

The Tale of the Tail in the TalysMana Revision

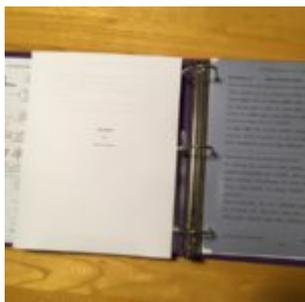
written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

Last Friday, I printed out my manuscript and my revision worksheets, located my pens, and set everything aside. Saturday was to be my first day of revision.

And Saturday with the the big table cleared for writing, I started into revising my badly wrecked fantasy novel *TalysMana*, written back in 2010.



I was planning on doing the way I always do it – manuscript loose and on the left, notebook and notes top and right.

You figure, I've been refining this system since 1995, and I knew I had it pretty well nailed down.

So I had everything neatly laid out – this time with more papers than usual, because instead of using my advanced streamlined system, I'm going through and treating *TalysMana* exactly as if it were the first revision I'd ever done. I'm using my first-time-through system from **How to Revise Your Novel**, and saving all my work to add to the class as a demonstration walk-through.



So here's what that looks like...

Neat, organized, simple to get through. Time-consuming if it's your first time, but this ISN'T My first time, and I anticipated making pretty decent progress the first day. Unlike most of my books, I pantsed this one, so the part at the beginning is the part I got closest to right, and I while knew it ran off the tracks more and more the deeper into the story I went, Saturday was supposed to be easy sailing.

I know things are going to get worse and messier the deeper in I get. But hey, I'm a professional. I got this. Right?

Turns out, not so much.

What I wasn't prepared for was *help*.



Enter "help," stage left.

Sheldon levitated onto the table with his usual gravity-free grace. (I'll note that no one eats on this table, in spite of the fact that it's in the dining room, which is why no one cringes when the cat goes there.)

He discovered an entire field of his favorite things: Stacks of paper, pens, plastic folder separators.

Sheldon spends a lot of time around office supplies, which he believes are named “No,” “No, dammit!” and, “Aargh!”



Three quick sniffs and a joyful growl and he leapt into the middle of my work, chased my pens across the table, scattered my pages, and carried the pen I was using to the floor to eat.

I retrieved my pen, said “Office Supplies” to him a thousand times in under ten minutes, and watched him sulk off at last.

I restacked everything, got to work, and enjoyed maybe ten minutes of peace and cat-free quiet and stillness. Until the question, “Why is he being good?” flitted all paranoid-y and bug-eyed through the back of my mind.

Of course there was a reason he was being quiet.

It’s the same reason your two-year-old is being quiet.

He’d found something he knew he wasn’t allowed to touch, and because he wasn’t being supervised, he wreaked havoc upon it.



This is a skein of Zauberboll Crazy, lovely German yarn given to me by a friend also named Holly.

Sheldon, a name that I have just discovered translates as “the

horns are hidden beneath the fur,” had somehow finagled this out of a bag from beneath the two folded sweaters that were supposed to make it impossible for him to reach, and was lying on the couch shoving his head as far into it as it would go and inhaling Smell O’ Sheep™ from it like it was cocaine and he was some Wall Street dude from the eighties, then hanging onto it with his teeth while kicking it with his hind legs, causing the ball to both unravel and to tangle.

Thus ended Saturday revision.

Sunday I set myself the task of figuring out how to cat-proof my work. ‘Cause... still have to revise the novel, still have to revise many more to come, still going to keep Ol’ Horns-Beneath-The-Fur.



So I hole-punched the entire manuscript and put it by itself into the big D-Ring binder. Dug out one of the strap-type cardboard binders I use to hold print-outs of my shorter classes. Put all of the empty worksheets and their dividers into this. (Little-known fact: *Holly* translates into English as “addicted to office supplies.”)

Cut my pens down to a black one for the worksheets and a red one for the manuscript.

Today, I set out the revision, and this time, got all the way to page 48. The image at the very top of this tale of struggle and triumph is of Sheldon with TODAY’s work in front of him, stymied by my office-supply solution, and trying to take the pen I’m using, this time to have it taken away from him.

And this time... no yarn for him to wreak vengeance upon. That's now in a zippered bag. Little bugger can fetch a ball (cat-style – he has to chase it, attack it, and pounce on it for twenty minutes before he finally brings it back to you), is trying to open doors by hanging on the doorknobs, likes to turn the touch lamp on and off, and took a flying leap at the light switch the other day. (Would have worked if it hadn't already been down).

But he can't (yet) work a zipper.

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