

So now I'm 59

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I turned 59 yesterday. As you get older, your birthday goes from being the high point of your year to something you give a wary sidelong glance as it whips by.

You back away a little. Birthdays start reminding you of all the people who aren't around anymore to celebrate them with you – grandparents and parents and siblings and friends.

So to have an amazing birthday – that's an unexpected grace note in your life, something you don't expect anymore.

My amazing birthday started when Matt and I walked a tiny distance to a local bakery in our new town and bought a bunch of very NOT keto celebratory stuff.

Then we drove to Gnadenhutten, where I showed Matt and Joe the three houses I'd lived in when I lived there – one on Cherry Street when I was three or four, one on Spring Street when I was five to six, and one on Tuscarawas Avenue when I was seven (before we moved to Alaska).

Showed them my school, which was the elementary and high school when I lived there, but which is now apparently just the high school.

Finding places you lived when you were very small is challenging – but while Gnadenhutten has gotten a bit bigger (and is still a lovely town), I was able to locate both the Spring Street and Tuscarawas Avenue houses.

The one on Cherry Avenue is kind of iffy, because I was around three or four when I lived there, and I remember the place only because the lady who lived downstairs from us (and from whom my parents rented the upstairs) had these gorgeous tucked red velvet pillows that she would let me touch when I went to

visit.

And because that house was the place where I got my mouth washed out with soap when my rideable Yogi Bear threw me to the sidewalk, and I loudly called him a goddamned bear.



I have tended to wax philosophical in some of my past birthday posts. And I don't do them that often, because birthdays when you're an adult are usually just another day.

But here's the thing...

Yeah, I'm getting older, and getting older carries with it the sure knowledge that you're pushing toward an ending, and you'd prefer that to remain a long damn way in the future.

But at 59, I'm down a minimum of a hundred pounds and a max of around a hundred thirty from the most I ever weighed. I stopped weighing myself when I hit 231, but I kept gaining weight while increasing another whole WalMart X size. So I don't know exactly how much weight I've lost. I know it's a lot.

My blood pressure, blood glucose, and overall health are superb.

I no longer have a parathyroid tumor, and am still clear of tongue cancer. We'll ignore the fact that I have a cold today.

And I now live in Ohio.

As you get older, birthdays stop feeling all that special. But

this one – this one was spectacular.

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Hurricanes and Roving Thug Block Parties

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Image of Hurricane Dorian is a cellphone screenshot from WeatherUnderground.com

Imagine you live in a neighborhood where, from time to time during the autumn, roving thugs invade the entire area. They pour into your house and the houses of everyone else in the neighborhood, stick guns to your head, and for a period of a week or more hold their guns to your head and the heads of anyone else who is with you, threaten to destroy everything you own and to kill you and everyone you love – and you can put shutters up on your windows – but if the thugs are serious, that won't stop them from doing what they're going to do.

One of three things then happens.

They do nothing, getting bored with their game, and just go away.

They trash some places but not yours, kill some people, but not you... and then they go away.

Or they destroy your stuff, or kill you.

They might come back again several times during the same year.

Might just disappear into the woodwork for a while – but you KNOW they'll eventually be back.

Well, the thugs are in my living room right now. Our sky is gray, it's raining, and there are intermittent gusts of wind bending the palm trees in front of our place.

I KNOW Hurricane Dorian is supposed to turn.

I KNOW.

But you look at the size of that monster, and to the outer bands that are already over us, it's very hard to NOT think, "Weather forecasters have been wrong once or twice before about hurricanes... and what if they are this time, and what if it doesn't?"

And even if it does, there's another one already building out there.

This needs to become Florida's State Song.

It already is for me.

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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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The Ohio Series: Novel 1 – Friday snippet (a day early) that might not make the final version

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I'm going to note that the urban fantasy series I'm writing operates around the importance of trade.

That it's an old system, and that it operates across multiple dimensions.

And that my protagonist is a cop, and the guy she's working with is... difficult to get a handle on.

With that set-up, this is so offbeat and was so unexpected that it might have to come out of the final draft. It might not fit once I've done the final worldbuilding. But with the usual caveats:

This is rough, raw, first draft; it undoubtedly contains errors, and I do NOT make corrections from this draft; this material is copyrighted to me; do not quote or use in reviews...

The set-up is that my protagonist's ally is explaining why he had to change his identity. Here's the snippet...

