I need four wrecked novels for How To Revise Your Novel

written by Holly
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By Holly Lisle

I've been wracking my brain on how to do the demos for How To Revise Your Novel, and I finally realized that what I need is real novels to revise. But not my novels—I'm not a beginner, and most of the 100+ major revision problem that I've now identified from your questions, I no longer have in any form. I used to have them, but my first (unpublished) novel no longer exists for me to use as an example.

~~What I need are four FIRST novels.~~

ADDED SEPT. 8 —

In fact, sanity has prevailed. I'm going to work with TWO writers. I've now set up a private chat where I can discuss things with each, and a private web board for each. These two writers will work with me directly—I'll show them the techniques, I'll do my own assessment of their novel, but they'll do the revisions themselves. (I will still do sample revisions of their work for the course. Aside from this, what is below remains the same.)

Which means there's going to be a opportunity for you. But it comes with some caveats, so you need to think hard about this before you jump, okay?

I'm going to need four beta testers

and their first novels.

- I need **one NaNoWriMo first novelist** who HAD NOT taken any of my courses before writing the novel.

- ~~I need one novelist whose~~ **~~first novel is the first book in a planned trilogy~~**~~.~~

- ~~I need one novelist~~ **~~whose first novel is based around a single hero~~** ~~the writer hopes will be continued in future novels.~~

- ~~And I need one novelist who~~ **~~did MASSIVE planning before and during writing~~** ~~of his or her first novel.~~

- **NEW** And I need one novelist whose novel is NOT a NaNo novel.

More importantly, I need these to be novels that broke your heart.

I'm specifically looking for **first novels you eventually gave up on** because you could not fix them and did not know what to do with them. If you've written other novels since then, so much the better. (It isn't a requirement, though.)

What I'm going to do through the course is plan out how **I** would revise each of these four novels, and then include marked-up and commented scenes from each as class demonstrations.

1. **The example scenes I use will be used anonymously.**

2. **If you request, I will change all character and place**

names in the examples.

3. **I will require world rights to publish unedited excerpts of your first draft, and then my revision examples of those edits,** in the private space of the classroom without owing you a royalty on them. These Technique Demos will not be included in any parts of the course I may decide to offer publicly.

4. **When the course is done, I'll send you the hardcopy of your marked-up manuscript and my comment sheets and filled-out forms.** (I will NOT be completing all forms for all manuscripts, so you'll have a fair amount of work to do on the book if you decide to save it, but I will do the complete read-through, manuscript mark-up, and comments. Along with the forms, I do complete for your project, this will give you one HUGE head start on doing the revision.)

5. **This is _NOT_ a FREE opportunity.** I know what my time and experience are worth, and offering four or more months of my undivided attention to four students and their manuscripts, I could sell the beta version of the course for several thousand dollars per student. I'm not going to do that. My requirement that you let me use excerpts of your novel for teaching purposes to include permanently in the course is part of the trade-off in keeping the price down.

6. **I've not yet decided what I'll charge the beta students.** I want to keep it reasonable. My idea of reasonable may vary from yours, so if you want to have a horse in this race, (or a manuscript in the beta program, for the more literal-minded of you) please feel free to make suggestions below. This version of the course will cost more than what regular students will pay—but four of you will be getting several months of my best efforts in

showing you how to fix your manuscripts in exchange.

7. Unlike later students, you **will have to commit** to being on the boards, to asking and answering questions about the lessons, to answering questions I may have about your manuscript—and to not dropping out. I have to know that you'll hang with me through the full revision, taking the course as I post the lessons. I need four people who are absolutely dedicated to this.

8. **You'll go through first,** starting probably a month ahead of the official course opening. You and the other three students I choose for this will have your own private board where you can talk with each other and with me. This preserves your anonymity and the anonymity of your work. You'll retain all pub rights to the book, by the way. If you take my suggestions and revise the book along the lines I figure out, and you sell it, I'll cheer like a loon. And you don't owe me a dime or a credit.

