

First draft of The Ohio Series First Novel is DONE! Includes FRIDAY SNIPPET

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I did not expect to finish the first draft today. Thought it would take me a couple more days to get there, but while Becky and I were running ten-minute work sprints together, what had to be in there just clicked, two complete chapters flew off my fingertips, and all of a sudden, I have a done first draft in my brand-new Urban Fantasy world.

I wrote it using the same process I teach in *How to Write a Novel*, I had a blast doing it...

And now it sits in a corner of my hard drive for a minimum of one month while it cools down.

Because I need to NOT be wildly in love with it when I do the read-through. I have to be tired, and grumpy, and bored, and wishing I was someplace else. In THAT frame of mind, the good stuff with hook me in, but I will be unable to make excuses for the bad stuff.

But before I put it away for the requisite month (and possibly a bit more), I have the Friday Snippet for you.

The Snippet Disclaimer: This is raw first draft, copyright Holly Lisle and all rights reserved. Do not quote, review, or bug hunt. The contents of this snippet are subject to change, and during revision I will not see any problems you find here.

THE FRIDAY SNIPPET

Now here I was with a cookie junkie who'd just heard there was a new dealer for his long-lost favorite drug, looking at

me with eyes that were shining with need, that said he was jonesing pretty hard.

People.

“I could get you the ingredients so you could make them,” he said. “If you told me what they were.”

“Didn’t Grandma give you the recipe so that you could learn how to make them yourself?”

I was watching him. I work the streets, I know what addiction looks like, and I was seeing a guy who’d gotten a hit of something that had sunk hooks into him and dragged him out on a cold, mean day to a dead woman’s house in search of cookies. Nobody does that.

Nobody.

Only the look people get when you’ve pulled them over and they think they’re about to pull one over on you was on old Mr. Yeager’s face, and that cop sense kicked in and all of a sudden I knew this wasn’t about cookies. It was... but there was a lot more here, and for some reason I didn’t know, it was important.

Really important.

In no universe are cookies a big deal.

So this was something else. Something was wrong with my picture.

When in doubt, poke the problem with a stick.

“I’m not going to be baking cookies here,” I said. “I’m just going to be going through the attic and the basement, clearing and cleaning, and then I’m going back home.” When I said the word home, it sounded like a lie in my ears. No matter. I was watching his body, watching his eyes.

And I saw a whole lot of panicked crazy go skittering beneath the surface. “Could I buy the recipe from you?” he asked.

The answer to that question came out of my mouth unbidden, instantly, like someone had programmed it there. “Old family recipe,” I said and shook my head.

And he hung his. “That’s what she always said, too.”

And though I could not understand what made me do it, I grabbed my metaphorical stick a little more firmly, and said, “Tell you what. Why don’t you bring those papers by the house for me so I can look them over while I’m cleaning. If you do that, I’ll think about making some more cookies.”

When it came out of my mouth, I knew it was a mistake. No lawyer would say yes to that. There was no guarantee, there was no promise, there was nothing to pin down. It was an utterly one-sided deal.

“All right,” he said, and sighed.

And that gut thing I had going said, Ding, ding, ding. We have a winner. Whatever Mr. Yeager is, he is not a lawyer.

The Ohio Series – 2842 words, and a series-anchoring question

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Yesterday, I discovered the dark secret in Tori's past. It's grim, harsh, and leaves her with some questions she's been fighting the whole rest of her life to answer.

Today, I discovered the long line of dark secrets in Duncan's past. This over a breakfast he and Tori share.

Everything flew, came together, answered some earlier questions in the book for me, and set up one of the BIG questions that will be asked only implicitly for most of the rest of the series.

It was a damn fine writing day.

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The Ohio Series: My main

character's past gets darker.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Still hanging with the objective of 2000 words per day. Hit 2084, and with them, something I did not know about my MC. Something dark and grim and gory – because far be it from me to write a main character who's past was full of sunshine and fluffy bunnies.

I'm 64,012 words into this now, with my objective being to hit 70,000, I'm discovering that I might have to run a little long to tie this novel off.

It's planned as the first in a series. I cannot wait to find out what happens next.

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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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DMP Revision Monday, and Not Too Early for the Halloween Listener Episode

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I did **four** hours of work on *Dead Man's Party* yesterday.

I got **one** page of manuscript done.

HOWEVER, I finally got the chance to do the thing I used to do first – world building.

I got six closely written pages of worldbuilding done, in which I figured out (this is AFTER having written the whole first draft of the novel) how my hero works.

Why would I do worldbuilding after writing the whole first novel and being well into revision? Because by working with an incredibly light concept in first draft, I allowed myself to find the story I really wanted to tell – and it took me twelve chapters to find that world. They were chapters in which I got to know the characters, and in a couple of cases didn't. They were chapters in which I found the real conflict, for which I only had a vague concept when I started.

It's a funny way to work for me, but it saved me a helluva lot

of time getting started, it allowed me to finish, and it kept me from having a notebook full of stuff I won't use... **because I thought I was building an entirely different world than the one I wrote.**

Here's an example:

In the earlier part of revision, I discovered that the guy I wrote as my hero was a complete non-character, while the guy who wasn't even supposed to be there became not just a great character, but a guy I really loved.

