

# Trusting your characters to surprise you: 1400 words from Friday, reported a day late

By Holly Lisle

Writing yesterday went really well. I hit this awesome surprise, where one of my characters suddenly did something perfectly unexpected, showing up at my main character's house with a cell phone video showing the impossible in action.

It was exactly the weird and twisty wonderfulness that thrilled me, and made me laugh, and at the same time made chills run down my spine, because it makes the situation my main character is in so much worse.

After the writing, however, my day took a sideways turn, and I didn't have the chance to blog.

So I don't have a spiffy picture of yesterday's daily progress.

But I did get the words, and I cannot wait until Monday to get back to them. I will wait, because part of the process is religiously observing the two days off that let my subconscious mind refill.

I'm refilling.

So enjoy your weekend. I intend to. ☐

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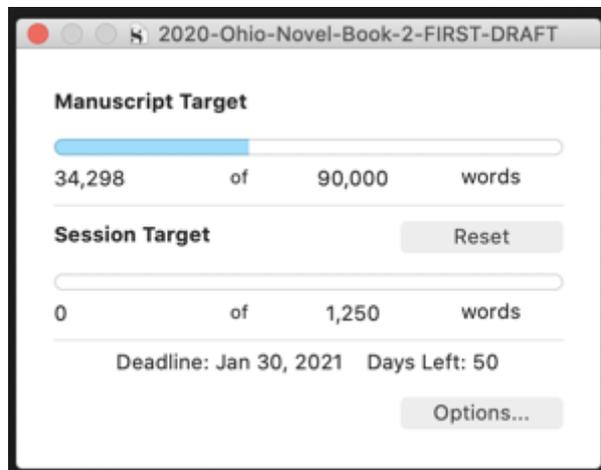
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# Seven. But close to done.

By Holly Lisle

At the moment, I don't have much more to say than that. If I can get this last hill of shit shoveled, I will then be able to get some actual words today.

If I get to my fiction before I run out of working hours, I'll be starting at 34,298 words, with a writing goal of 1250 or better – but if I get to work on the book at all today, and don't hit my wordcount, just getting to write some fiction



will be a win.

Here's hoping. AND working.

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**Help I didn't ask for... a long slog ahead to fix what a**

# “helpful” company irreversibly broke

By Holly Lisle

Oh, irony.

Two days ago, I think, “Gee... the writing is going really well, I miss blogging, and I would love to blog about writing fiction again.”

Two days ago, after a middle-of-the-road-but-not-bad day of getting my words – I have fun, I like the words I get, and I get enough of them to move the story forward and to add some pretty spiffy complications – some nameless jackass at some nameless company decides that said jackass can make some changes to my basic NONWRITING work process that will make my life better by breaking the way I do damn near everything I do.

I can either put my faith in this awesome company [THAT’S IRONY] which – having once completely broken my still-unfixed daily work – has proven that although it might NOT break my process again, it could. At any time.

I can say, “Yeah, sure. I’ll take that chance.”

Or I can change my process, not depend on the help of that company or any other company like it, and make sure I control this particular mission-critical task from end to end.

**EASY DECISION:** Wherever it’s possible, you don’t give other folks the power to wreck your work.

**OUTCOME:** I have to figure out how to control the process from end to end.

So yesterday I worked from 6 a.m., when I started work and

discovered I couldn't work on anything else until I fixed this, to not long after 6 p.m., when my eyes were crossed and I didn't dare keep going.

And my accomplishment can be summed up in a single number.

3

This is an objective number that defines what I accomplished yesterday, encompassing 12 hours of straight work, one cup of coffee, and one bathroom break. This is not 3 out of some knowable bigger number, because I have no way of telling what the end number could be. I could be 6. It could be 60. It could be worse than that.

It is, however, an objective number of what I've completed in a finite but very large task.

BECAUSE... if I can't get words, I can damnwell stick with my decision to get back to blogging, so that when I can get back to fiction, the blog will attest that I did not just forget. I did not lie down. I did not make excuses.

So that, when I can get back to the words, I will have the reminder of what broke them for however long this takes, and the reminder of how important it is to keep your mission-critical processes in your own hands.

Three. At the end of today there will be another number. At the end of tomorrow, there will be one after that. And so on, until this is fixed.

