Writing, and Linux

By Holly Lisle

The writing did not go well yesterday, but some days are like that. I stalled out on Molly. Today, however, I worked through all of Molly's story and most of Lauren's, including developing Lauren's major conflict, which will drive the rest of the book. Still have some work to do on notecards, but will have everything carded tomorrow, and will be able to spread stuff out on the floor and try to figure out the best order. Once that's done, I'll do a typed scene-by-scene outline, install it into my novel document, and start checking off scenes as I write them.

On to Linux. [rant mode="on"]

I've now installed, then uninstalled SuSE, Caldera, Red Hat, and one other flavor of Linux the name of which slips my mind at the moment. I keep trying, dammit — I want off of Windows. But last night's and this morning's fun with Red Hat is enough to make me think it's not worth the trouble. Of all the Linux varieties I've installed, Red Hat was the worst. First, it died every time I tried to install GNOME, requiring three complete reformats and reinstalls before I could even get the system to work, and I had to do that by going in and manually choosing packages, and eliminating all GNOME-related packages. Then, it would not acknowledge the printer and hung up, requiring a reboot; then hung up again, requiring another hard reboot, when I tried to use the modem; eliminated all access to my D drive in both Linux and Windows modes; and finally, devoured my boot manager, causing the system to crash when I tried to switch into Windows.

Where do I go if not to Linux? I won't buy Windows XP, mind you. Bill crossed the final line in requiring registration, then limiting re-installs to four before you have to call

Mommy and ask for permission to install your own damned software on your own damned machine. And Macs … I have gone over and over and over the Mac issue — they're nice machines, but overpriced, undersupported, and proprietary as hell. Their software is too expensive, too. And Apple has the nasty tendency to develop OSs with **bad** backward compatibility, or else software with seriously vile planned obsolesence. Either way, not good.

Linux looked like the way to go. Except that every flavor of Linux I've tried has been actively user-hostile. If you cannot set up your system without the manual, that's not great. However, if you cannot set your system up by following the instructions in the manual, that's dreadful. Either Red Hat hires idiots to write its manuals, or the manual writers are taking some steps as given that are neither intuitive nor obvious, or Red Hat is developing its version of Linux to be elitist — in which case, it should say **PROGRAMMERS ONLY, ALL ELSE BEWARE** on the box.

So.

Having eliminated Windows, Mac, and Linux as desirable operating systems, I'm left with … what? Reversion to the typewriter? Been there, done that, it sucks too. Doesn't anyone make a modular, stable, well-coded operating system that actually works with printers, modems, etc. when installed? I've had both Debian and Mandrake recommended, but after all the unhappiness with my last four tries, I don't know that I want to put any more money into Linux systems that just may not work, or may screw up access to my non-Linux hard drives the way Red Hat did. I'm tired of playing.

Hell, I switched from QWERTY to Dvorak — I'm willing to tolerate a learning curve, a fair amount of effort on my part, the requirement of patience and research and hard work to get something better than what I have. But what I'm getting has to at least not screw up what I already have, and should, at bare

minimun, do what it says it will do. [rant mode="off"]