

# The DMP Revision, and the WRONG End of the String – Family and Brain Surgery

[By Holly Lisle](#)

The string in the title is CHAOS, and in the little image on my blog, we are currently not in the neat and spiffy central spiral, but in the dark tangle out at the end.

I'll start with the happier stuff. Today was Revision Monday, and I got just over half of the remainder of the write-in revision of *Dead Man's Party* finished. Seventy-six pages revised and noted. Only seventy manuscript pages remain, and my hope is to be able to finish that on my next Revision Monday, whenever that might be.

The type-in revision is going to be a bitch, but I discovered that the stuff I wrote for the character who is going to be eliminated in the final version is actually excellent, contains very good conflict plus active worldbuilding for the story world, set in the near and deadly future, and can be given to the new male lead in the new version as the first couple of chapters of the novel.

**The other news is more chaos**, but *not the good and happy chaos* we've been in for the last couple of months.

My brother-in-law is back in the hospital following seizures, and has discovered that the parts of the brain tumor that his previous doctor couldn't get out some years ago because they were attached to the brainstem have grown in the interim. Are now causing weakness in his extremities, seizures, some other not-good things.

On the bright side, brain surgery has improved a lot in the

last half a decade. On the dark side, it's still *brain* surgery.

SO... He has big brain surgery pending. This is not a little deal. It's currently planned for Thursday, but that might change. So the next couple of weeks might have me gone a lot.

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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 –  
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: 693 words,**

# and What's In The Basement?

[By Holly Lisle](#)

While I did not get a lot of words today – we have a bit of nice chaos going on here at the moment – the ones I got were good.

First, cookies rear their dangerous heads in my fiction again, this time cookies that apparently have just a hint of magic to them.

Second, I found out what was in the locked third freezer.

NOT what I expected.

Way cooler than what I imagined. So...

Here's a tiny teaser from what I got today. Your set-up for the snippet is this – my cop MC is sitting on the lid of the third freezer in her dead grandmother's basement, from which she just cut off a lock – and once she's seen what was inside, is now holding it down until help arrives. Mr. Yeager was her grandmother's lawyer. Or so he says...

*A corpse, I thought, would have been a lot less worrisome. I would have known how to deal with that.*

*I had my cell phone in its holster. I pulled it out, and I called Mr. Yeager. When he answered, I said, "I have a deal for you. Go to a hardware store and buy me a keyed medium ABUS brass shrouded padlock, bring it to me in Grandma's basement, don't ask any questions about what I'm doing, and I will bake you a batch of cookies."*

*I heard a pause on the other end. "How many cookies in a batch?"*

*"A dozen," I said.*

*"I'll do it for two dozen."*

*Mr. Yeager still wasn't convincing me of his lawyer-ness. But I began to see where he might play one on TV.*

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# The Ohio Series: Taking the measure of a novel

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Yesterday was Marketing Day, and I got the first half of the 4th edition of **Create a Plot Clinic** finished. Next week if all goes well I'll finish and do a new cover, and take that class live and wide.

Today, I worked for several hours, and got 1010 words of the 2000 I'd planned. I'm working on Chapter Two, finding my way through the story, and building Smits Corner, a town based on one of my two favorite towns in Ohio. While I was writing, I was crawling through images from Google, and remembering places I knew as a kid (places that look even better today – go figure).

And having my MC, a cop currently named Tori Gage, looking around her long-abandoned hometown and having a sudden bad feeling – what she describe as...

*All of a sudden I was pulling off into a parking space, trying to catch my breath. This wasn't nostalgia.*

*This was pure unadulterated fear, cold and dark and running*

*into my gut like ice water, the five-second warning a good cop feels responding to a domestic when all of a sudden you know it's going to go bad. And it's going to do it in your direction.*

Ladies and gentlemen, the magic just showed up.

I have no clue yet what it is, and she knows even less than I do... but she can feel it.

*And it just identified her.*

This is where, when you're writing, you take the measure of your novel. Where you start understanding what you're writing isn't what you thought you were writing. Might be less cozy, meaner, bigger.

Don't get me wrong. This is small-town urban fantasy where the protagonist is a displaced big-city cop finding her way back home after too long away.

But this bugger just growled at me and showed its teeth. And when I look under the desk, the eyes blinking up at me are red, and they glow in the dark.

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**Marketing Tuesday #1 –  
Reading Emails, Building a**

# “Loves, Hates, and Recommends” chart

[By Holly Lisle](#)

So because last Tuesday was TAX DAY, in which I had to finish up everything to get to my accountant, today is my first ever Marketing Tuesday.

