

How to Write a Novel

LESSON 16



Building Your Novel's **RIGHT Voice & Tone** **HOLLY LISLE**

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Habit can hurt you.

Habit can have you writing every book in the same voice and with the same tone, because your left brain Editor is comfortable with the voice and tone you know.

And when you mix ***not knowing what you don't know*** with habit, you are on a dark road racing toward the fiction cliff.

The habit we're talking about in this lesson is Voice & Tone, which can be a superhero duo used correctly, but which move you from pro consideration down into the Little Leagues of writing if you ignore them, and just do what you've always done because it's what you know.

This week, (or at least this lesson), you're going to rewrite a scene you've already written, intentionally changing both the voice and the tone.

You might end up not using this scene, and you might even not like it — but you'll gain some essential skills from doing the work.

But before we get to the work, I'm going to SHOW you why this matters.

Onward...

Who Is Telling Your Story?

The person telling your story influences what the reader sees...

And right off the bat, so I can SHOW you rather than telling you what I mean, I'm going to pull in pieces of my own work as demonstration.

EXAMPLE ONE:

The corpse's left eye squinted at me from mere centimeters away. Decomposition lent her face an increasingly inscrutable expression; the first time I'd regained consciousness, when I found myself tied to her, she looked like she had died in terror. After a while, she started leering at me, as if she had reached the place where I was going and took perverse pleasure from the thought that I would join her there soon. Now, having had her moment of amusement at my expense, she meditated; beneath thousands of dainty auburn braids, her face hung slack, bloated and discolored, the skin loosening. Threads of drool hung spiderwebbish from her gaping mouth. Her eyes, dry and sunken and filmed over beneath swollen lids, still stared directly at me.

For a while, when I'd been hallucinating, the corpse had talked to me. She'd whispered that they would come back and throw me out an airlock, into the hard vacuum of deep space; that my vile mother was stalking me; that I could never run hard enough or far enough to find freedom – that death would be

my only freedom. But my mind was clear now. No hallucinations. No talking corpses. Just me and horrible pain and aching, tantalizing thirst and a stench that even several days of acclimatization couldn't minimize; the stink of decomposition, of piss and shit, of the gangrene that I suspected was starting in on my right leg. Me ... and all of that ... and the body of the young woman who had waited on me during my business dinner with Peter Crane in the members-only club *Ferlingetta*.

Hunting the *Corrigan's Blood*

Before you read further, you have a worksheet and three simple questions to answer.

Those questions are:

- What would you be doing if you were this character?
- How does what this character is doing instead make you feel?
- What expectation does this give you for the rest of the book?

Your Turn

Think about the paragraphs above, write down your answers, and then go to the next page.

First Person as Protective Barrier

This novel is far-future science fiction. The voice here is first person, pulled in very tight. I think of it as CLOSE first. You're getting Cadence Drake's sensations, smells, thoughts, fears, made as claustrophobic and dark as I could get them.

You get a story that starts right in the middle of trouble, where you discover in the first two paragraphs that the character is bound to a corpse, and welded into a locker, has a broken leg and issues with her mother, has been at times unconscious and delusional, and recognizes the corpse to whom she's bound, because the corpse was her waitress in an upscale members-only club on a space station.

But the other thing you get is the introduction to the character, and the comparison you have to draw between what she's doing, and what you'd be doing if you were her.

Because this is what readers do. They put themselves into the character's situation, and try to live inside the character's world... and they either get involved, or they bail.

Because the stuff I do to Cady is brutal, I give the reader a barrier between being in the character's skin and feeling what she feels.

I use *First Person* as my voice. This means that the reader gets to be told the story, and does not have to live the story.

If I used third person, the reader would slide inside the character's skin and become her.

The corpse's left eye squinted at Cadence Drake from mere centimeters away. Decomposition lent the dead girl's face an increasingly inscrutable expression. The first time Cady had regained consciousness, when she found herself tied to the corpse, she'd though the girl looked like she had

died in terror. Then the corpse started leering at her, as if she had reached the place where Cady would go after she died, as if the dead girl took perverse pleasure from the thought that Cady would join her there soon.

Third person let's you become Cady — and because I know the kinds of things I do to this particular MC, I know third person would make the book unbearable for tenderer readers.

So my choice of first person recent past, written very close to show what the character experiences BUT to buffer my readers from experiencing it too, was carefully chosen.

My next example is also in first person, but for a different reason.

EXAMPLE TWO:

Something scratched at the window, but I pretended not to hear it. "True dark is here," I told my brother Danrith. The yervi is attending Mama, the younglings are all in bed. Uncle Banris must be locked inside the study again—I've heard nothing of him since twilight.