"Building a network up from nothing is a helluva lot of work, though, and let me just say that the rewards offered by this particular world were... not enticing."

"Prospective bride not pretty enough?"

"You ever see Star Wars?" he asked me.

"Sure."

"She looked a lot like Princess Leia, minus the sticky-bun hairdo. And was a real princess."

"Then what was the problem?"

"She was a real princess. And a cannibal. She'd had two previous prospective bridegrooms killed and cooked when they failed to live up to her expectations."

Every once in a while, the words that come out of someone else's mouth are so utterly ludicrous that it doesn't even matter if they could be true. Or might be horrible. The shock value of them catches you, and you crack.

I just lost it, right then, right there. Laughed my ass off. Had tears running from my eyes, had to excuse myself to go blow my nose.

When I got back, he was staring at me, an accusatory expression on his handsome face. "That wasn't a joke."

"Dude," I said. "Cannibal princess. I'm sorry, but I keep seeing Princess Leia cooking Han Solo and serving him with cranberry sauce."

Yeah. It's definitely out there.

In other updates, the Sweater From Hell required a complete rip back of [the sleeve I was starting here](#).

Too much flipping of the whole sweater while knitting the sleeve in.

So now I'm doing it this way...



Faster, lighter. Remarkably, however, the 2/2/8 stitch pattern is still just as inconceivably frustrating.

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Post-Vertigo: The Ohio Series, Novel One, and shifts in the story

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Had a rough last couple of days [due to BPPV](#), but thanks to the Half-Somersault Maneuver, today I'm okay again.

And I had a great writing day, with a few caveats.

I created a character in the first half of the book that has to go. This character would have (or COULD HAVE) made things too easy for my protagonist, and ***easy is never good*** in fiction.

I'd countered the "character knows all the secrets" problem by making the character an obstinate jerk – but obstinate jerks are tiresome to read, especially in series fiction.

If I made the character likable, or even sane (since what my MC is doing is desperately important, and being the obstacle in the way of that would be suicidal), my MC would have no obstacle to discovering all the crap that's going on.

I have the right main character. My MC is, as all good MCs are, the person who knows the least in this situation... but I have eliminated (in my thoughts and daily provisional outlining – eliminating what's already written will have to wait for revision) the character who knows everything.

I have substituted this character for two people who each know just pieces of the puzzle. And a library full of books mostly written in languages my MC cannot yet read – a lot of which

are not even languages from this world...

Or universe...

It's a nice little library, but my MC is going to have to figure out her own way through a lot of the crap that's now falling on her head.

She doesn't yet realize it, but the most important question she needs to ask now is, "Why did the thing that tried to eat me explode?"

It's a good question. Because, however, she has a whole lot of little fires igniting all around her, the point where she gets around to asking that one is going to be a long time coming.

I'm really happy. Got 2288 words today, and they felt like they were flying. With the know-it-all gone, the story is back on track. And I'm having a wonderful time figuring out what happens next.

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The Ohio Series: TGIF, and the magic digs deeper

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I made myself cry three times today in the couple hours I was writing my 2056 words.

I'm connecting deeply with the magic of a real and remembered place – with a town I loved, with a time I recall with a lot of powerful emotions.

I'm dealing with my connection to this story with my odd version of humor, but there are times when you're writing along and being snarky and smartass, and you step right into a puddle from the past where you can put faces to names, can wrap the angle of a ray of light around the smell of a basement or a little bedroom, and suddenly you're up to your neck in ice-cold memory. It's a shock. A punch in the stomach, and you find yourself choking back tears at the sound of someone's voice who's been dead a long time.

The characters in this book aren't me. They aren't people close to me. No thin disguises, no 'just the names are changed.'

I knew going in that the place I'm writing was powerful for me, so I made the people as different from me and folks I knew and loved as I could. But they have to live in the place, and they keep setting off memory minefields scattered around from this place I never wanted to leave.

I'm starting to understand what my Muse was keeping me away from in never writing about home.

But being safe is never good for your fiction. I'm seeing what I've been missing by not writing about home too.

Anyway... today...

My hero is a cop. She has a cookie recipe handed down to her from her mother, who got it from her grandmother, both now dead – and today she used a bit of cop-ness and the suggestion of possible cookies in the future to make the deeply disturbing discovery that the guy who has been claiming to be a lawyer isn't one, and that there's something weird about the cookies.

