

# The Ohio Novel #1 Is Done! (Or what it's like to disappear into a black box)

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I wrapped up my final draft yesterday.

In spite of best efforts, I came in over my 90,000K wordcount by about 12,000 words.

I don't have a title for the novel yet (Matt comes up with my best titles, and I'm really hoping he can pull out something amazing, both for the first book and for the entire series).

I do have my pseudonym. I can't give either until – BARE MINIMUM – the first five books are out and starting to find their audience.

And then I'll only be giving it to the folks on my mailing list who are genuinely interested in the genre.

Since I'm publishing the Ohio series independently, since I'm bringing the series and world (with possible subsequent series) out under a pseudonym, and since I have to plot the next four novels, then have to complete the entire 5-book series – have all five written, revised, edited, bug-hunted, formatted, covered with pro-quality covers, and get them all up into Amazon-exclusive KDP and print formats, and then launch them at the speed of one book a month for five months, I have a long, long way to go.

But... THIS TIME, I'm trying to work with Amazon's algorithms, and see what I can learn from doing that.

**It's an investment in manpower.** A BIG one – primarily but not exclusively mine. We're talking the time, effort, focus,

dedication, that goes into thinking and then writing 400,000+ MORE connected, related, compelling words of fiction that must be outlined, first-drafted, finished, revised, edited, bug-hunted, typeset, put into Kindle, print, and other formats (the Ohio novels will start Amazon-exclusive, but probably won't stay that way past the completion of the initial five-book launch) have cover copy written and tested and re-written, have title testing – so I'm talking about an all-in commitment of a big chunk of my life, with no feedback (except from Matt, Becky, and my bug hunters) until this whole thing goes live.

It's also an investment in money: All mine. Just the cash outlay for five great, professional covers, is significant. But much, much more expensive than that is [opportunity cost](#) – the things I don't get paid for because of the time and effort I'm putting into this project that I *hope* I might get paid for... that isn't a new writing class or a couple of classes I KNOW I could get paid for.

If it goes big for me, THEN my writing students will get my numbers and how I did it, along with this really cool story development process I've come up with and am using for these. Maybe some workshops.

If it doesn't go big for me, they'll get the really cool story development process... but that's not a cool new workshop that might be able to give writers willing to do the work (as outlined above, so we're talking BRAVE writers) a path to building a live-on fiction income. The story development thing is just a few lessons. Probably added into an existing class or two.

And here's the thing that's making me a little nuts.

The entire process has to be done completely in the dark. I have to build EVERYTHING, pay for EVERYTHING, set up EVERYTHING, write EVERYTHING, and publish EVERYTHING... with

nobody but Matt, Becky, and myself seeing what I'm doing. (Well, at the point where I'm ready for bug-hunters, I already have a couple lined up, and will bring in a few more, and this handful of readers will go through all five novels back to back to back. And sign an NDA beforehand that they can't tell anyone who I am, or what my pseudonym is, or where the website is, or anything. Not until the books are doing so well that I can bring in my other genre-related fiction to the new writer under a "written as Holly Lisle" label with the pseudonym as the author name.

I can't share snippets of any of the Ohio stuff – not snippets or scenes or teaser stuff or worldbuilding – on my blog, on the podcast, in the writing community forum. Nothing.

I can't put links to the books when they come out here or in the writing community or on the podcast page.

I can't link my old novels to this new set.

I have to become invisible.

Not my strong suit.

But for this test to mean anything, for this process to mean anything, this is where I am.

At some point in the future, I hope to be able to share some crazy great news. Or at least, "Hey, I'm making enough to pay off the house." That would be really cool.

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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](http://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](http://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 Wishbone Conspiracy: Yesterday and today

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Yesterday, a couple things went wrong.

First, the writing dragged because I didn't know where the novel was going. I made it up to 21,843 words – so it wasn't a complete wreck. But it was not that flowing, flying race against the timer that is so fun.

Second, I chose to get sidetracked figuring out some Amazon ads for *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood*.

I did not trip. I did not fall. I made a shitty choice knowing it was a shitty choice, and spent writing time doing non-writing things, and then berated myself for the choice.

Not productive – except it pointed out to me that I absolutely have to have a Provisional Outline to stay on track with this novel.

And in starting to put that together, I found exactly where the story broke yesterday – I was focusing so much on the second conspiracy Cady and friends discovered that I forgot to follow up with the first one.

I'm only thirteen chapters into the thirty-seven I need to outline to get the book into writeable range for “short, tight



chapters and 70,000 words”, but with the story summary written (the story summary is what I WANT to write, though not necessarily what I’ll end up with), and with my focus on weaving the two conspiracies and “Newsletter Guy” into the plot, this is coming together in an interesting fashion.