'Nuff said. Onward.

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# The Pointy Marketing End of Writing Fiction: Old Dog, New Trick

By Holly Lisle

No big secret that I'm working hard on making my fiction a full-time paying gig again – my objective is to earn 50% of my income from fiction, with the other 50% coming from my writing classes.

Fiction has been shoved over in a corner for years, because, well – writing good nonfiction is about a million times easier than writing good fiction, and in general it pays a lot better for significantly less work. And at the point where my writing site broke, it was getting the nonfiction up and running again that kept us from ending up living under a bridge.

And, honestly, after being taken in by that con artist John Locke, I had any hope of making a living writing fiction crushed out of me for a long time – everything that including both “indie publishing” and “earn a living doing it” looked like a scam.

**But writing fiction is the dream job I love** – sitting by myself in a room talking to invisible people on a page, watching them do things I don't expect, finding better conflicts, bigger stories – and writing about what matters to me in THIS world that translates into *my* worlds.

I did it for free every spare minute I got for seven years before I sold anything. Did it as a commercial novelist working fiction as my full-time paying job for seventeen years. Throwing in all the years when I've been an indie doing fiction at least part time, I'm now over thirty years in on this – and it is STILL work I love.

When you find **WORK. You. LOVE...** you do not ignore that. It's rare. It's astonishing.

I'm writing hard again. Fiction is what bounces me out of bed every morning. Knowing that I'm writing the stories I love, and that they will not be destroyed by bad editors or cancelled by ordering-to-the-net publishing idiocy matters to me.

Knowing that if I can get my work in front of a broader readership, what I'm writing has a chance to matter more – to me because it will help pay the bills, but to MY perfect readers, who can find something in fiction that they love, that matters to them as well – that's what **MAKES** this the dream job.

**I know how to write fiction.** I'm good at it, and a good number of my students are making **REAL** money writing fiction after taking my classes.

They learned the "write good fiction" part from me.

Learning how to bring in serious money as indies? No.

That's the part I'm learning from them.

And here are the books and here is the software they have pointed me to that I am fighting with and fighting through in order to make fiction a business, while **STILL** keeping it MY fiction. Good fiction.

1. Mastering Amazon Descriptions: An Author's Guide: Copywriting for Authors
2. Mastering Amazon Ads: An Author's Guide
3. Rapid Release: How to Write & Publish Fast For Profit
4. How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis: A Step-by-Step System for Enticing New Readers, Selling More Fiction, and Making Your Books Sound Good
5. Become a Successful Indie Author: Work Toward Your Writing

Dream

## 6. KDP Rocket

None of these are affiliate links. They're just links to books I'm reading and software I'm using.

I do NOT yet have numbers to prove any of this will work for me. I can prove (using KDP Rocket) that my folks are earning what they say they are. That the writers of the books above (and the maker of the software), are earning what they say they are.

So this time, I can see that there is a path that leads from where I am to where I'm going. I am going to find my way down that path.

You're going to be seeing more split tests on this site. NOT just cover art. Sometimes cover copy. Sometimes blurbs.

If you'll help me out by participating in the split testing (just click whatever you like best), I'll be grateful.

**The only data I'm gathering is clicks.** Nothing personal, nothing identifiable, nothing that will track you across the web and show you damned advertising.

I'm simply learning the split-testing process to figure out how to write better cover copy and blurbs, and how to build better covers.

Whether you're a reader or a writer, thank you for reading this, and thank you for your help in clicking to let me know what you like.

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# Got my words on Wishbone Conspiracy

By Holly Lisle

Got a good chunk of the novel note-carded with my current best ideas on how it will go, and wrote a big chunk of words of background and outlining, plus 1151 words of the actual story.

And I like what I got.

This being Saturday, I'm not supposed to be writing fiction. Saturday and Sunday are BOTH supposed to be days off.

But I was one day short on my Patreon hours because of a doctor's appointment on Thursday – news on that was all good, incidentally.

So I figure the three hours I put in today will cover that.

No snippets right now. I want to get into the flow on this thing first, make sure I'm heading in the right direction.

Then I'll drop a few hints.

But I'm very happy. It's so cool to be writing Cady from her own point of view again.