And since she knows what's in them, and knows there are no bizarre ingredients, she can't imagine why they have such a hold on the Old Guy.

But instinct tells her to protect this secret. That it matters.

I know – but she doesn't – that this ties into the fictional magic of the place. I know – but she doesn't – that the magic of the place already has its hooks in her. She could leave now.

But she isn't going to... and the time when she can leave is growing shorter by the second.

What's there? The secret this place is hiding? I don't know. I'm getting hints of it as I write, the feeling from my Right-Brain muse that *it* knows.

I have no clue when I sit down to write what happens next. And I'll note for the record that I HATE pantsing novels. So at some point, I'm going to work through a provisional outline, just so I have something solid that I can ignore and write against and fight with and argue with on my way to the story.

Because, dammit, the story here is big. Dark. Scary. Powerful. And the weird old lawyer who isn't, and the locked freezer in the basement, and the fact that Tori's mother's room was stripped bare and wiped down and repainted with a glossy gray paint, but every item in Tori's room is exactly where she left it when her mother took her away and went on the run, is a big part of what's still hiding.

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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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Why I shut down my Patreon fundraiser

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I'd intended to send a *Questions & Answers* email to my [How to Write a Novel](#) launch list, but that's going to have to wait. Instead, I did THIS.

Closed my "Move out of Florida while writing fiction" fundraiser.

Here's why – it's this clause in the Patreon Legal Agreement

<https://www.patreon.com/legal>

By posting content to Patreon you grant us a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, sublicensable, worldwide license to use, reproduce, distribute, perform, publicly display or prepare derivative works of your content.

Understand that I read that clause and all the rest of them before signing up.

BUT... I'm not a lawyer, and I understood that clause to mean that Patreon was claiming the right to use my Patreon-created content (in other words, my POSTS) to promote the site.

I DID NOT think that they were claiming the right to use and abuse the content I was giving my patrons. In this case, three monthly chapters of the raw first draft of one of my current novels in progress, Dead Man's Party.

A friend emailed me with a link to this post, however:

<https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-beginning-of-the-end-for-patreon/>

Turns out, I was wrong. Patreon is claiming rights to my novel.

So I'm out. I sent the first copy of this email to my patrons using a private Patreon post, and then I shut down my Patreon fundraiser, and am now trying to figure out how to actually close my account.

I'm not letting this kill my dream of moving us out of Florida...

...(hopefully before the next hurricane, if not the start of the hurricane season).

How you can help, if you want to –

IF YOU'RE HERE AS A WRITER:

I have created original classes ranging from under ten dollars to way over a hundred. If one of the classes I offer could help you, then you buying it would help me.

MY COMPREHENSIVE CAREER-LEVEL CLASSES (in recommended order)

***** How to Write a Novel *****

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/class/how-to-write-a-novel.html>

(IN LAUNCH: On sale ONLY through Tuesday APRIL 8 – Final Discount Launch)

How to Revise Your Novel:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-revise-your-novel.html>

How to Write a Series:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-a-series.html>

How to Think Sideways: Career Survival School for Writers:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-think-sideways.html>

WRITING CRAFT SERIES (Each class is under \$10)

Create a Character Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/characterclinic.html>

Create A Plot Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/plotclinic.html>

How to Write Page-Turning Scenes:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/pageturningscenes.html>

WORLDBUILDING SERIES (Each class is under \$10)

Create A Language Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/languageclinic.html>

Create a Culture Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/cultureclinic.html>

Create a World Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/worldclinic.html>

WORKSHOPS & MID-SIZED CLASSES (PRICES VARY)

How to Write Short Stories:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-short-stories-class.html>

How to Write Villains:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-villains.html>

How to Write Dialogue with Subtext:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/dialogue-subtext.html>

Title Cover Copy Marketing Basics:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/titlecovercopy.html>

How to Find Your Writing Discipline:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/writingdiscipline.html>

How to Find Your Writing Voice:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/writing-voice.html>

How to Motivate Yourself:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/motivate-yourself.html>

Beat Writer's Block:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/beatwritersblock.html>

FREE, INCLUDED WITH (also Free) SITE MEMBERSHIP

How to Write Flash Fiction That Doesn't Suck

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/free-flash-fiction-class.html>

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IF YOU'RE HERE AS A READER:

You can help out by buying some of my indie-published fiction.