I’ll get back to countable words on *Wishbone* next Thursday.

**Today I’m building the foundation that will make getting them easier.**

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Added at 12:39 PM – it took me hours, but I got the outline built, and I like where it goes.

I know parts of it will change when I’m writing, but for the moment at least I have figured out specific things I need to accomplish in each chapter – and if I can beat those things with better ideas as I’m getting my words, that’s all to the good.

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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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# Writing contest sites, and fiction versus the NBA

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I never recommend writing contest sites that charge an entry fee. No exceptions. I've never entered one, because I was out to make a living from my writing, and contests were an unnecessary diversion from my path.

Your mileage may vary. But I received an interesting request from someone building a "perpetual writing contest site" and once I removed all the identifying details, I thought you might find it interesting to observe the conversation.

Here's the link to the article (the first one I've added to "Writing Mind, Heart, and Soul in a while):

<http://hollylisle.com/why-i-dont-recommend-writing-contest-sites-and-why-writing-fiction-isnt-like-the-nba/>

From there you can come back here and add your comments on the article if you care to.

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# Don't miss the Writing Live Chat FIVE, Aug. 18, 2015

[By Holly Lisle](#)



Click to  
Register

The chat will start at 1PM EDT. It may run over an hour (the last one did).

Here's your invitation if you haven't yet signed up:

<http://app.webinarjam.net/register/4436/e963ecd928>

## Here's our discussion schedule:

- **Genre:** Discussing What Genre Isn't, and Why This Matters
- **When To Go to War Over a Book...And When NOT To**
- **Writing As A Business (or A Hobby):** From Getting Paid to Going Full-Time
- **Products—Novel, Short Stories, Ring Cycles, and Everything Else:** A step-by-step walkthrough on deciding which products you want to create and how to go about placing them
- **Tips from the *How To Think Sideways Class*:** Dealing with Fear, Criticism, Perfectionism, the Real World™, and More

I have some questions, and will be taking more LIVE as we go through each section. And this time Jean Schara will be running the questions and getting them to me, so we should have a slightly smoother experience.

The replay plus downloads, if any, will be available from the link I'll post here after the chat is done. No login necessary for this.

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# **LAST CALL – Free live writing chat today, with a little writing workshop thrown in**

[By Holly Lisle](#)



I've set up today's writing chat so I should be able to answer some live questions along with the ones asked previously.



# IF YOU HAVE WRITING QUESTIONS...

Today's topics are:

- Story Planning (Plotting)
- Character Development
- Writing from Different Points of View
- What About Genre
- Writer Myths AND Writing Myths
- Revision and Editing (Are NOT Synonyms)

**And I have downloadable notes sheets and the worksheets for you,** set up for the little "Quick Story Plot" workshop we'll do in the middle of this.

The worksheets are printable, but if you don't have a printer handy, you can do the workshop with just a notebook or loose-leaf paper and a pen.

**No pencils.** Pencils let you erase, and erasing breaks your discussion with your muse (subconscious mind).

If you're already signed up, check your email for the link that will take you to the live page.

If you haven't signed up yet, HERE'S THE LINK:  
<http://app.webinarjam.net/register/4436/e963ecd928>

I hope I'll see you there.

By the way, if you can't make the live version, sign up to get the link to the replay—where you'll still be able to download the worksheets and do the workshop, and get the answers to questions folks ask.

You just won't be able to ask questions.

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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:

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## MY FIRST REPLY:

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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

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**SFWA President Steven Gould's response ([linkback](#)):**

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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.

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**MY DEFINITIVE FINAL REPLY:**

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**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

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**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.) [\[Link to original Open Letter post\]](#)

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**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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# **The View From Fifty-Four: Writer On A Mission**

[By Holly Lisle](#)

**Writing was, and is, my passion.**



## Vision, Passion, Mission

I worked at my fiction from the time I was twenty-five until I was thirty-one without ever making a dime, and never begrudged a minute of that time. While I was writing, I was happy. I was creating. I was learning to write better. I was finding my stories and my voice. I was discovering a life-long love.

When I was thirty-one, I sold my first novel, and experienced the realization that I was home.

**In that moment, I knew my purpose in life.**

I was born to write fiction, to create worlds and characters and stories—and every crazy, dangerous, scary, heartbreaking, and wonderful thing I'd done in my life had been building up to that moment when I could roll what I loved and desired, feared and hated, lived and remembered, into stories that people who shared my same passions and dreads could read.

**More, I found my mission.**

I knew I wanted to be able to help other writers know what it felt like to come home to their lives' purpose, to get their fiction into print, to get paid to do what they loved in the world, to turn what had been an impossible dream into "This is my real life, every amazing day!"

