

Plot Clinic: The tools are done

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

All that remains are three longish essays—about three days worth of work. (Yeah, about another 9000 words, but that's okay. I figured I'd end up running a bit long.)

So now's the time to ask a favor of you.

I already have one beta tester lined up. I have room for two more.

Beta testers get the finished book free in e-book format, you're recognized in the acknowledgements, and you have the warm, fuzzy feeling of knowing that you helped make the book better by field-testing it and finding places where it worked, and where it broke.

In return, however, you end up jumping through some pretty ferocious hoops. These field testers will need to have either index cards and a bulletin board (and pins, don't forget pins) or software that replicates index cards and a bulletin board.

You'll need a deck of cards, preferably one of those listed in the previous post, or one similar to one of those.

You'll need a ring-bound notebook, lots of paper, and a solid lump of free time. I anticipate having the first draft of the book done on Friday, and will choose volunteers then, whether I go a day over or not. I'd like a three-day turn-around, which means I'd like you volunteers to build your plot in three days. If I send it to you on Friday, I'd like your comments back early Tuesday at the latest. Saturday would go to Wednesday, etc..

Yes, this is time- and labor-intensive, and to some extent brutal. You'll end up with about twenty to thirty plot cards (minimum) and the knowledge of how to create missing scenes to fill in around them, you'll come up with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and you'll probably feel like your brain has been run through a wringer. I think you'll also have a lot of fun in the process—I almost always do.

Testers should not start with a book already written, or in progress. This should be plot-from-scratch, because that's the hardest thing to do under deadline. I can't guesstimate how long this will take you. I figure it usually takes me a hard eight hours to build my basic plot (the part you'll be doing) but I know all the tools already; since this is new to you, I'll need to have you keep track of the amount of time you spend on the process so I can average that and let other writers know what to expect, and the point at which you can confidently declare yourself done. And you have to at least try ALL of the twenty tools.

But wait. There's more. You have to proof-read, too, which is not going to be easy with the pressure you'll be under when using the book.

And

You have to tell me why you want to do this. Funny or passionate entries which are also articulate, grammatical and correctly-spelled will receive priority.

With all of that in mind, I'm opening the door to proofreading volunteers. Post your applications here.

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