

The Ohio Novel #1 Is Done! (Or what it's like to disappear into a black box)

written by Holly

April 28, 2020

By Holly Lisle

I wrapped up my final draft yesterday.

In spite of best efforts, I came in over my 90,000K wordcount by about 12,000 words.

I don't have a title for the novel yet (Matt comes up with my best titles, and I'm really hoping he can pull out something amazing, both for the first book and for the entire series).

I do have my pseudonym. I can't give either until – BARE MINIMUM – the first five books are out and starting to find their audience.

And then I'll only be giving it to the folks on my mailing list who are genuinely interested in the genre.

Since I'm publishing the Ohio series independently, since I'm bringing the series and world (with possible subsequent series) out under a pseudonym, and since I have to plot the next four novels, then have to complete the entire 5-book series – have all five written, revised, edited, bug-hunted, formatted, covered with pro-quality covers, and get them all up into Amazon-exclusive KDP and print formats, and then launch them at the speed of one book a month for five months, I have a long, long way to go.

But... THIS TIME, I'm trying to work with Amazon's algorithms, and see what I can learn from doing that.

It's an investment in manpower. A BIG one – primarily but not exclusively mine. We're talking the time, effort, focus, dedication, that goes into thinking and then writing 400,000+ MORE connected, related, compelling words of fiction that must be outlined, first-drafted, finished, revised, edited, bug-hunted, typeset, put into Kindle, print, and other formats (the Ohio novels will start Amazon-exclusive, but probably won't stay that way past the completion of the initial five-book launch) have cover copy written and tested and re-written, have title testing – so I'm talking about an all-in commitment of a big chunk of my life, with no feedback (except from Matt, Becky, and my bug hunters) until this whole thing goes live.

It's also an investment in money: All mine. Just the cash outlay for five great, professional covers, is significant. But much, much more expensive than that is opportunity cost – the things I don't get paid for because of the time and effort I'm putting into this project that I *hope* I might get paid for... that isn't a new writing class or a couple of classes I KNOW I could get paid for.

If it goes big for me, THEN my writing students will get my numbers and how I did it, along with this really cool story development process I've come up with and am using for these. Maybe some workshops.

If it doesn't go big for me, they'll get the really cool story development process... but that's not a cool new workshop that might be able to give writers willing to do the work (as outlined above, so we're talking BRAVE writers) a path to building a live-on fiction income. The story development thing is just a few lessons. Probably added into an existing class or two.

And here's the thing that's making me a little nuts.

The entire process has to be done completely in the dark. I

have to build EVERYTHING, pay for EVERYTHING, set up EVERYTHING, write EVERYTHING, and publish EVERYTHING... with nobody but Matt, Becky, and myself seeing what I'm doing. (Well, at the point where I'm ready for bug-hunters, I already have a couple lined up, and will bring in a few more, and this handful of readers will go through all five novels back to back to back. And sign an NDA beforehand that they can't tell anyone who I am, or what my pseudonym is, or where the website is, or anything. Not until the books are doing so well that I can bring in my other genre-related fiction to the new writer under a "written as Holly Lisle" label with the pseudonym as the author name.

I can't share snippets of any of the Ohio stuff – not snippets or scenes or teaser stuff or worldbuilding – on my blog, on the podcast, in the writing community forum. Nothing.

I can't put links to the books when they come out here or in the writing community or on the podcast page.

I can't link my old novels to this new set.

I have to become invisible.

Not my strong suit.

But for this test to mean anything, for this process to mean anything, this is where I am.

At some point in the future, I hope to be able to share some crazy great news. Or at least, "Hey, I'm making enough to pay off the house." That would be really cool.

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Still kicking, still writing

written by Holly

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So Ohio Novel #1 is pushing hard toward completion – or rather, I'm pushing hard and it's fighting me all the way to the finish line.

As I've discussed on the Alone In a Room with Invisible People podcast, having this book done doesn't mean there's going to be a new book. Not soon, anyway.

- This one is coming out under a pseudonym.
- I have to write and finish the next four before *any* of them come out.
- When they do come out, they'll be coming out a month apart on Amazon exclusively to begin with, and will, by Amazon's terms, stay exclusive for at least one full term per book.
- And this particular book and its series are set up to introduce a brand new world, brand new characters, a solid core of layered conflicts that cross and intersect through the entire series... Five books minimum, possible spin-off or connected other characters, other books, and other stories beyond this series for the characters in this one.
- It's a big, big project.

I have been head down, learning a lot of new things about revision while doing it.

The *How to Revise Your Novel* class revision and update is on hold because of what I'm learning, and because I need to

figure out how to teach what I've learned, and also (only slightly less important) how to present my new discoveries while not giving away my pseudonym.

But I'm pleased that the book is now over 90,000 words. My objective for all five is 90K apiece. It makes for a nice reading length, and gives me a good writing rhythm for each 3000/word-ish chapter.

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