**I have a vision.**

Mine is not a grand vision of a whole world changed by what I love. **Mine is a little vision, but it's mine.**

- **I want to live in a world where readers can buy stories they love directly from writers whose work they love, and who can directly, one-on-one, help those writers**



keep their careers alive, and keep writing the fiction they love, where the commercial publishing issues of sell-through or book-to-book increases cannot interfere with this human-to-human connection. Where the reader will always be able to ask her favorite writer, "Can you tell me a story?" And where the writer will be able to say, "Yes, I can."

The potential for this world now exists, but it isn't fully realized.

- **I want to live in a world where writers can wake up every morning to write their fiction first**, because that is what they're being paid to do directly from the people who love what they do.

Where motivated, passionate writers can afford to feed themselves and their families, can afford to create better lives for themselves, because their readers happily buy their stories and ask for more. Where every writer who is willing to work hard to perfect his or her craft can connect with the people who value that writer enough to pay to read what he or she does...and who will recommend the writer to friends who share the same loves and passions, and who will love this writer, too.

The potential for this world exists, too—but too many writers don't realize that what they love is within their reach, or know what they have to do to reach in.

This is a problem I have solved for myself and know how to teach other writers to solve.

- **I want to live in a world where writers from anywhere in the world who want to write for a living can do so**, regardless of previous education, regardless of pressures from family or society, and in doing so bring

joy and laughter, comfort and courage, to the people who share their community, their understanding, their world view. And who can, by reading the works of these writers who share their world and lives, know that they are not alone. The Internet makes this world both reachable and creatable, and I am working right now to build my small part of it.

## **Since 1991, I've been feeling my way toward building my part of this world I want to live in.**

I made mistakes along the way. I went in wrong directions, forgetting that every person who wants to live a better life has to work to do it, and has to be paid for that work—and that **the only way any writer can fully realize his or her dream of writing full-time is to get paid for doing that.**

I was the first person who jumped in front of the 'do it for free' bus I once recommended, and my family suffered for many years because of that.

When I realized that if writing was going to be my work, I had to work for money, I put together a little writing shop, and invited other writers to create work for readers and writers and publish it there—but while I did pretty well for a few years moving nonfiction for my writers, I couldn't do anything for their fiction.

And keeping up with the expanding platform and the books on it turned out to be more than I could handle while still keeping my own writing career going.

I tried to create **Rebel Tales** as a way for writers to connect

directly to their readers with serial fiction, and got my ass handed to me by a thief pretending to be an editor.

Both of these projects of mine were before Amazon and other online bookstores opened up their platforms to indie authors. Amazon and other platforms created much larger access for writers than I could ever offer. They are one of a number of pieces now in place that can allow me to expand my vision, my passion, my mission.

## **I have strengths and weaknesses that affect what I can do with this vision, this passion, this mission of mine.**

- **I know how to find the best people on the internet, both readers and writers.** Some of them hang out here, and have for years. Some of them hang out in my old Forward Motion writing community, now owned and run by my friend Lazette Gifford. Some of them hang out in my new—well, newer—writing community on How To Think Sideways, which has been alive for about seven years now.
- **I know how to show them how to change their dreams into their reality.** What they love is what I love—and for the writers, what they want to do is the same thing I wanted to do. I did it without college, without funding, and without assistance from the government, and I know that to succeed, other writers don't need those things either.
- **And I know how to write good fiction, how to revise it, how to make it hang together so that readers want to read more.**

Those are my strengths.

## On to the weaknesses.

- **I am only one person, and I've now used up more than half my life, no matter how optimistic I might choose to be about how long I can hope to live.** My great-grandmother lived to be 103, and when I was twenty-four (and she was ninety-four) I looked at her and thought, "I need to be doing something that I can still do when I'm her age."

That was the origin of my New Year's Resolution to finish my first novel before I turned twenty-five. I made it, and I made it here, and as long as my mind stays sharp, I can do this until I die. And I intend to.

But in the last four years, I've had a brain tumor scare and a cancer scare. So far, the symptoms turned out, after expensive testing, to be from benign problems.

But one of these days, they won't be. I can't do everything. And I don't have forever in which to build the world in which I want to live.

- **In my [HowToThinkSideways.com](http://HowToThinkSideways.com) writing school, along with pros who are sharpening skills and intermediate writers who are close to breaking out, I have thousands of "baby writers."**

Many of these folks are going to become the great voices in fiction for the next fifty to seventy-five years. But right now they're brand-new, and struggling to find readers.

- **I want to help them find readers—but I need to help them find THEIR readers.** I need to help them find the people who will love what they do, who will help them discover their voices, and who will, when they start publishing, find and buy their first stories, and their later stories.

