More on notecards

By Holly Lisle

I'm back at work, and playing with my index cards again this morning. I'd like to have at least most of them filled out by the time I run out of work time today.

I have Baanraak's cards filled out already — by starting with the villain (or the one who'll have actual scenes of his own) I've developed the dark thread of the book first, and have given my heroes their problems. As I start filling in scenes for Lauren, Pete, and Molly, they'll already have some of their conflicts in place, and I'll be able to develop their solutions, as well as the conflicts these solutions cause among them.

My insurance salesman has mutated, both in name and in career — he's become builder named Heyr. I'll do his scenes next, since he's the book's dark horse. By the time I have him mapped out, I should have a clearer idea of where everyone else will be, and what their issues will be.

I do develop these scenes in what seems like a linear fashion as I write them — however, once I have everything on cards, I frequently find that the order in which I wrote them isn't anywhere near as interesting as new arrangements that I develop when I start spreading them out and lining them up on the floor. This is why I don't number them in any way until I've had a chance to spread them out and rearrange them. It's an odd way to work — I'm not sure if anyone else does this; as I've mentioned before, I don't do it every time myself. But when I'm starting without a clear idea of where I'm going or what my story problems are going to be, it helps a lot.