

Book 5 outline done – and my application of Creative Destruction.

By Holly Lisle

So I have all thirty scenes for Book 5.

I love what I got. It's solid, it holds together, it brings in essential pieces from the first four novels and uses stuff I hid throughout the first three (and in-progress fourth) stories to tie things up in a fashion I think is really cool.

It's a target to shoot for... but again –

No plan survives first contact with the enemy.

And when you're the writer, the outline is the plan, then **you are the enemy.**

So there's that.

I have done all this work knowing that I'm going to get back to writing Book Four, using the MUCH better ideas that I've come up with over the past few days to direct it toward the ending...

And I am going to break shit again.

I imagine my re-think on the rest of Book 4 will mostly hold.

I imagine that the completely destructive outline of Book 5 (not ONE scene from the first outline made it to the second one) is probably doomed to Yet Another Outline when I get to it.

The logical question is:

Why do you do this?

And the born-from-brutal-experience answer is NOT –“If I can’t see where I’m going, I can’t get there.”

It’s much messier and crueler than that. It is, “If I can’t see where I *think* I’m going, I can’t get *anywhere*.”

Writing novels for me mostly happens by me having *better ideas* while I write.

For that to work, I have to have *ideas* first, though, and they need to be the very best ideas I can come up with at the time.

The process is known (though it’s generally not associated with writing fiction) as “destructive creation.”

It how tractors made horses obsolete – and destroyed the workhorse-breeding industry. How computers made typewriters obsolete, and destroyed the typewriter manufacturing industry.

And it’s how I write – I do all this work so that I can break my less-good ideas on my way to coming up with *better ideas*.

Though I *don’t think* I’ve ever really thought of it as that until today.



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**Today I studied the map,
asked WHY... made good progress
on OUTLINE 5... figured out why
YESTERDAY crashed...**

By Holly Lisle

Can't say today was easy. I walked in circles (literally) because pacing helps me generate ideas, talked to myself out loud to ask important questions, looked at my map and drew a few circles on it to identify story issues...

And then I went back to the line-for-scene outline and managed to come up with eleven line-for-scene sentences, a MASSIVE conflict I'd forgotten to consider while pushing for the series end, and now not only do I love the new direction the series takes in the final novel...

But I cannot wait to write the damn thing.

Could stuff in BOOK 4 break things in the final outline between now and then?

Sure.

Could I hit some sort of wall tomorrow while figuring out the remaining eleven LFS sentences?

Oh, most certainly.

But there are solid principles to storytelling that I follow... and if I don't end up using what I have now, it will only because I have something that is provably better.

About the Tuesday Crash...

I forgot that I hadn't had any food since Sunday at about 7 p.m.

It's a mostly regular intermittent fasting thing we do – one meal a day Tuesday through Sunday, then don't eat again until Tuesday at around 7 p.m.

And mostly that works just fine. Sometimes, though, I get a little hungry by Tuesday morning, and instincts kick in that send me in search of food: BODY gets up and walks to the fridge or to the cashew can, BRAIN grabs body, turns it around, and sits it back at the desk, BODY waits until brain is engaged in though (so not paying attention) and walks over to the damn fridge again...

That, with multiple repetitions, was Tuesday.

Tomorrow, I have eleven more Line-For-Scene Sentences to go to finish the Book 5 outline.

So – this is within reach... and I should be back to writing Book Four on either Friday or Monday.

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Have figured out the plot summaries for Ohio 4 and Ohio 5 – now to the line-for-scene outlines

By Holly Lisle

Kind of a headdesk day today.

Been at this for about three hours already, and it looks like I've only achieved 60 words so far: A 30-word plot sentence for Ohio 4, and a 30-word plot sentence for Ohio 5.

It's a lot more than that, though.

While I can't count any of the words, I had to rant at myself in my text notes to figure out the primary and secondary conflicts on each of the two remaining novels, and make sure I included stories for each of the primary series characters...

And I had to figure out how to retrofit one of *this morning's* revelations into the three earlier books without breaking anything...