People who will value them for their writing, will pay them to keep writing, will love what they do and spread the word to other readers who will ALSO love what they do. And I don't KNOW their readers. But you do, or someone you know does, or has a cousin once removed on his mother's side who's uncle reads exactly what this person writes.

**I want to recruit people who share my purpose, my passion, my mission...my vision.**

**I have some of my core people already.**

**My web developer, Dan Allen, understands what I'm doing and why.** He knows this mission, and like me, he sees why it matters. He's on board to build the infrastructure that will make it fly. And he's in this for the long haul.

**My amazing moderators know the mission,** and in the forums every day, they are now—and have been for years—helping writers figure out new ways to use my writing courses. They help people adapt processes that I use myself into processes that work for brains wired far differently than mine. And as we move forward, they'll be putting together writing challenges, and using new forum features to help writers make their fiction better.

Even while we're on the crappy forums we're stuck with until

Dan finishes turning a battered, ancient database into a well-oiled machine, they're on the boards every day. They are magnificent.

## **I'm still missing some core people.**

I have two service providers who are also **HowToThinkSideways students**, and who created special offers for my writing members, so that they could get better prices on getting their books edited and formatted.

- I need more folks like these.
- And I need readers for my writers.

**As part of my ongoing mission to create an online writing school that teaches writing dreamers how to become writing professionals, I'm adding a service for readers.**

<http://ReadersMeetWriters.com> will introduce **READERS WHO SHARE MY VISION** to writers who are working to become professional writers, and who are trying to find their readers.

- These are **readers who are dedicated to helping the writers** who are going to become the great voices of fiction for the next fifty to seventy-five years,
- **Who want to read good fiction and who are willing to support the careers** of the people who it by buying their work...
- And by **recommending their work** to others...
- **Who are willing to pitch in** on crowdsourcing final

manuscripts, for example, to make sure broke beginning writers are able to put out high-quality, non-buggy fiction even when they're just getting started..

- **Who are willing to help** split test things like cover art and cover copy (basically, you'll just go to pages linked from a Want To Test? page and click around, browsing what interests you and ignoring what doesn't).
- **Who are willing to get involved in helping the writers you'll someday love** BECOME those writers.

Dan and I will have to build this, and my moderators, and volunteer readers and writers, will have to test it.

**As Dan and I work toward building a better online writing school, I'm going to ask you what you want, either as a reader or as a writer.**

I'm going to use this site to talk to you about these things, and ask you to test various site features and let me know what you think about them. I'm going to ask for your opinions. I'm going to ask for you to help me find the people I need to make various parts of this vision of mine work.

I'm building this thing so it will outlive me. I want to know that writers will still have a place where they can learn what they need to know to build lives, feed their families, and reach their dreams doing what they love. And I want that place to still have some part of me in it. To go on doing what I love when I no longer can.

I don't know how long this place can last.

I don't know who else besides me this vision, this passion, this mission speaks to.

But if this matters to you, please tell me here. And tell me WHAT matters to you, and WHY.

**The view from fifty-four is a wonderful view. It is watching my dreams made real in the world in the lives of writers who reach their own dreams.**

Thank you for joining me for all these years in making this happen. Please help me make the vision clearer, the mission stronger, the passion more loved, more respected, and more cherished.

**[Join the Readers Meet Writers Brainstorming team and get Founder Benefits](#)**

(Link opens in a new tab/page so you won't lose your comment)

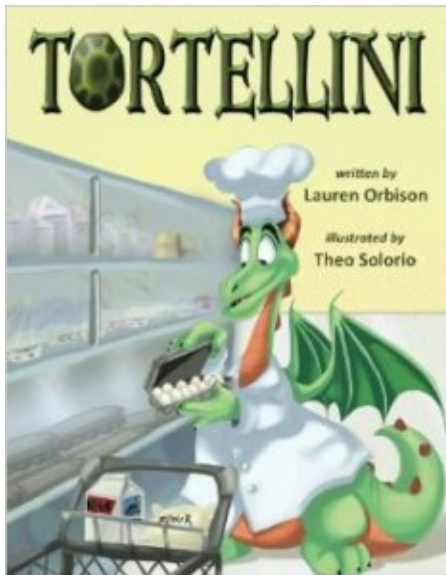
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# Why Lauren Orbison Chose to Go Indie

[By Holly Lisle](#)



Tortellini, by Lauren Orbison

I've been corresponding back and forth with a student of mine for a while now, and think you'll find the story of how she hit print inspiring—and amazing.

So I'd like to introduce you to [Lauren Orbison, author of Tortellini \[link goes to her site\]](#), and her tell you this story herself. Lauren garnered serious interest from a couple of BIG publishers, but in the end decided that going the indie route was best for her writing goals.

I'm thrilled with her success, and excited to see what she comes up with next.

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