Here's another example:

I discovered twelve chapters into first draft that I needed to move the story from Year Ten back to Year Two, because if I didn't, one of the characters (the one who I've now removed) would have been dumber than a bag of bricks.

I LOVE what I got yesterday. It doesn't count as words – what I built will have to be used during type-in revision – new stuff that will replace things I'm ripping completely out. But what I discovered gives me the conflict for the first part of the book where I have to completely redo the places where the story is set, and bring in the Post-Apocalypse that I discovered twelve chapters in had happened just two years earlier, not ten.

And now, for something completely different...

WRITERS: The AIARWIP.com Halloween Episode is COMING!!!

Last year in our FIRST Halloween episode, my daughter Rebecca, my son Mark, and I all read (and sort of dramatized) 500-word short fiction written by podcast listeners. We are going to do it again.

Which means you can submit ONE 500-word story you've written to us at the podcast – more details on that when we're actually ready to start accepting.

But it means you have to know how to write 500-word stories. PLOTTED 500-word stories. Not slice-of-life, not mood pieces, not and-then-they-all-died.

Real stories. If you have not every learned how to do this, [How to Write Flash Fiction That Doesn't SUCK](#) is my free writing class – and to understand what I mean by REAL stories, listen to the stories last year that won.

Our [First AIARWIP Halloween Listener Edition is here](#). We will only accept one story submission per writer, but to get your best story, you generally need to write a batch of them. Which the class is set up to help you do. By the time you finish, you'll have written eleven stories.

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The Ohio Series: Novel 1 – Define “crazy”... And a note about my email list revamp

[By Holly Lisle](#)

My main character is finding herself in a situation where reality is meshing badly with her previous understanding of reality. She's doing the best she can with it, but she's kind of missing the days when the worst thing that happened to her was that she got shot at.

Thinking maybe going back to THAT job would be a serious step up.

Had a great writing day, got 2053 new words, finished up yesterday's second scene, and got a good chunk of a new scene today. And I keep loving this world more and more.

My favorite moment today was my main character's "ahah!" moment about conspiracy theorists and their connection to areas in the country with low population densities. That might be tomorrow's snippet...

MAJOR fun.

Have I mentioned lately that I love my job?

And on a another topic, I am overhauling my mailing lists, simplifying the selections, and deleting a few things I'm not going to be pursuing anymore from the options, and have dumped the "game" concept from the option selection because it was impossible to maintain, and too hard for folks to use.

So if you are already on my mailing list, I've deleted all your tags except for the "big class owner" tags for HTWAN, HTRYN, HTWAS, and HTTS. You'll get the new "pick your interests" email when I get it done."

If you're if you're considering signing up for emails from me in the next week, it's going to take me about a week to get you your Preference Email.

Here's why.

I've deleted all the tags folks added to their emails before. Have selected just the tags for projects and activities I'll be supporting in the future – and now I have to build that email. Selecting tags is a light process on the user end. It is intensive and complicated on the builder end, though, and as the builder, I'm going to need about a week to put together the structure that underpins "click the link you want, add

that tag to your email.”

So please hang with me while I get this done.

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The Ohio Series: Novel 1 – The first big secret comes out.

[By Holly Lisle](#)

And I’m not going to report it here. But one of my two MCs just confessed to his big secret, and my other one said, in essence. “Isn’t that nice? Now help me get this giant monster out of my basement.”

2018 words, and a scene that started rough but smoothed out at the end. The rough bits will have to wait for revision.

I love this book, though, and this world.

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Wordcount doesn't reflect

progress on the Ohio Series, Novel 1 today

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I built the first part of my series Octopus Map, uncovered the secret behind how the magic works, did a big rethink of a couple of items on my provisional outline, and if I only have 622 words of progress to show for that, it's okay. When I get back to this next week, I'll be on much sturdier ground.

I know how the magic works now. And WHY.

How and why are the core of the whole thing – and it's a very cool kind of magic, and something that's going to change my protagonist in ways she cannot yet even imagine.

The trick is to set a hard limit on what the main character can do so as to avoid "Superman Syndrome" in which the heroine has a superpower for every problem.

Today I made sure that will never happen.

It was a good writing day.

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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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The Ohio Series – A chaos

writing day... and seeking calm through abusive knitting

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I did the best I could.

I had phone calls to make, though, and phone calls to answer, and emails that had to be dealt with promptly, and things I had to put together for people, and at the end of five hours (I was up EARLY this morning), I had 381 new words of fiction, and that wasn't even with deleting any.

I'm throwing in the towel.

It was a good day overall, but fiction-wise, I might as well have been trying to write in the middle of an Iron Maiden concert with Bruce Dickinson at full volume running in circles around me while he sings. (Yeah, I'm a fan.)

That would be a great experience, but probably about as productive for getting fiction written as today.

So I'm going to check on the forums, going to put together notes for the podcast, and then I'm going to close my eyes and breathe and wind down a little.

Or frustrate the crap out of myself with the Sweater from Hell, an ad-hoc design-as-I-go exercise in demonstrating to myself yet again that simple counting – 2-2-8...2-2-8... – is my nemesis.



So my [Summer of Fiction Writing](#) numbers have taken beating this week.

I'm hoping things will settle down next week so I can just fall back into my world and focus.

I'm not counting on it, though.

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