"We can't go yet," Dan told me. "Something is outside the window. And I hear whispering."

"No you don't."

"I do, though, Genna," he said. I heard the pleading in his voice. "I hear nightlings. They're saying, 'Come. Hurry, children. There is but little time.' Nightlings. And on Offering Night."

I gave him a stare I hoped would still his flapping tongue. "Since we plan to go out, and since we plan to hurry, both we and your nightlings will get what they want." He clutched at my sweater, knit by Mama for me when she was still well, imbued with her love and a handful of spells. I pulled away from him, and he whispered, "We can't just give ourselves to them."

The Ruby Key

Answer the same three questions:

- What would you be doing if you were this character?
- How does what this character is doing instead make you feel?
- What expectation does this give you for the rest of the book?

Your Turn

Think about the paragraphs above, go to your DEMO TWO worksheet and write down your answers, and then go to the next page.

First Person as Secret Keeper

This novel is a YA Fantasy, and contains kids in serious danger, with the lead character the one who has to do the most to save the people she loves and her whole world from a nightmare unleashed more than a thousand years earlier that is finally close to doing what it set out to do — to destroy humankind.

She is the one character who has the hidden strength that will let her stand against the dangers that will come at her, but she has no idea who or what she is to the nightmares that pursue, or the people she must save.

She tells her story in first person so I can keep a lot of things hidden from her — and at the same time, from the reader. When you're writing in first person, your readers can only know what your MC knows, and can only discover new things when the character discovers them. There are no other points of view, no omniscient narrators to drop hints.

I want my readers to care about Genna, but I don't want them to get any other views of her besides her own. Don't want to let anything slip to spoil any surprises, either accidentally or on purpose, about why she's special.

So now I'm going to walk you through a couple of third-person novel starts.

EXAMPLE THREE:

Evil moved through the swirling, laughing throngs of the Naming-Day party. Kait Galweigh felt the weight of it against the back of her neck, cold as the flesh of a week-drowned corpse. Evil as real and purposeful and focused as a torturer seeking his next victim seeped up from the earth, and blew in through the screened archways, and dripped down the walls, and the silent blind horror of its subtle hunting twisted Kait's stomach into queasy

knots and told her to run. Yet the evil was all-pervasive, and no place to run existed in the city, nor did any place to hide.

Everyone else seemed oblivious. The Dokteerak Family women in their gauzy net finery chatted in little clusters beneath the broad palms in the central garden. Torchlight cast an amber gleam on their sleek skins and pale hair and made the heavy gold at their throats and wrists seem to glow, while their easy laughter rolled through the soft twilight like waves breaking on a distant shore. The diplomats from both Families, Galweigh and Dokteerak, gathered in the breezeway that surrounded the courtyard, leaning along the food-laden tables, nibbling from finger servings of yearling duck and broiled monkey and wild pig and papaya-stuffed python, talking about everything but what they really had on their minds. Concubines flirted and primped, tempting their way into berths in the beds of the high-ranking or the beautiful.

Diplomacy of Wolves

Same three questions:

- What would you be doing if you were this character?
- How does what this character is doing instead make you feel?
- What expectation does this give you for the rest of the book?

Your Turn

Think about the paragraphs above, go to your DEMO THREE worksheet and write down your answers, and then go to the next page.

Third Person for Super-Power Fun

The example above is in close third, where you can hear what the MC is thinking, feel what she's feeling... And I chose this POV for her because Kait is an obligatory shapeshifter — there are times when her body changes into non-human forms without her having any control of it, and she lives in a world where people like her are executed (horrifically) the instant they're identified.

Kait, however, comes from a rich, powerful family, and those who know her secret have protected her from the consequences of her disease. Until now.

And while this novel is written from a number of different character points of view that let me take the story to different parts of the world, to show heroes and villains from inside their own heads, and that let the reader shift through these different skins as easily as Kait flows from human to four-legged to winged forms, Kait is the main character. Most of the other characters are in distant third, NOT putting the reader right inside their skins.

But Kait's fun to be. She gets to do a lot of cool things with her weird superpower — so I chose close third person for her. That way, the reader gets to have wings too.

Time for another example...

EXAMPLE FOUR:

In front of a fieldstone cottage, on a crisp spring morning, Risse Leyeadote and her leggy, dark-eyed daughter, Faia, hugged each other goodbye.

Faia pulled away first and grinned. "I love you, Mama. I will see you soon."