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**NEW Fiction, BARGAIN price:**

# The Longview Chronicles and The Owner's Tale

By Holly Lisle

I'm delighted to announce that *The Longview Chronicles*, the complete six-book series in one volume, **is on sale through Friday for \$2.99**— *regular price will be \$7.99* for the complete series in ebook form, but I wanted all of my folks to get the whole series for the price of one episode.

For folks who are wondering, Cady is in the series (as is Herog), and this is the (very big) book that fits between *Cadence Drake: Warpaint* and the next novel, *Cadence Drake: The Wishbone Conspiracy*, and shows you what's happening during and right after the end of *Warpaint*.

## When the trusted are monsters, one monster becomes a hero...

In the vast reaches of Settled Space, everything is legal, or at least obtainable privately... for a price.



Science has created near immortality, and the wealthy and powerful are buying it to make themselves gods. But these gods require—and create—an endless procession of manufactured criminals who become human sacrifices for their amusement...

Until one twisted creature born to be a sacrifice discovers the truth. This escaped slave declares a secret war against corruption, enslavement, and the wealthy, powerful men and women who have declared themselves gods, and made their whims law.

### **THE COMPLETE SERIES IN ONE VOLUME**

- Born From Fire
- The Selling of Suzee Delight
- The Philosopher Gambit
- Gunslinger Moon
- Vipers' Nest
- The Owner's Tale

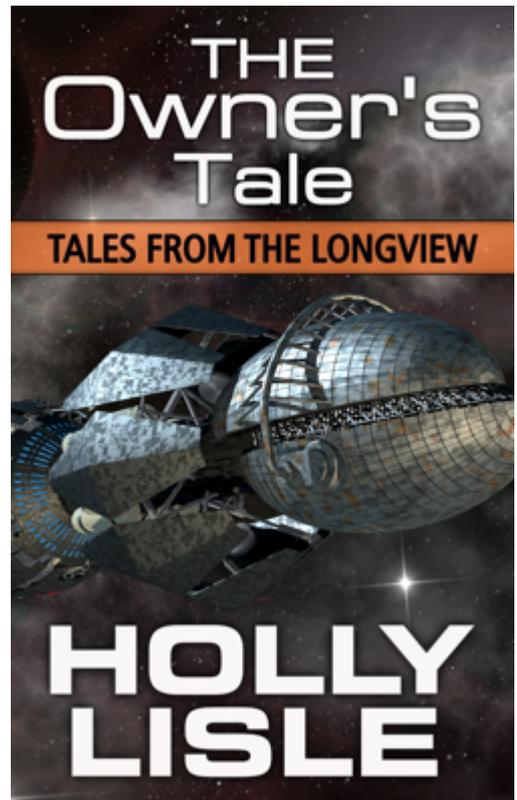
**Get this book from your favorite bookstore.**

(And if you love it, please leave a review...)

And for folks who already have the first five, for the rest of this week, *The Owner's Tale*, the brand new concluding episode, will be on sale for \$.99.

**When the truth comes out, who is left standing?**

In this final episode of the series, the Longview reveals its secrets, Herog finds the path to protecting the City of Furies, and Melie discovers the truth about the ship she captains and the owner she serves.



MEET THE LONGVIEW – An Ancient Spaceship Resurrected To Transport Conspiracy

Inhabited by a crew of misfits fleeing nightmare pasts, with a cargo of Condemned slated to die at the hands of the highest bidders, and with a passenger roster made up exclusively of people NOT who they claim to be, The Longview serves the hidden agenda of an eccentric recluse bent on playing puppetmaster to all of Settled Space.

**Get this from your favorite bookstore.**

(And if you love it, please leave a review...)

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# Completed revision of The Owner's Tale today – Next big step to getting back to Moon & Sun

By Holly Lisle

This is the first revision I've ever done that didn't even require the fixing of a typo on the first twenty-four pages, and had only the addition of a hyphen on page twenty-five.

This is the lightest revision of a first draft I have ever done.

And it's making me a little crazy that I don't know why.

I love the way this story came out. Made myself cry twice reading the print-out at things I wrote when I was so deep into the story I don't remember writing them, and that took me by surprise.

This is the ending that I wanted for the entire **Longview** series, and from my perspective, I got it in the first draft, with some very minor revisions, not a single added scene, not a single added page.

