

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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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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The Ohio Series – Basements Can Kill You

[By Holly Lisle](#)

In general, “what’s in the basement” is a staple of scary stories.

They’re easy to ignore, but you do so at your own peril.

Especially if you fail to notice the monster that really is down there in the glow-y green light waiting for you.

I’m at 59,777 words total, and got 2339 words total today (in spite of having to throw away about a thousand words.

Love, love, LOVE the twist that smacked me over the head today.

Not sure what I’m going to do for tomorrow’s Friday Snippet. It has to be early stuff. I’ll make sure it’s fun.

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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 – N1: When magic goes privately public... And a FRIDAY SNIPPET

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Today's word's flew. And I love what I got – My cop decided that the only way she was going to be able to win the assistance of the people she needs to have help her is to tell them the truth.

Followed by realizing that she CAN'T tell them the truth. It's too impossible.

All she can do is show them.

So that's what happened today.

For the snippet though, I'm pulling out something from earlier in the first draft.

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 town itself was lifting my spirits. No one loitered on street corners. There were folks out doing things – but they were moving the way people do in the cold. With purpose. With destinations. It wasn't a town that would give a cop like me much to do, but I thought it would make a great vacation

spot. Go to Grandma's. Sit on the porch swing for a week in summer and just watch people not being criminals.

And then I felt that chill again.

That certainty that something was wrong – that someone was watching me, and that something big, bad, and potentially deadly was about to go down.

I had the bag slung over my right shoulder.

Was armed, but the gun was under my coat, concealed, and I was going to have to drop the bag to go for it. I was regretting the purchase of two jars of jam in class containers.

I could sense rapid movement across the street – not on the sidewalk, but behind the houses, through back yards, over fences. And then I stopped myself with one simple question.

How? How was I sensing this?

There was no noise.

I could see no movement – and the chain link fence my mind insisted the something that had climbed over had not made the tiniest sound when the person my brain insisted had gone over it moved.

Out loud I said, "Yeah. Definitely need a damn vacation."

And heard something snicker behind me.

When I turned, of course there was nothing there.

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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Not so Marketing Tuesday: Finished the BIG HTWAN bonus

[By Holly Lisle](#)

Did no marketing today. I had too much of a backlog, and in the middle of *The Ongoing Chaos*, I have to do what I can when I can...

So today I built the last pieces of the [How to Write a Novel](#) Graduate BIG bonus. This is *Interweaving Multiple Story Threads in Big, Complex Novels*.

I'm adding all the materials into the classroom now, so it'll take me another hour or so to get everything in place and the classroom opened up.

But if you've already graduated from the class, you can head into your classroom at [HollysWritingClasses.com](https://hollylisle.com), watch the video, download the transcript, go through the worksheets and the L0000NG lesson, and see how you put complex monster novels like *Talyn*, *Hawkspar*, and the *Matrin* series (*Diplomacy of Wolves*, *Vengeance of Dragons*, *Courage of Falcons*, and *Vincalis the Agitator*) together.

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