In which I am building a chart to help me understand who my readers are, what they're looking for from me, what other work they like and what they like about it.

READER	Email	Genre Loves	Genre Hates	Rec'd Author	Titles
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The Research Chart Header

Reader and Email are on there so the folks who answered the three questions I asked, whether via email, on my blog, or over in the HWC forums, can get their stories.

**And so far, it's looking very much like I'm going to have to write a new story for them.** The people who like my work are enthusiastic about it – but in most cases, not for the reasons I thought.

SO FAR... (and I have a LOT of feedback yet to go through) many of *MY* readers love the fact that I mix genres, love my insertion of grim and gritty and real-world into fantasy and science fiction, love the fact that my worlds feel real, and do not mind at all that I smosh all the stuff I love from nonfiction (anthropology and archeology and history and science and pseudoscience) into books that are ostensibly about other things.

Turns out... I'm not the only writer who is currently doing this – and the fact that there are folks who write what I love to

write and who have really good audiences for it is encouraging as hell.

It just means I've been putting the stuff I love to write in front of the wrong people.

And the answers I'm getting to the questions I asked are showing me everything I was getting wrong... and better yet, how to get those things right.

So I'm going to have to write a story for these folks.

I think it's going to be a short one-off that will introduce a new character, a new world, and an idea I have for my first "now I know what I'm writing" series.

Hugs and thanks to everyone who answered my questions. **You guys are magnificent.**

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# The Emerald Sun: Lost some time to the world

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I got 879 words today – not the 1500 I'd planned.

But Genna found herself at the end of the world, and it took me a while to figure out how to get that part of the scene right.

The dragon and his many voices has rejoined the party, and the cat had a terrible scare.

I love what I got.

It simply took me much more time than I'd hoped to get it.

Tomorrow, maybe I'll be able to make better progress.

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# Rediscovered Worldbuilding Workshop: Holidays in Hell and Other Delights

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I was doing a BIG search on my hard drive for something I'd previously written about Tangerine, who was a minor character in *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood* who became a major character in the current novel, *The Wishbone Conspiracy* (for which as I blog this, I have not yet gotten my full complement of words for the day...

When I tripped over a handful of old workshops and articles I'd written for *Vision*, back when Lazette Gifford was editing and publishing that as part of my Forward Motion site.

Most of them are already in place on the writing pages.

But one of the ones I hadn't yet reprinted was [Holidays in Hell and Other Delights: A Worldbuilding Workshop](#).

I got a wee bit sidetracked with that, and am now getting back to my fiction, STILL not having recovered a big chunk of writing I did on the novel that actually featured Tangerine

(that isn't his real name, by the way).

I put that up so I wouldn't forget it, and am posting here so you won't miss it. I was pleased that the quality still held up – it'll be useful for those of you who write fiction and need to build in some little pieces of worlds to give them added depth and verisimilitude.

The link again: [Holidays in Hell and Other Delights: A Worldbuilding Workshop](#)

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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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# Do you own and play Minecraft? Want my spaceship models?

[By Holly Lisle](#)

## Yes, I'm a geek.

Using Minecraft, I built life-sized walkthrough models of the spaceships I write about in **Hunting the *Corrigan's Blood*** and ***Warpaint*** from the schematics I drew. I did it to keep myself from making stupid location mistakes in the stories. (And let's be real...it was fun. And when I was a kid, I used to pray to God to send me to space instead of heaven if I died. At this point, building my own spaceships in Minecraft is as close to space as I'm ever going to get.)

Thing is, they're pretty cool. I did them for myself, and I use them for story accuracy—but when I mentioned them to an interviewer, he got really enthusiastic about them. And pointed out that it's possible to make copies of maps that other people can then download and use in THEIR copies of Minecraft. (Something I'd known, but hadn't considered in relationship to myself.)

So I thought it might be cool to zip them up and let the folks who buy the books download them as a “Thanks for buying the books” gift.

But...would this even interest you?

## THE POLL (primitive, but it works)

Do you play Minecraft?

[Vote Here. Would MUCH prefer you use your BACK button to comment on the weblog](#)

Would you like to get full-sized walkthrough Minecraft models of the spaceships in the books when you buy any of the Cadence Drake novels?

[Vote Here. Would MUCH prefer you use your BACK button to comment on the weblog](#)

Use your browser BACK button to return from each poll after voting.

## **By the way...**

Vote will give me a rough idea of the percentage of my readers who'd be able to use the maps.

Comments and questions will let me know what you're actually thinking. I appreciate both. ☐

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