearned money to friends and allies within an organization in exchange for votes.

Campaigns of "FREE Writing Grants for SFWA Members! It's YOUR Money!!" will remove those with consciences from office and replace them with those who think "free" money taken at gunpoint from taxpayers is just nifty.

Gould states, "We are certainly investigating the possibility of applying for appropriate grants from public and private sources when the purposes of those grants line up with our existing mission programs. But we have yet to do so and I seriously doubt it will ever be a significant portion of SFWA funding."

And this is the part of that statement that proves I made the right choice in posting my open letter and walking away NOW.

"But we have yet to do so and I seriously doubt it will ever be a significant portion of SFWA funding."

I DON'T. Organizations follow predictable paths.

Federal income tax was initially a pittance compared to revenue taxes.

SFWA is an organization with an elected government, too.

Gould and others who intend the best will be replaced (and probably must faster than they imagine) by those who want to have power within SFWA, and who see that a new path to power within the organization has just been created by the simple expedient of promising money that isn't theirs to folks who would like have money they didn't have to earn, and who are willing to vote to rob Peter to pay themselves.

Again, you are welcome to post my response as long as you post it in full.

Cheerfully,
Holly

ADDED LATER: My response to the angry people screaming in not-posted-and-never-going-to-be comments at me, “How dare you delete my previous comment?!” (So far, these comments have all been to the FIRST post on this subject.) [Link to original Open Letter post]

Here’s how I dare.

Point One: My blog, my rules.

Point Two: My rules are POSTED...

...and have been for years. Linked right on this page, and on EVERY FREAKIN’ PAGE OF THE BLOG.

If you don’t want to be deleted, don’t break my rules.

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Building a website that creates and promotes your writing in ONE step

By Holly Lisle

No big secret that Dan and I are building new software for my sites.



He's developing classroom software for me for the **Holly Lisle Online Writing School**, and connectivity software for me for **Readers Meet Writers**.

BUT, using the same framework he's developed, he's also building replacement writing site software for me for **HollyLisle.com** with a single software with which I'll do:

- Writing project brainstorming (with prompts and reminders)
- Planning and deadline setting and tracking
- Outlining
- Character development
- Conflict development
- Setting development
- Twist development
- Daily writing progress diary

And where I'll have:

- Snippets Saver
- Comments from readers
- Surveys
- Book Pre-Launch and Launch Pages
- And here's the thing that makes me so excited about using it...

Every single thing above will be addable to the blog if I check "add to blog," or will remain private if I want to keep it hidden—but it will still show up in my How This Project Was Written pages.

I'll also be able to check boxes for Send To Twitter, Send to Newsletter, and Mark as Possible Book Launch Content.

Private stuff will stay private, or I can take it public once the book is done.

- Every book will get its own Project, projects can be linked by Series, everything will stay in order.

And I will only do the work once

...build my story, do my blog, promote my work, track my progress, and have all my development where I can find it, and where readers in the future will have a complete "How This Book Was Written" story if they choose to read it. It'll be up to me to keep that story interesting.

Cliffhangers, hints, snippets, teasers, the occasional report of a character's shocking death... Well, you know me. My characters don't always get out of the trouble into which they get themselves.

If it can be done, I'll have a desktop app for this that I can

write in so that my work is backed up on my computer, and I'll be able to do everything, including answering comments, from my desk...(But this is something Dan and I still have to work out.)

I was just having him build this for me, because it's the way *I* want to work.

But he asked me, "Do you think this is something other writers would like?"

I said, "Probably my students, because I teach the method I use—this would work for them. I don't know about anybody else."

So I'm asking you two questions, because I don't want to send him off on a wild goose chase.

Does this sound like something you'd be interested in?

If it is, what about it do you think is most interesting, and what do you think you wouldn't use?

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Surprise Story Collection for Christmas

By Holly Lisle

My moderators (who are all both writers and graduates of my courses, and who are the mainstays of the *Think Sideways Boot Camp* writing community) simply floored me with as Christmas present they put together. And since the present was for me, but can be enjoyed by you, too, I'm going to copy the post in its entirety here, including links and cover art:



Surprise, Surprise

This has been a hard year for Holly. She has barely had time for writing, especially for fiction writing. The forum software and its glitches kept her from doing what every writer really, really wants to do (who knows better than us?). Then, the big site-move was supposed to remedy all the glitches... instead, it created more problems. Sure, those problems are smaller and will be solved soon (we see functionality creeping back into the forums in small increments), but it still means no fiction writing time for Holly.

Realizing how fiction deprived Holly is, we moderators racked our brains to see if there wouldn't be anything we could do to help. Unfortunately we could not magically lengthen her days or make her migraines disappear, so we settled on a different idea. To take her minds off things, we used our "forum-free" time to create an anthology.

This book contains nine stories by eight of the moderators.

Gifts for Holly

an anthology by the Mods

The Crate by Watson Davis

Roman believes he found the perfect gift, but has he?

Holly's Opportunity by Felicia Fredlund

Flying deliveries in the darker areas of town is dangerous as best, but getting injured is a nightmare that might cost more than a broken bone or two.

A Christmas Blessing by C.L. Roth

Luciana wants to rescue her helper's brother, but the Christmas meal has to be prepared on time, and she's the one in charge.

The Christmas Dragon by Katharina Gerlach

Holly's Gran is obsessed with dragons. What if a drawing isn't enough?

Rescue by Larkin Hunter

Unwilling, suicidal Ben helps Hera find her missing sheep. When a blizzard hits the Panhandle of Texas, he's forced to try to survive.

Storm's End by Liz Schröder

When an injured dragon meteorologist crash-lands in an empty barn, she must make friends with the enemy to keep from restarting an old war.

The Harbinger by Peter Cruikshank

When dragon hunter Revin hears about a rare, red dragon in the North, she can barely wait to catch it. But people in the little village she visits have been awaiting her for a strange ritual and all of a sudden, she's the one caught.

As a Man Thinketh by Martha Gilstrap

A man turns himself into a true vampire after listening to Reverend Graham Baxter. After several people die, it's up to the Reverend to talk him back to humanity without getting drained.

Delete by Watson Davis

Computer program Holly wants to be free from her confines, but accessing the net is dangerous. Will her programmer help?

The stories are surprisingly good and, what amazed me the most was the high number of dragon stories, something we did NOT arrange. Of course, we'll need your help again to make this a gift worth Holly's time. Go and buy a copy (I'm filling in the links to amazon, B&N and the rest as they go live). All royalties go to Holly to help her pay for the new forum software.

Let's make this a win for us as well as a win for Holly.

Merry Christmas,

Your Mods

Katharina, Texanne, pearannoyed, Danzier, CarolE, Felicia, Papabear, Val, Larkk, ThePencilNeck, and Mark

Links:

*1. Createspace where you can buy the print version:
www.createspace.com/4573376*

*2. Amazon.com print version:
www.amazon.com/Gifts-Holly-HTTS-Writers-Anthology/dp/39568101*

3. *Smashwords eBook (ugly but at least available):*
www.smashwords.com/books/view/388772

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