

From the Winnowing post

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

This is the last bit of **the Winnowing post over in the publishing forum**—the part I think might be of general interest. You are, of course, invited to go over and read and comment on the whole thing.

And that brings me to where I am on pursuing the publisher vs. writer route, which right now is at a Decision Point, capital D, capital P, and with maybe a TM thrown in for good measure.

*What I want to do if I can do anything I want—first choice, no quibbles, no equivocation—is write novels set in one rich world, to work against one broad, complex canvas to which I can keep adding over the years. I’ve been trying to do this since I sold my first book back in 1991. The world was **Arhel**. And it was followed by the **Devil’s Point** universe, and the **Cadence Drake** universe, and the **Matrin** universe, and the **World Gates** universe, and the **Korre** universe (oh, GOD, the **Korre** universe—talk about heartbreak) and a couple of universes that I pitched to romance editors, who don’t seem too excited by universes, and now here I am with the **Moon and Sun** universe.*

For each of these, and for some fantasy universes that never even made it to the published stage, I have thrown myself wholeheartedly into the process of creation—worldbuilding, mapping, creating religions and nations and philosophies and peoples and characters, flora and fauna, cracks in the ocean floors and schedules for the rising and setting of the moons and suns. I have invested myself deeply and willingly, each

time hoping that this world would be the one that stuck, that these characters would be the ones that won the hearts of readers and that this time I would get to put down roots and stay a while, create a home for my characters and let them stretch out and test the limits of their world and themselves.

And each time, I've had to roll up my maps, tuck away my notebooks, and say goodbye to my characters. I've had to adopt a stiff upper lip, and I've had to move on. Start over. Be fresh and upbeat, give my heart—my whole heart—to yet more characters, to fall in love all over again without reservation or wariness, never conceding the possibility that I could have my heart broken all over again, because if I tried to guard myself against heartbreak, my writing would be guarded, it would become cynical, and it would lose its soul.

I'm tired of starting over. I'm tired of having my heart broken again and again. I'm tired.

And yet...

Moon and Sun is the best shot I've ever had at getting to write for the rest of my career in a world I love passionately, to paint on a broad canvas, to spend years letting myself love a broad cast of characters and to take them everywhere and push their limits and test them and challenge them and set them free to become whole and real.

The first book in the series, *The Ruby Key*, is done. It will be on shelves in hardcover as a lead title from Scholastic's Orchard Press next July (2008). It'll have more of a chance of catching on than anything I've written before. There's no guarantee, of course, and it, too, could fall prey to the 'three books and gone' series curse.

The odds are never in the individual author's favor, and I know this. If it dies in three, I want to have something different to break my heart over for a while. Other people's

characters, stories, worlds. Something that I can fight for, but that I can watch from one remove. I won't stop writing my own work, I won't give up on fantasy, but I've built enough worlds already to keep a dozen writers in books for their lifetimes, and I can't keep tucking them back in the corner. Back there in the shadows, some days I can hear them screaming.

Hence, publishing.

If **Moon and Sun** goes, though...

Well, it depends on how well it goes, doesn't it? There might be money to fund the publishing house, at least if I keep it small and pretty simple. But there might be an opportunity to bring back **Arhel**, or **The World Gates**, or **Cadence Drake**, or **Korre**, and write more books in those worlds as well. I might have the chance to take my nonfiction to a pro-publishing house. If it goes, if I get to do the whole series, maybe I'd be happy working in just the **Moon and Sun** world. God knows its big enough, and the stories are there. Not just stories with Genna and Dan and the cat, either.

Am I, then, fully committed to becoming a publisher?

No.

I'm exploring possibilities, knowing that this is something that I could do and love, though it would be a different kind of love, believing that if I did it, I could bring wonderful books to people, could treat authors well, could do something good.

I'm operating on the assumption that I have some time, and I'm trying to figure out options for how best to use my time and my passion. And talking with you about this is tremendously helpful. It's focusing me, letting me discover that in the long run, fiction is more important to me than nonfiction, which I have always written simply because it's a

lot of fun, and a good way to pay forward.

And it's letting me see that there's an unfilled niche in fantasy I could create, a niche I could love.

The rest, for now, hangs on Fate.

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