

More About “C” In Its Current Incarnation

By Holly Lisle

First a note on **“Genie In a Bottle.”** I got it wrong, but I was in a bookstore that didn’t have the book, and I was working from memory.

I’ve never made any bones about the fact that I’ll learn from anyone who can teach me. There’s a screenplay writer named Blake Snyder who wrote a book called Save The Cat! It’s strictly about screenwriting, it’s about his method of categorizing screenplay genres and developing screenplays, and all of this fits within the rigid format of the commercial screenplay. If you read it thinking it applies word for word to writing novels, you’ll end up wearing an unnecessary straightjacket while you write.

But if you remember that you as a novelist are not in any way constrained by the three-act, 110-page format with strict A and B stories screenwriters must follow (if they hope to sell), it becomes one of the best guides to good storytelling I’ve ever come across. And it was by sitting in the bookstore working out the beats of a screenplay from (admittedly poor) memory that I figured out how to redo “C” so that it would work as a story.

Snyder takes you through ten genres he’s come up with—ways of categorizing stories. Again, novels are MUCH more flexible than what he presents for screenwriters, but again, if you keep that in mind, you’ll find that most of what you’ve written either fits pretty well into one of his ten genres, or you’re stuck on it because it isn’t working as a story.

So that’s a long way of saying that my “Genie in the Bottle” note at the top of the page is my misremembering of his

classification of “Out of the Bottle” stories, of which “C” is (more or less) one. “C”, however, fuses elements of “Rite of Passage” stories (another of his genres), which I can do because I’m writing a novel, and which probably wouldn’t work too well for a screenwriter because I have the glorious elbow room of 100,000 words in which to create A, B, C, and D stories, themes and subthemes, and because, writing a novel, I don’t have to worry a bit about budgets, special effects, being rewritten by credit jumpers, or any of the other miseries that await screenwriters.

In any case, “C” does involve time travel. It knowingly breaks some very specific and nearly universal rules of time travel stories. Because I know the rules, and have a critical REASON WHY, I think I can get away with it, but we’ll see.

“C” doesn’t have anything to do with Cadence Drake or Badger. I haven’t given up on them, but they’re not what are keeping me up nights.

And... I’m having a wonderful time working this all out. Thank you, and thanks for letting me know about your secret projects. They’re exciting stuff, and I hope you have as much fun with yours as I’m having with mine.

As for what I’m doing online at this hour on Mother’s Day... we’re under a tornado watch, and Matt stayed up for hours watching the weather. I’m standing watch now so he can catch a few hours’ sleep.

Contents © Holly Lisle. <https://hollylisle.com> All Rights Reserved