"Such a hurry. My youngest daughter cannot wait to abandon me for the flocks and the fields."

"Oh, Mama—!"

Risse laughed, then held out a wrapped packet and a necklace. "Take these, Faiachin. I have more than enough jerky here to get you to the first of the stay-stations, and I have finished the work on a special amulet—added protection against wolves. And I am sending my love. You have your *erda*?"

Faia nodded.

"Wolfwards?"

Another nod.

"Knife? Herb bag? Matches? Needles?..."

Faia nodded at each item on her mother's list until finally she burst out laughing. "*Mama!* How many years have I been taking the flock upland? I have everything I need. I will be fine, the sheep will be fine, the dogs will be fine, and I will see you in late summer with a nice bunch of healthy lambs and fat ewes."

Her mother smiled wistfully. "I know, love. But it is a mother's job to worry. If I did not, who would? Besides, I miss you when you are not here."

Fire in the Mist

Same three questions:

- What would you be doing if you were this character?
- How does what this character is doing instead make you feel?

- What expectation does this give you for the rest of the book?

Your Turn

Think about the paragraphs above, go to your DEMO FOUR worksheet and write down your answers, and then go to the next page.

Third Person for Multiple POV Ease

This was my first published novel (the second I wrote). And it has some beginner errors in it, but my choice of voice was a good one.

I knew the world I was writing in was big (I had, after all, Tolkien-ed the hell out of it, had maps and languages and cultures and histories and alien creatures).

And I knew that I was going to need to show different parts of that world from different points of view. And while you CAN write a novel from multiple first person, or for alternating first and third (as I did with my Korre novels), it's way, way easier for readers to make the jump between characters in third person than it is in first.

Last example.

EXAMPLE FIVE:

Phoebe Rain sat with her back to the bar that divided the kitchen from the dining room, watching the first traces of pink creeping across the Florida sky. She shuffled the tarot cards on the table in front of her and shifted on the kitchen chair. Her right knee was hurting again, but she didn't dare get up to stretch. Her call volume had been steady all night – she knew that as soon as she moved away from the table the phone would ring. Out west, where it was still dark and the insomniacs were pacing the floor, people were still looking for psychic comfort to get them through the night.

She smiled sadly at that. Sometimes she wished she, too, could have a little companionship, a little comfort, in the lonely hours before dawn. But she

wouldn't consider paying Psychic Sisters Network prices for it.

So she straightened her right leg the way the physical therapist had taught her, concentrating on contracting the muscles as hard as she could, then relaxing them completely. Fire lanced out from the joint as she forced it to do what she wanted, burning down into the calf muscle and up into the thigh. She tightened the muscles again, gritting her teeth against the pain, and when it became too intense to tolerate, relaxed. One more time – then the phone rang, and she grabbed her pen, depressed the headset switch on the phone, and lowered her foot to the floor.

"Fifty-five... minute... YES... club," a recorded voice said as she wrote down the time: 5:57 a.m. She glanced at the flowchart again, noting the script she had to follow, and said, "Thank you for calling Psychic Sisters Network. My name is Ariel, and my extension number is 723884. May I have your name, please?"

A nervous-sounding woman said, "Clarise."

Midnight Rain

Last time on the three questions:

- What would you be doing if you were this character?
- How does what this character is doing instead make you feel?
- What expectation does this give you for the rest of the book?

Your Turn

Think about the paragraphs above, go to your DEMO FOUR worksheet and write down your answers, and then go to the next page.

Third Person for Romantic Simplicity or to Meet Reader Expectations

This is the intro to my first paranormal suspense romance novel, and Phoebe is one of the two main characters.

Because this is partially a romance (fairly spicy, though much more focused on the suspense than the relationship), the reader has to be able to be the character. So third person is the voice of choice for this genre.

Wanna read mad hate from readers? Find well-known, really good romance writers who wrote romance or suspense-romance novels in first person. The responses of readers to this breach of voice is horrifying. I didn't know about it at the time, but found out when one suspense/romance writer I really enjoyed did this. I thought the book was great, but a whole world of rage and meanness came down on her head.

So there are times when you may need to conform to genre expectations.

To know when these times are, you're going to need to read heavily in the genre, and then check reader reactions when you discover something by someone else that feels fresh and new and cool to you.

Because readers are not writers, and may react differently (and badly) to what to us seems like a fresh and excellent direction.

Then, however, you have to decide whether you want to do the fresh and new thing, to make it your own, and to find **your** readers in that variant of a genre you love.