This is writing in a whole different place for me, and I don't know if it's because I've been writing to find this ending for so long – for years – or because I've made some sort of breakthrough in my writing...

... Or because I've lost my objectivity toward my work. That last one will get tested after I get my type-in finished and put this story in front of Matt.

But type-in will be fast. Will probably be done in a couple

hours tomorrow, and that's just with me being extra finicky and paranoid because I've NEVER had a first draft that looked this clean when I was done with it.

I am my own toughest critic. I am deeply suspicious first-draft pages that pass through my brutal revision process without coming out the other end battle-scarred by massive changes.

Still – it DID come through, and as far as I can tell, I was being as brutal as usual.

## So what comes next?

**Short-term**, when I get Matt's edit back:

- I'll do my editor's revision.
- I'll request bug-hunters and will do the typesetting from the bugs they find.
- Will put the story on sale in single episode version.
- And will then go through and put together the six-story bundle, because *The Owner's Tale* ends the **Longview** series.

I figure that along with writing lessons for **How to Write a Novel**, writing the parts of my Demo Novel (*Dead Man's Party*), and doing the *Alone in a Room with Invisible People* podcast, that will keep me pretty busy through Christmas.

Once I have the complete **Longview** series available, however, my next step is to reread the first two novels in the **Moon & Sun** series and get the series voice back in my head, and find the various toys I left on the floor in the first two books. Pick those up, figure out how I want to use them in the final book in the series.

By New Year's day, 2019, I want to be in a position to start writing *The Emerald Sun*. I'll be plotting that out concurrently with writing the first draft of *Dead Man's Party*.

And then might find myself writing two novels simultaneously for a couple months. Not optimal, but not the first time I've done this, either.

I would like to finish *The Emerald Sun* and the **Moon & Sun** series next year – writing, revision, editing, and publication. And get all three books back into print with new covers. Folks have waited way to long to find out how that story ends. As have I.

It's time to get back to the kids, the cat, and the mystery of the Moonroads, and what went wrong, and how to make it right.

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## **Just finished the first draft of The Owner's Tale – Moon & Sun 3 on deck.**

By Holly Lisle

So. Just now the first draft of *The Owners Tale*, the LAST episode in *Tales from the Longview*.

Wrote the final thousand-ish words this morning and part of this afternoon, and for now, at least, I like the ending.

I've printed off the manuscript (in 12 point Courier, double-spaced and with large margins, of course) where it will sit on my desk for at least one week to cool off.

I like a lot of stuff when it's still hot that I can see

problems with once it's cooled off.

After it's cooled for at least a week, I'll go in, do a read through and a revision, and then hand off to Matt, who will do my content edit. I want to wow him. He already figured out a part of how it will end (he's just that good).

But he doesn't yet know why. That is where I want to really bring this home.

This is a story I've been working towards for a long time, through a lot of books. This is the story I've pulled from dark corners and bad spots in my own life, from the lives of family, from the lives of other people who have not always had things easy. It's not personal, not any sort of roman á clef.

But through the fiction of the characters, I did manage to hit some things I've never been able to work into fiction before.

So here's the process once I get through the revision.

I hand off to Matt.

Matt points out all the places where I got it wrong, where I missed what I was going for, where I failed to give the characters the proper respect.

I go in and to an editor's revision.

I ask for a few folks to bug hunt THAT version.

I make corrections from the bug hunt.

I publish the final episode.

**And then I start into *Moon & Sun 3: The Emerald Sun*.**

**Yep. FINALLY.**

I'm not going to rush through writing the final book in the series. In the episode of *Alone in a Room with Invisible People* that Rebecca and I taped yesterday (Episode 13: Plotting VS. Pantsing, which will go live TOMORROW – Tuesday, Oct. 16th) I talk a little bit about why.

I remembered to mention:

- Currently writing my **How to Write a Novel** class demo novel, *Dead Man's Party*
- Whiles also writing the first draft of the **How to Write a Novel** class
- Brainstorming and doing the weekly podcast with Rebecca
- Doing the other stuff that has to fit in with these major activities, like spending time with my guys, answering emails, paying bills, talking with folks on the forums, and doing the still-less-frequent-than-I'd-hoped blog posts

## **But the biggest thing about getting back to the series is this:**

I haven't read the first two books in years, and I have to step back into that world. I'm a visceral writing. I write from inside my characters, doing my best to become them while I'm writing.