SHORT STUFF, CURRENTLY AMAZON ONLY:

Light Through Fog:

<https://www.amazon.com/Light-Through-Holly-Lisle-Singles-ebook/dp/B0096F4HY0/>

Rewind:

<https://www.amazon.com/Rewind-Holly-Lisle-Singles-Book-ebook/dp/B00AY10HAE/>

Strange Arrivals:

<https://www.amazon.com/Strange-Arrivals-Twisty-Fantasy-Tales-ebook/dp/B00E0WMYRW/>

FANTASY – ARHEL TRILOGY

Fire in the Mist:

<https://books2read.com/FireInTheMist>

Bones of the Past:

<https://books2read.com/BonesOfThePast>

Mind of the Magic:

<https://books2read.com/MindOfTheMagic>

DARK SCIENCE FICTION-ISH

SETTLED SPACE

Both of the Cadence Drake novels – *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood* and *Warpaint*, are off sale while I come up with new titles and new cover art for them, and new key words, descriptions, and other marketing that allows me to correctly put them in front of the audience that likes a few vampires and a bit of horror with its spaceships.

The Longview Chronicles (complete Series) is in the same universe – still dark, but without the vampires:

<https://books2read.com/longview-chronicles>

Or you can get the individual stories:

Born from Fire:

<https://books2read.com/born-from-fire>

Suzee Delight:

<https://books2read.com/the-selling-of-suzee-delight>

Philosopher Gambit:

<https://books2read.com/the-philosopher-gambit>

Gunslinger Moon:

<https://books2read.com/gunslinger-moon>

Vipers' Nest:

<https://books2read.com/vipers-nest>

The Owner's Tale:

<https://books2read.com/the-owners-tale>

STANDALONE URBAN FANTASY

Minerva Wakes:

<https://books2read.com/minerva-wakes>

PARANORMAL SUSPENSE

Author Page:

<https://books2read.com/ap/xbzgyx/Kate-Aeon>

Midnight Rain:

<https://books2read.com/midnight-rain>

Last Girl Dancing:

<https://books2read.com/last-girl-dancing>

I See You:

<https://books2read.com/i-see-you>

I have much more fiction that's commercially published, or which is out of print and has reverted to me, but which I have not yet republished.

I'm not linking to ANY of that fiction, because your purchase of used books or books where publishers haven't paid royalties in years will not help me.

So there we are.

I want to thank all my patrons again, and I am so sorry that I had to do this, but there is no way I can permit this:

Excerpted from Patreon Legal Terms

You keep full ownership of all content that you post on Patreon, but to operate we need licenses from you.

By posting content to Patreon you grant us a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, sublicensable, worldwide license to use, reproduce, distribute, perform, publicly display or prepare derivative works of your content.

No. Just NO.

Holly

P.S. I have had one of my Patreon patrons already ask me how she could continue to support me on a monthly basis.

Here's the answer I gave her:

"I'll look into what's available. Right now, I'm crushed to discover the rights Patreon actually claimed, and worried about getting involved with any other site. So I'm in limbo. You'll find my blog at HollyLisle.com. I'll be keeping my folks there up to date on how I deal with this. It sucks.

Hugs, and thank you for asking."

Why is EVERYBODY on my blog, my mailing list, and in my forums getting this?

Because if you know me, you're probably either a reader or a writer. If you're a writer, you may be considering using Patreon, and you need to know. If you're a reader considering funding someone on Patreon, THEY need to know.

And this is the ugliest, broadest rights-grab I have personally ever seen. Or sadly, been caught up in.

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3 Questions for My Readers (and the story behind why I'm

asking)

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Survey is now closed.

This is going to sound pretty strange, but I have recently discovered that **I have no clue what it is about my fiction that readers like...**

And I'm a lot less certain I understand what kind of fiction I write than I was up until yesterday.

Here's where I discovered how little I actually know about my own fiction. My daughter and I did a podcast episode on [Writing to Market VS. Selling Out](#), in which I humorously described how I have managed to spend a thirty-plus year writing career (so far) not realizing I was a genre contrarian, and that being a genre contrarian was making it really difficult for me to connect with my readers.

Followed by the discussion in the private podcast forum... (If you're interested, [create a free account](#), then go here... [Episode 37: Writing to Market VS Selling Out – Discussion](#))... in which one reader mentioned that she didn't read a lot of my books because she had a hard time with the horror.