Because along with all the mad hate reviews, there were the readers who loved the first-person romances. They were a smaller audience, but if — for example — you love first person as a voice, or ethical vampires, or books that include the history you've been geeking on since you were five... you may decide to carve your audience out of the smaller group of readers who

will love what you write, even if they won't make you rich beyond your wildest dreams of avarice.

I left paranormal suspense romance after four books. I had the best sales I'd ever had in the genre — and in that genre, they were not big enough to make me the star my publisher hoped I could be. So that publisher didn't look for a fifth contract with me, and I didn't pursue one elsewhere.

That was the point at which I decided it was time to go indie.

The Steps for Selecting Your Novel's Voice

Every voice is possible, but some voices limit what you can do.

Second person...

You walk through the door and are confronted by three items – a ball, a watch, and a little ivory cat...

is hard to take seriously. It is the voice of children's "choose your adventure" stories and text adventure video games.

Omniscient...

Little did he know as he walked through the door that he would be dead in five minutes.

is at its best distancing for readers, and at its worst feels contrived and gimmicky. Used very lightly in novels that are otherwise in third, it can be a useful tool when you want to move the reader away from a character.

Second? Well, you can do some fun kids books and text adventure video games with it.

So this leaves most writers with variations on first person and third person, and mix-and-match combinations of the two.

And it puts you in the position of asking the following questions?

What tools do I want voice to provide for *this* novel?

- Do I want it to give the reader a protective distance in fiction I know will get grim and dark? **Use first person.**

- Do I want it to hide secrets from the viewpoint character — and in doing so, hide them from the reader? **Use first person.**
- Do I want the reader to live inside worlds and powers she can never experience in real life? **Use third person.**
- Do I want to take the reader through the story, crosscutting between multiple characters and locations?
 - Use third person
 - Or mixed first and third with just one first-person protagonist (which I did in *Talyn* and *Hawksparr*, and will do with *Redbird* when I write it)...
 - OR... **HARD MODE WARNING:** Multiple first person. To carry it off, you need to be brilliant at making each of your character voices so unique and clear that the reader will know who's speaking instantly.
- Do I want to make the book acceptable to the largest possible audience? In most genre's, use third person. It is always acceptable, always relatable, and in most genres, it's what's expected. Hardboiled detective fiction is an exception, where first person is the voice of choice. If in doubt about which is the "right" voice for your genre, read the genre broadly and deeply.

You might not want to redo your voice for this novel, and might want to save this process for the next one.

But it's worth looking at what you've already written and thinking about how the voice you're using now is working out for you.

Reminder:

Do not go back and change anything you've already written. If you decide you've chosen the wrong voice for your book, switch to the voice you want now, and simply pretend this was where you started. Doing this will not make revision of the novel any harder than it will be already.

How Are Your Characters Telling Your Story?

On to TONE...

Learning tone takes a lot of words written, but it also takes a lot of words read. Odds are good that if you're taking this class, you have always been a big reader

You may not have been a broad reader, however, preferring to stick to just the genres you love.

I was a “cereal box” reader — meaning if it had words on it, and the words weren't racing past me at 70 miles an hour, I read them.

The difference between this:

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was — but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible.

— The Fall of the House of Usher, Edgar Allen Poe

And this:

I was leaning against the bar in a speakeasy on Fifty-second Street, waiting for Nora to finish her Christmas shopping, when a girl got up from the table where she had been sitting with three other people and came over to me. She was small and blonde, and whether you looked at her face or at her body in powder-blue sports clothes the result was satisfactory. "Aren't you Nick Charles?" she asked.

— The Thin man, Dashiell Hammett

... is tone.

Both are in first person, but where the tone of the first is dark, matching perfectly with the grim, horrific story it relates, the tone of the second is breezy and light, relaxed and casual, fitting the novel it starts.

The first has a formal and archaic sentence structure, uses long sentences and complex punctuation, and from the first line emphasizes loneliness, solitude, darkness, foreboding. Poe starts building a feeling of doom from the first line, and in his word choices, he is unrelenting.

dull
dark
soundless
oppressive
dreary
melancholy
insufferable...

Compare this to Hammett. He uses short, punchy sentence clauses with commas or periods — no semicolons, no em-dashes. And both his scene setting — a bar in a speakeasy while his companion is Christmas shopping, generally a happy activity — and his word choices...

leaning
waiting

girl
small
blonde
powder-blue
sports
satisfactory

emphasize a casual, safe location in a setting the character finds appealing setting, and with a starting conflict he finds equally so.