9. **You need to have a thick skin.** PLEASE believe this. If you've seen what I do with my own books, you MUST realize that I am not going to be gentle with yours. I'm not going to be mean. I'm not going to insult you. But you have to acknowledge that the book you've offered for my dissection **is not your best work, or the best work you're now capable of**, and you have to be sincerely eager to understand how to fix it. If you're in love with your words, this process will beat hell out of your ego. Don't apply.

10. Finally, if you're not a native English speaker, you must must write English fluently, and the manuscript must be written in English.

So that's you. What about the book?

I have specific things I'm looking for here.

- **Frankly, I'm looking for shorter works.** Anything over sixty thousand words and under a hundred thousand. (For the NaNo novel, 50K will be just fine.)

- **You must be telling a story.** If you ended up muddy about what the story was, no problem. If you know it's not a very good story, no problem. But when you started writing the book, you have to have intended to make a story out of what you were writing.

- **Your story MUST have an ending.** That is, you have to have completed the first draft of the manuscript, and you can not have ended the book with a cliffhanger. If you hate the ending, no problem. That's fixable.

- **What I'm eliminating here are all "experimental" books.** No metafiction, no deconstruction, and absolutely no collections of vignettes (little slices of life that you never intended to tie together.)

- **Your spelling must be somewhere between acceptable and impeccable.** This is not a course about spelling, and massively misspelled prose makes trying to find the bigger problems the book has—plot, structure, characterization, style, etcetera—impossible.
  You cannot see big problems while you're trying to decode a sentence of scrambled words into something with meaning. Unscrambling is a left-brain problem, and it will override the much more delicate and much more important right-brain processes of looking for and finding patterns of structural and content error.

Finally, you have to apply, and I'm not ready to take applications yet.

I have a signup form below—it's to the same priority signup list on How To Revise Your Novel, so if you already signed up there, you don't need to sign up again. If you're not sure, go ahead and add your name and e-mail address—if you already signed up, the software will just let you know you're on the list.

When I'm ready to start taking applications, which I'll do about the time I'm ready to start writing lessons, I'll send an e-mail to this list, and ONLY this list. The email will tell you first how much the "four students only" version of the course will cost—that way, if it's outside your budget, you won't waste your time filling out the application.

The application will ask you about the book, about the problems you know it has, and about what specific issues made you give up on it. I'll also ask you what genre the book is, how many words in the existing draft, and for a very brief summary of your story—or at least of the story you wanted to tell before the first draft got in the way. I'll also ask about how much time you have available, what hours you're most likely to be on the private beta board, and what your writing experience has been since writing the book you wish to submit. And I'll want to know about your motivation—WHY you want to do this, and WHY you aren't going to quit.

YOU WILL NOT BE ASKED YOUR NAME. I want this to be a blind submission process, so when you get ready to submit, please get either a Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo or other anonymous mailing address and come up with some creative alias that you don't use on message boards or anywhere else. Numbers are fine. Number-letter scrambles are fine. While I'm selecting applications, though, you and I need to know that the process is objective, and not based on prior knowledge of your work.

(Just use your regular e-mail address to sign up for the notification list. You'll only need the anonymous address for the first and second stage of the submission process.)

Once I close the applications, I'll go over them, I will then privately notify promising candidates—more than can actually take the course, because then I need to see a sample of your manuscript. I'll ask for the first three chapters or first sixty pages. Your manuscript will have to have your anonymous e-mail address in the header and on the title page, not your name. You can do this in about 5 seconds if you select you as a candidate, so don't worry about doing it now.

If I choose your application, I'll include a release for you to sign which will allow me to use excerpts of your work in the course. You'll send me a copy of your manuscript, and a week or two after that I'll send you the secret sign-up code to the course, you'll start your subscription (with PayPal), all five of us will introduce ourselves, and we'll get to work.

If you're interested, include your first name and an e-mail address that you check regularly below.

Name:	
Email:	
Submit	

And you're welcome to comment on this, of course, ask questions, whatever.