And I had to ditch my main character's sister – not just for novel four, but for the entire five-book series. It won't affect that many scenes, or the overall plot (which, in fact, was one of the problems and part of the reason I have to do it), and I've figured out how most of the affected minor scenes be adapted for secondary characters who already have other things to do in this series.

If there is a second five-book series in this world... or just

one-off novels... I might be able use the sister.

In this series, though, she ended up having nothing essential to do, and her presence raised questions about why she was there in the first place (she gave my MC something important to do at the start of Book 3) – but I figured out a better way to begin Book 3 that will still hit all the same goals.

So... now I'm going to start the new Book Four line-for-scene outline, and hope I can salvage some scene sentences. If I can't, I can't.

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Reworking the Ohio #4 Outline – The outline from the current chapter on is “burn to ground, start over”

By Holly Lisle

As noted in yesterday's post, today's work has required me to gut the outline for Book 4, and rethink.

While I'll be able to keep the scenes I've already written in Book Four, I won't be able to keep much of any of the future scenes I'd planned.

Progress is slow, and also (big surprise) painful, because all changes to what I'd planned in Book 4 will have a domino effect on what I'd planned for Book 5, and once I finish the

first draft of Book 4, I'm going to have to replot Book 5.

This is the price of the better idea – so before you turn your series upside down to chase this beast, you have to know that your “Better Idea” really is better.

This one is.

It is worth all the work it's taking me to redo the final two outlines, because the single critical piece of information about the villain that my subconscious mind withheld from me through the writing of the first three books and the first quarter of the fourth brings a depth and a power to the story that I hadn't imagined was possible.

I already built the critical pieces of this story line into the first three books... *without knowing I was doing it.*

However, in Book 4, I started veering away from this secret I was keeping from myself and what it meant – and that was when my gut told me I'd gone in the wrong direction... and FINALLY told me its secret.

No words today. (There's no point in counting outline Sentences because they don't ever show up in the actual story).

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“No plan survives first

contact with the enemy..."

By Holly Lisle

Or second contact...

Or third...

The quote may come from Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, or Carl von Clausewitz, or Dwight D. Eisenhower... or just some dude who knew shit.

But it's true – and it isn't just true about war.

It's true about any sort of creation that requires spontaneous adaptation to unknowable but expected change. Like writing fiction.

I outline while knowing the nature of outlining, which is this –

The thing fictional characters do when presented with a story plan is to act around the plan – to do something that will beat the plan. Fictional heroes and villains alike invariably act like real human beings. That is, they work to improve their own odds of success inside the story, and by doing so, they invariably shift the odds in their favor, and invariably surprise me.

These surprises are good for the story – if they surprise me, they will surprise the reader.

They're just such a pain in the ass... because my heroes AND my villains keep blowing up my nice, neat, carefully plotted outline.

But anyway, that's where I am today – several hours into my workday, having to stop to re-plot the next few scenes of my outline to maintain the structure of the story I'm building so

that I can keep the cool shit one of the little jerks just did.



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Tiptoeing through the minefield... and being mocked by my Muse

By Holly Lisle

I'd hoped to get 1200 words net today, but after a workday that started at six AM and included very little sleep the night before, I'm going to take what I got and go do things

that don't require so much brain.

What I got, though...

Holy Crap!

I found out something absolutely enormous about the over-all series villain today – something that pretty much rocked my world.

Funny thing is, though, that this discovery is one of the sort that is going to require absolutely NO revision to get it to fit into the earlier books.

I have from time to time mentioned that while I'm writing, my Muse (the non-verbal part of my brain where most of my best ideas come from) keeps secrets from me.

Some of them are minor. Some of them are kind of cute.

Today I met one of those secrets – And this one was EPIC.

More astonishingly, I have been writing important pieces of that particular secret into the novel from day one, never recognizing the actual meaning of what I was writing.

This wasn't a little mike-drop moment for my Muse.

