

Wow! 1412 words, two hours... And LIGHTNING struck! (Or... “Am I making a huge mistake?”)

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

I'd written myself into a corner yesterday, and I had absolutely no clue what was going to happen next.

See... Brain writes the outlines and the overall planning. Gut, however, writes the words, and Gut – like a willful horse – is entirely capable of getting the bit between his teeth and galloping straight toward whatever suddenly looks good.

Over the last few days (my time, not hers) my main character has experienced an appalling revelation, a near-death experience, and an unexpected triumph combined with a terrible loss...

And I thought she was still heading toward the same basic end-story objective, but getting there by some strange side paths.

I was still having to get there by pure pantsing, because I left my line-for-scene outline a couple chapters ago in pursuit of The Better Idea.

But today I found myself staring at a wall where I realized I'd just caused the utter obliteration of the ending I thought I was going to write.

Brain was muttering...

“Right... That thing you blew up yesterday was supposed to be

the heart of your conflict for another five books after this five, and now... BLAMMO? You sure you want to save what you did yesterday? You can go back. Back is SAFE. Back in KNOWN. Back is the PLAN... and you liked the PLAN when you wrote it."

Gut held firm. Gut said, "Don't be a chicken. You knew yesterday's stuff was cool when you wrote it, and now you want to wuss out and go with what's safe? C'mon! Grow a pair!"

Small side note here while I point out that my gut is kind of a jerk sometimes... but it's almost always right about the fiction, so I have learned to look past the taunting to the meat of the argument.

Which is that what I got yesterday was really cool. Gut is absolutely right about that.

It isn't what I planned, but it's better than what I'd planned. It isn't Safe. But Safe in fiction, the Known in fiction, the Expected in fiction... are always okay.

They are NEVER fucking amazing.

And today I had to look at the loss of some words to return to the Safe Known. Or to keep moving forward in pursuit of the hope of bringing home something fucking amazing...

With the acknowledged very real possibility that I will fall on my face, absolutely wreck this story, and then have a gruelling, long slog through it when I go back through to do the One-Pass Five Book Revision <shudder> that waits for me at the end of this process. Where I will end up turning it into the book I'd planned to write.

I'm choosing to chase the chance to make this fucking amazing.

This may be a serious tactical error on my part, and if you find me in here next month muttering, "Yep... should have got back to the outline..."

Then...

You're invited to say, "Well, I thought you were nuts when you veered away from your plan into fresh new territory."

Not yet, though. Let's see where this goes.

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MINIONS!!! Minions are awesome! And today my main character had some!

written by Holly

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I've run out of time, but I got 899 absolutely wicked words in Ohio 5 today.

My MC has some helpers who today, in her hour of need, turned into minions – and they're about to wreck havoc in her defense.

It was a fun scene, and will be fun to get back to tomorrow morning.

Right now, though, I have to go back to building pricing boxes, and setting up the last bits of the new writing site shop software before the official site re-launch (and the half-price class sale) next Tuesday, April 12.

For writers, the site is still in the same place:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com>

It's completely different software, it works differently, but it still delivers the writing classes, and still has our forum full of wonderful folks.

If you're a writer (either along with being one of my readers, or not), and you're interested in any of my classes, head over and take a look at the courses I offer.

The half-price relaunch sale has a hard time-limit, but it's a pretty roomy one (ten days).

Hoping to have most of that finished today.

It would be awesome to not have anything I had to do tomorrow, so that I could just write more Ohio 5.

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Doing a Line-for-Scene re-plot of Book 5 from Chapter 7 to Chapter 30

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

I got 281 words, and am up to 18,423 total, and was rolling along pretty nicely.

Hit the end of Chapter 5, rolled over to Chapter 5, and found stuff written clear through Chapter 8 that I'll either have to

save or delete. But I also discovered that the book I've been writing since the Cave is different by a lot (and better by a lot) than the story I'd been telling up to that point.

So now I have to pull out my Book 5 Line-for-Scene outline, see if there's anything in it I can save, and re-plot from there. I have another hour and change to work on this before I have to move over to writing-school-upgrade stuff.

So there aren't going to be anymore words today, and tomorrow might have a terrific word slaughter pending..

But I'm going to see how cleverly non-destructive I can be in working in what I've already written. (THIS USUALLY GOES BADLY.)

