

My Better Angels

By Holly Lisle

This is the story of my own personal miracle (mentioned yesterday), and an answer to the Reinventing Myself dilemma.

Two days ago, I was flipping through *The Psychic Pathway* by Sonia Choquette, looking for an idea – ANY idea – that I could work into something to make into yet another proposal for Onyx.

This was not a small matter. If you've followed the progress of the Onyx proposal, you know that I've done more than a novel's worth of writing since last October, without a book or a contract to show for it yet. It's been a grueling, frustrating, occasionally heartbreaking process, and when I discovered that I was going to have to do yet another proposal – that the last one wouldn't fly, either – and that my editor would not want to see the next one until July (meaning that whether or not I get the contract is going to be as much about how *LAST GIRL DANCING* is doing when it hits the shelves as about anything I might write, no matter what anyone said about pre-sales). My mind went blank.

For this to have any meaning, you have to realize that I don't run out of ideas. I have never wanted for ideas. I can come up with ideas like water pours off of freakin' Niagara Falls. And the rest of the Falls was still running just fine – writing on the current book was flying, ideas for Anna at Tor and the next proposal for her were coming so fast I stopped writing them down, trusting that the power of the really good ones would winnow them out from the vast rush of pictures and sounds and textures and shapes that came racing at me from all directions. Rewrite ideas for *HAWKSPAR* were pushing in from all sides, too, clamoring for airtime.

But when I thought of Onyx, I found myself in a plain white

space without doors or windows, without sound or shape. Nothing. It was a scary, bad, desperate place to be, and, having loved the Sonia Choquette book, I figured I could find something about psychics in there that would click for me, that would give me a psychic character or a psychic kernel that I could use.

I found something I **could** use, but not in the way I'd anticipated.

I told my agent, Robin, a week or two ago that if I could write the way I wanted to, I would never write another proposal again. That I would just write the books, and send them to her, and let her sell them. It was the way I wrote the first draft of MIDNIGHT RAIN, and that book was a joy. Doing the first draft was everything about writing that was wonderful and thrilling and liberating, and I didn't mind the rewrites because they made the book better. But first, before it had belonged to anyone else, it had belonged entirely to me. "When I have enough money," I told her, "that's the way I want the rest of my career to be."

Money being the big problem, of course. It's been nightmarish this year.

So there I was, reading this section in the Sonia Choquette book called "Living at the Proper Pace," where she described how she and her husband and her kids had the life they wanted – they were doing the things that they wanted to be doing – but it wasn't working out. They were frustrated, exhausted, not having any fun. I read her, and I saw me, where I was two days ago. I could see what the problem was, I could see what the solution was, but I couldn't see any way at all to get from point A to point B.

And she was talking about angels, and how she was convinced that an angel had directed her to her answer. I thought, "I could use an angel right about now."

Fifteen minutes later, we were on our way into town to get groceries. We stopped at the mailbox. There was one piece of mail in there – not a shred of junk mail, just an envelope from my ex-agent. I pulled it out and opened it, expecting the sort of accounting paperwork that such envelopes usually contain. Instead, it was a check for the second and third on-pubs that sold in Germany – the second and third WORLD GATES books. It was enough to cover expenses for a few months if we didn't get crazy.

If you say out loud that you could use an angel and an answer to a problem, and fifteen minutes later, you get the answer to the problem, you can't deny the angel. At least I can't. I don't believe in coincidences. So for the last couple of days, I've been trying to figure out how to use this gift, this little miracle of time that I've been given – trying to figure out how not to squander it. I could easily piss it away on writing five more Onyx proposals. But I'm not going to do that. Last night, working in my Reinventing Myself notebook, I figured what I'm going to do with this gift.

I'm going to write "C" on spec.

Writing "C" this way is a risk without guarantees, on an admittedly odd project that might or might not be salable. But "C" is also the book of my heart; it's full of people I've been dreaming of, asleep and awake; it's the story I most want to tell right now.

I have a little bit of table-clearing to do first. I have to revise WFH1. I have to revise HAWKSPAR. And I need to do that proposal for Anna. (Which is what I'll be working on today, since I'm out of printer toner to print of WFH1, and they don't carry the type I need in town, so I had to order it online. It'll be here in a couple of days.)

But I ran the numbers – even miracles have numbers – and I can do the finish-up work, and still have time when it's done to

write “C” without going broke. Onyx may have to wait an extra month or so for something from me – maybe my editor there will want “C” when it’s done. Maybe not. That isn’t the point.

I woke up before my alarm this morning, excited to get in here and get started. **This** is why I love writing – this excitement, this joy, this anticipation. This is the tightrope I **want** to be walking. I’m so excited about the next few months, I can’t stop smiling.

Even on crappy days (sometimes especially on crappy days) I stop and remind myself to be thankful. It’s very easy to find the things I’m thankful for today.

I’ve enabled comments for this post.

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