So I have reacquaint myself with the nuances of these folks, both good and bad. Walk through the concept map I drew for Book 3. Remember how to step back inside those characters, and become again the girl at the end of childhood who has had the weight of her world land on her shoulders, and who, with a brother she sometimes fights with, friends who aren't as reliable as one would hope, and a cat who's lying through his teeth about who he really is, has to save her people from destruction.

If she doesn't do it, no one will.

I'm hoping to be able to announce the start of the novel around or shortly after Christmas of this year.

I expect that I'll need about a year to write and revise it. I cannot GUARANTEE that's what I'll need, because I'm not just doing one book these days. I'm doing a book, classes, forums, and other things that are possible with the Internet.

Life was simpler in the days of just print publishers and just answering snail mail letters from fans a few times a year.

But cooking on a wood stove and dumping a honey-bucket in the midden downriver from your house were simpler, too. Been there, done that.

Simpler is not always better. *Vive la Internet!*

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# **Published            the            WARPAINT Soundtrack**

By Holly Lisle

It took a while to find the right music for WARPAIN.



First, this is the music I have playing in the background while I write, so it has to fit the universe, the characters, and the “feel” of a lived-in place full of real humans, real needs, and the themes of the story. And it has to not grate on my nerves or distract me from my words.

It has to become subliminal, has to leak into my subconscious mind and feed the story I want to write.

So the soundtrack places HEAVY emphasis on Jim Tozier’s guitar work, which fits Cady like her skin.

The rest of the music in the soundtrack hits plot points, characters, or some element of theme or characterization I want to have in my head.

But Tozier is the backbone of the whole track.

## **So here’s the WARPAIN soundtrack.**

(Link is to iTunes. It’s quick and convenient, and every other listing option I’ve tried has proven a giant pain in the ass.)

Consider it a sneak preview.

On a personal note, I still have the damn headaches and

migraines. I'm getting some work done—putting the soundtrack together was a little bit of relaxation when my head hurt too badly to do anything else.

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# Discussing “I’ve quit Big Publishing” to publish myself

By Holly Lisle



"I Quit!"

Below is the start of an article that's been a long time coming.

*After years of publishing my fiction through big commercial publishers, with thirty-two novels sold to the big New York houses as well as to international publishers around the planet, and more than a million books in print, I have decided to move to self-publishing my fiction.*

## ***Why am I going to start publishing***

## **myself?**

*First, because books don't stay in print anymore with major publishing houses, and my 32-novel backlist has just about vanished.*

*Second, because I know self-publishing works, and doing this will allow me to write the books I want to write the way I want to write them, and present my stories to my readers without an intermediary.*

*Read the rest, then follow the link there to come back here...*

I imagine it seems a little crazy to walk away from twenty years of publishing with the major New York publishers to go into indie publishing and do all the work myself.

The thing is, as fun as it is to walk into a bookstore and see your novels on the shelf, the rest of the experience gets old fast. Prior to reading John Locke's book on self-publishing, I was going round and round with myself about giving up on fiction altogether.

I was already publishing non-fiction (my writing courses), and the experience was FUN. And all the frustration, headaches, and fury associated with my fiction career stood in stark contrast to me being able to talk live to my students in a forum, get immediate feedback on work, and, frankly, get paid regularly.

But I LOVE writing fiction. I didn't want to quit—I simply didn't see a way to make it fun again. To make it as immediate and joyful for me to create as my nonfiction.

When I read Locke's book, I saw myself. Someone who does not care about the numbers, who is not interested in constantly pushing for more readers, who wants only to write stories people love and to get them to the people who will love them.

Being a “team player” has never been my strong suit. Not school, not in nursing, not in writing. I’m not writing for everybody, and I’m not interested in pretending I am. **I want to write for the folks who already love what I’m doing**, not to have someone constantly push me to make my work blander, safer, and more commercial so it will appeal to people who **don’t** like what I’m doing.

I was BORN to be indie. And now I can.

I hope you’ll join this adventure with me.

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