Here's the quote (with her name redacted) and my posted response:

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MEMBER said: Personally there are many of Holly's books I don't read because I don't read Horror.

MY reply to her: Here's the thing that stopped me cold in reading your post.

I thought, "I've never written horror..."

*Followed by thinking through what's in my Cadence Drake novels – genetically engineered vampires and the piles of dead with which they decorated their spaceships. And thought... Oh. I just thought of it as **kind of dark science fiction**, though certainly not the darkest I've ever read.*

And then thought, How did I miss the fact that my first SF novel has horror in it...

And then I remembered where I got my worldview.

Going hunting and fishing with my father from the time I was six, helping my father clean our kills, helping my mother cook them, enjoying eating them. I am not squeamish, a fact that served me well in my first career as a nurse.

Alaska in the children's home when I was nine, where one boy ran away, fleeing out onto the tundra. He was never found. In the part of Alaska where we lived, the population density was about .0001 people per square mile. There were thousands of square miles of uninhabited tundra in all directions from us, rivers and lakes and sinkholes.

Being grabbed from behind and felt up by a perv at a Costa Rican bus stop when I was late-fourteen, turning and

attacking him – in six-inch platform high heels with my umbrella held like a sword, filled with crazy blood rage, chasing him with the absolute intent of killing him when I caught him – with zero chance of catching him.

Guatemala in 1975/76 during its civil war, seeing boys my age (I was fifteen when we lived there) being marched into the back of a truck at gunpoint – the method by which the Guatemalan army conscripted soldiers. Round them up, shove them into a truck, shoot the ones who try to escape. (I did not see anyone get shot the day I was watching that truck, those soldiers, and those kids, and trying to understand what was going on.)

Guatemala again, walking with my family past the ruins of a magnificent old cathedral near the mission where we lived. It had collapsed in an earthquake maybe a hundred years earlier. The front was decorated with a long line of head-high freshly blood-stained bullet holes.

The emergency room where I walked in to work one morning and found both of our code rooms stacked with bodies after a drunk who'd been driving all his MANY friends home in the back of his pickup truck hit a tree at – best guess from the sheriff – eighty miles an hour.

Two young kids – 8 and 10 years old – who we coded for over an hour after a tragic accident that had happened while they were playing outside. Neither survived. They were their divorced parents' only children.

And a long, long list of other real-life horrors and tragedies in Alaska, Costa Rica, Guatemala as a kid, and then in the ER, in the ICU, in Med-Surg.

And then even when I was writing full-time, discovering by returning some of my mother's things to her house (about a mile from mine) after a falling out that my parents and sister no longer lived there... that they had moved away without saying goodbye or telling us they were going, or even where they were going. And having my then-nine-year-old kid try to kill himself because he thought the shitty thing they did was his fault...

And. And. And. There's so much more. But here's my point...

*I see **horror** as "supernatural clowns pulling kids down gutter drains, and haunted cars eating people."*

***In my mind, I never wrote a word of horror.** I just translated what I'd seen in the real world into realistic but well-disguised background for my fiction. And even when Becky and I were doing this episode, I did not include horror in my description of what I'd written in *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood*, because I didn't think it had any horror in it.*

And now I'm wondering if any of my other books have horror in them.

None of us see the world the same way, and my default setting

is a combination of “Survive to Operate” and “don’t look away, don’t excuse, and don’t forget.” My world view is broad, real-world, and dark.

Nonetheless, I bounce out of bed every morning thrilled to be alive because I get to write fiction and nonfiction, get to be with my guys, get to talk to my other kids (a lot of days, anyway), get to play with my goofy cat...

And the odds of me having to do CPR on someone or intubate someone or watch someone I fought like hell to save die anyway, or live through my own or anyone else’s real-world horror are – on any given day – pretty low. Especially compared to what those odds used to be.

But from the responses to this episode, I have discovered that I do not understand my own fiction or its contents as well as I thought I did. So I’m going to be sending out a tiny questionnaire to the readers on my list, asking them to show me what they love about my fiction, and why, and what they hate (or avoid), and why.

I need to see how people who consider themselves my readers interpret what I do – because none of us see the world the same way, and I’m guessing the way I see it is pretty strange even for a science fiction/fantasy/suspense writer. (And accidental committer of horror.)

===== So... reader of mine...

If you’re still reading, here’s what I would greatly

appreciate from you: The answers (in as much detail as you wish to give) to three questions.