Either way, none of the rest of the words I'll do today will count. They'll all be line-for-scene outlining and rethinking.

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**Figured out a spiffy twist...
and got carried away: 1797
words, 50,345 total**

written by Holly
May 17, 2022
By Holly Lisle

Today was a "how are they doing it?" day with the novel, as something that has been going on since before Book One even started is revealed.

And for folks who, like me, watched a LOT of Scooby-Doo as kids, I'll note that no rubber suits were involved.

This was bloody, and gory, and truly evil... and when my MC discovered it, it revealed an explanation behind the history of the murder of someone who had been her whole world.

I ran long, because when I discovered this morning what had actually happened (it was a complete surprise to me, too) I just couldn't stop writing.

And it's just the fact that it's Friday and I still have stuff on my list to get done that finally got me to put on the brakes.

AWESOME writing day, with a twist I didn't see coming... and with the set-up now in place for one that I do.

Get Holly's Free Fiction Sampler, plus Weekly Fiction Updates, and when these books go on sale, *get invited to the launch.*

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Yeah... the streak of *Writer Cruelty (TM)* continues

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

The words leapt to the page today, my fingers flew, I giggled

evilly – and my delightful little town and its bizarre and unpredictable denizens took me deeper into a mess my MC hasn't even fully wrapped her head around yet.

Something big is coming.

Something bad is watching.

And I'm flying toward it through lovely little neighborhoods of fifties Mid-Century Modern homes and sixties bungalows, moving down sidewalks that hold back carefully manicured lawns and 19th Century mansions shaded by centuries-old oaks...

Down to the places in the town that have been around not just for a couple centuries... but for eons.

God, I love this world.

1435 words, and 44,430 total. Really fine day all the way around.

Want to be invited to the launch when these books go live?
Join the invitation list.

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Oh, today was GOOD... main character in deep soup, her dear friend in deadly danger...

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

Ohio 4 Slow start, but some nice conflict – 852 words

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

This morning didn't go as I'd planned (scheduling conflicts and a calendar screw-up that broke a couple of planned things), and I was way late getting started on the words.

But the local high-school football stadium found its way into the story, and tomorrow, I'll be writing some scary, magic-y things happening there. Things that are FINALLY going to reveal the identity of one traitor...

Though not the BIG one.

The new outline is working well so far.



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

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

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...**

written by Holly
May 17, 2022
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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Down into the DEEP dark... Outline 4 completely redone.

written by Holly

May 17, 2022

By Holly Lisle

After the weekend break, I came in this morning to a blank outline for Ohio 4, and no idea what was going to go in there... except that it had to be big.

I suspect, however, that while I was playing a lot of No Man's Sky and having fun in my new solar system with three suns discovering alien lifeforms and building a new base, my subconscious mind was tinkering around with the problems I have with the current Book 4.

Because today, I sat down, and thirty line-for-scene sentences leapt from my fingers to the document in just under two hours.

And they answer my questions. They retrofit the shock I had last weekend into what already exists so seamlessly that books One through Three can stay just as they are...

(WELL, they're first draft, so I'm still going to have to revise and debug, but this massive revelation doesn't mess up

anything in them)...

And I have my Book Four ending.

And I have the conflict for Book Five that is so compelling, and scary, and kind of heartbreaking, that I can't wait to write it.

THIS is what taking down-time – walking away from the story for a while, doing things that are not thinking about the book, and just letting things bake – does for me.

I can never look at writing fiction as neat, or orderly, or simple. I can never think it's easy, even after all these years.

I can never think that I know, absolutely and confidently, where the story is going, or that as I'm writing, I'm writing the best story or the best ending.

I can, however, know that I have a process to get to the best ending.

It's messy. It's a lot of work.

But, holy crap, does it ever manage to surprise me in the best possible ways.

So... that was today.

Tomorrow, (even though I know I'll be changing things all the way to the end of Book 4), I have to do a new 30-scene line-for-scene outline for Ohio 5.

I already know I won't use some of it. Maybe most of it.

But just as I cannot hit a target I cannot see, so I can't make a better target for the final book unless I can see the target that's already there.

Today changed everything. So tomorrow, I build the new final

target that, while I'm writing Book 5, I will try to beat.



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