This was that wicked elf dropping the mike, flashing his ass, and laughing like a loon. It was, "Hahahahahah! Sucker! I've known this all along."

(Why was my muse male today? Don't know. It shifts.)

Anyway, while I probably got my 1250 or more in real words written, **my net gain was only 846**. But with the Muse revelation, which was awesome once I got over the shock... I'll take it.

It was a good, good writing day.



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Bending space-time, dealing with elf shot, and 1344 words today.

By Holly Lisle

I'm now, much to my surprise, Ohio 4 is at 28,400 words. After the unwelcome but necessary "not writing" work yesterday, today was fun and exciting, and I got to know a lot more about my newest folks in the series.

I had to do a bit of retrofitting on some of what I got on Tuesday – that day off to deal with other things did give me a bit of perspective when I went in and started to work.

And my MC's best friend is still in trouble.

But now, on to the other stuff on today's list.

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The truth about elves... 2,266 words today, 27,056 words total, and a LOT of fun

By Holly Lisle

Tolkien aside, I have always preferred small, fast elvish trouble-makers to tall, willowy, blonde high elves.

And today I had a LOT of fun writing the little troublemakers, and got sheer joy reveling in knowing who they're about to start making trouble for.

Some of what landed in the book today was a cut-and-paste save from Book 3 that had to be moved into Book 4.

A lot of it, though, was me having my ass out of bed at six a.m today and being to work by seven.

FUN writing day... and if past experience serves, that should make for fun reading when I go back through to revise these.



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**Hear now my wicked laugh...
Today went GREAT. 3,555
words, and 24,071 total**

By Holly Lisle

First, I need to say that I did not WRITE 3,555 words today. I wrote quite a few of the words I got today during that wrong direction I took in Book 3.

From the mess I made of that before I ripped out those chapters and wrote new ones, I saved a number of chapters that I knew were good, but that had happened in the wrong place.

And I got use about 2500 words of one of those... and then I added.

So today was a bunch of work. But it was fun work, with a dude who made me laugh the first time he showed up, and who made me

laugh even harder today. I'm glad I got to save him.

And as a nod to a friend I misplaced about twenty-four years ago somewhere down in Texas...

I also saved the elves.

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That **RIGHT** left turn in Albuquerque

By Holly Lisle

First, the word count. On Ohio 4 today, I got 1264 new words (out of my planned 1250...), and on Book 4, I now have 18,426 total.

This was, overall, an excellent writing day, in which stuff happened that I was not anticipating that was way better than the stuff I'd planned. My characters were in trouble, one of them was in terrible danger... and still is...

BUT this was not the day I'd planned. It was better... but in the same way that when Bugs Bunny popped out of the ground to discover that he wasn't where he thought he'd be, he discovered he was on the moon. Or a beach with palm trees.

Someplace good.

I'm definitely not where I planned to be, but I am for damn sure someplace better.

I set out to write five urban fantasy novels.

I read a bunch of urban fantasy novels beforehand – some I really loved, and some I loathed... but I understood why each of them was urban fantasy, and what made them THAT...

And what I planned to write was *that*.

...

These novels are not *that*.

A simple left turn would have gotten me to urban fantasy.

But I turned some other way, and then a bunch of other ways after that. Up, down, in a spiral, then right, through a fourth dimension, up some stairs, left at a dragon, past the monk and through a nonexistent corridor that vanished behind me...

And here I am.

Whatever kind of fantasy I'm writing, it isn't Urban Fantasy as defined by the state of the genre as it stands. Or ever stood.

It's fantasy. Definitely fantasy.

And epic.

And contemporary... well.. *contemporary-ish*, with some bits that aren't.

Beyond that, I don't know.

I got the words, and I love the words... but I've just discovered have I no clue what to call these words, since I am not going where I thought I was going, I'm not writing in the genre I thought I was writing, and the core story is not behaving as I expected it to behave.

So... I'll just keep writing, and when I wherever the hell I'm going – well, maybe when I get there, I'll figure out what to

call this.

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