Just cut and paste the following questions into a **REPLY to this post**, and tell me...

—

- What do you specifically love about what you find in my fiction, and why – and what genre(s) would you call the parts you like?
- What do you try to avoid in my fiction, and why – and what genre(s) would you call the parts you avoid?
- What ONE other writer do you read who gives you what you love most about my fiction without giving you what you try to avoid in my fiction? (With a link to your favorite book by that reader if you're willing to recommend him or her.)

—

I've got some studying, and thinking, and rethinking to do, and if you're willing to help me figure out what I need to do to make my fiction better for YOU, I'm grateful. If you got this far, thank you for reading this very long email. **And if you're willing to answer those three questions for me**, I'll use the email linked to your reply to send you a personal download link to a story of mine that fits what you like and avoids what you hate.

With the acknowledgement that in some cases, I might have to write that story first. So you may not get your link immediately.

Holly

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The Pointy Marketing End of Writing Fiction: Old Dog, New Trick

[By Holly Lisle](#)

No big secret that I'm working hard on making my fiction a full-time paying gig again – my objective is to earn 50% of my income from fiction, with the other 50% coming from my writing classes.

Fiction has been shoved over in a corner for years, because, well – writing good nonfiction is about a million times easier than writing good fiction, and in general it pays a lot better for significantly less work. And at the point where my writing site broke, it was getting the nonfiction up and running again that kept us from ending up living under a bridge.

And, honestly, [after being taken in by that con artist John Locke](#), I had any hope of making a living writing fiction crushed out of me for a long time – everything that including both “indie publishing” and “earn a living doing it” looked like a scam.

But writing fiction is the dream job I love – sitting by myself in a room talking to invisible people on a page, watching them do things I don't expect, finding better conflicts, bigger stories – and writing about what matters to me in THIS world that translates into *my* worlds.

I did it for free every spare minute I got for seven years before I sold anything. Did it as a commercial novelist working fiction as my full-time paying job for seventeen

years. Throwing in all the years when I've been an indie doing fiction at least part time, I'm now over thirty years in on this – and it is STILL work I love.

When you find **WORK. You. LOVE...** you do not ignore that. It's rare. It's astonishing.

I'm writing hard again. Fiction is what bounces me out of bed every morning. Knowing that I'm writing the stories I love, and that they will not be destroyed by bad editors or cancelled by ordering-to-the-net publishing idiocy matters to me.

Knowing that if I can get my work in front of a broader readership, what I'm writing has a chance to matter more – to me because it will help pay the bills, but to MY perfect readers, who can find something in fiction that they love, that matters to them as well – that's what **MAKES** this the dream job.

I know how to write fiction. I'm good at it, and a good number of my students are making REAL money writing fiction after taking my classes.

They learned the “write good fiction” part from me.

Learning how to bring in serious money as indies? No.

That's the part I'm learning from them.

And here are the books and here is the software they have pointed me to that I am fighting with and fighting through in order to make fiction a business, while STILL keeping it MY fiction. Good fiction.

1. [Mastering Amazon Descriptions: An Author's Guide: Copywriting for Authors](#)
2. [Mastering Amazon Ads: An Author's Guide](#)
3. [Rapid Release: How to Write & Publish Fast For Profit](#)
4. [How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis: A Step-by-Step System for](#)

[Enticing New Readers, Selling More Fiction, and Making Your Books Sound Good](#)

5. [Become a Successful Indie Author: Work Toward Your Writing Dream](#)

6. [KDP Rocket](#)

None of these are affiliate links. They're just links to books I'm reading and software I'm using.

I do NOT yet have numbers to prove any of this will work for me. I can prove (using KDP Rocket) that my folks are earning what they say they are. That the writers of the books above (and the maker of the software), are earning what they say they are.

So this time, I can see that there is a path that leads from where I am to where I'm going. I am going to find my way down that path.

You're going to be seeing more split tests on this site. NOT just cover art. Sometimes cover copy. Sometimes blurbs.

If you'll help me out by participating in the split testing (just click whatever you like best), I'll be grateful.

The only data I'm gathering is clicks. Nothing personal, nothing identifiable, nothing that will track you across the web and show you damned advertising.

I'm simply learning the split-testing process to figure out how to write better cover copy and blurbs, and how to build better covers.

Whether you're a reader or a writer, thank you for reading this, and thank you for your help in clicking to let me know what you like.

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