Tone Demo

I'm going to pull a smaller section of my first scene from *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood* back in here to do double duty, and I'm going to walk you through the tone in something I've written:

The corpse's left eye squinted at me from mere centimeters away. Decomposition lent her face an increasingly inscrutable expression; the first time I'd regained consciousness, when I found myself tied to her, she looked like she had died in terror. After a while, she started leering at me, as if she had reached the place where I was going and took perverse pleasure from the thought that I would join her there soon. Now, having had her moment of amusement at my expense, she meditated; beneath thousands of dainty auburn braids, her face hung slack, bloated and discolored, the skin loosening. Threads of drool hung spiderwebbish from her gaping mouth. Her eyes, dry and sunken and filmed over beneath swollen lids, still stared directly at me.

Hunting the *Corrigan's Blood*

So what are the tone words here?

corpse
decomposition
died
terror
leering
perverse
amusement
meditated
dainty
slack
bloated
discolored
loosening
drool
spiderwebbish
gaping
dry
sunken
filmed
stared
swollen

Most of the words here are clearly intended to be disturbing, unnerving, scary.

And those that would generally be happy or soothing— *amusement*, *meditated*, *dainty* — are in the context of describing a corpse used to make the reader feel uncomfortable.

Realize that genres can have vocabularies — that the words I used in this first scene would fit easily in horror or suspense, would be wrong for pure romance, and are not regularly encountered in pure science fiction. (Which is why I write impure science fiction. 😈)

Tone is heavily genre-dependent.

Until it isn't.

All of my characters and all of my stories have roots in my life, and my life is a Frankenstein's monster of mixed cultures and languages, foreign countries, different states, constant outsider-dom, and a combination of real-life horror and a lot of humor, much of it dark. I've used all of that.

But beyond that, I pulled what I loved from reading everything. I bring hard-boiled detective fiction, cozy mysteries, and humorous fantasy into my Cadence Drake SF novels *along with* some the spiffy science that defines the genre; what I love from romance, Tolkein, SF, mysteries, and good nonfiction *along with* the very cool magic that defines the genre into my fantasy novels. My suspense romances pull from ghost stories, thrillers, and police procedurals along with the genre-defining romance, with sex scenes that a bit too spicy for some readers, and not spicy enough for others. They're just right for that third bear, though...

I'm heavily focused on writing the stories I want to read, **and because of who I am, where I came from, how I got here, and what I read and like**, there's a cost to this.

I am both a broad and a deep reader. I regularly read a lot of genres heavily preferred by women, and a lot of genres heavily preferred by men. I read male, female, gay, and straight authors equally, pursue works from writers of other cultures and races, and read about equally in fiction and nonfiction. While there are a few genres I don't care much for, I know I **don't** like them because *I've read them, too*.

Along with cereal boxes, back when I still ate cereal...

So what I like is not what "a romance reader" likes, or what "a fantasy reader" likes.

It's what "one oddball reader-junkie" likes — and what I write is going to primarily appeal to...

Take a guess here.

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- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
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- .

Yeah. Other oddball reader junkies.

And we are a small market.

I am the poster child for “Novelist Who Wandered Off the Reservation.”

I know what kind of writer I am. And I am that writer by choice.

I know a path out if I ever choose to take it. I could dissect one best-selling genre — say a clearly defined niche in romance, and boil down what I learned from reading it, and then only put elements included in that genre into my work.

I could then probably write some pretty decent novels in that one genre, designed to appeal to readers of that one genre, and by doing that, I might sell better and make more money than I make writing what I love.

But then I wouldn’t be writing what I love. I’d be putting myself inside a tight box, a writing corset with steel stays. And I would start feeling like I couldn’t breathe.

So I write what I want to read — and I appeal to a small audience of folks who are up for anything, who do not get offended by my use of either first or third person voice, or get confused by cross-genre elements or themes, and who appreciate the stories I tell because I’m willing to go into the wilds with my work.

I do NOT recommend duplicating what I do in this regard.

SO... What do I recommend?

That you write what YOU love.

If you end up doing what I'm doing because you have the same omnivorous reading habits and loves, at least you'll go in with your eyes open, knowing what you're doing and what it might cost you.

But if you have a narrow range of genres you prefer, or even just one, while I do recommend that you read outside them to find themes and elements that can give you richer stories to tell, I suggest that you read much more heavily in the broad genre(s) you love, and get to know the works of the major players as well as the boutique minors who have strong, devoted followings. That you take apart what they've done, see how they use voice, see how they use tone.

And that you then borrow the bits you love, and discard what you don't.

Learn the tools of voice and tone, and make them work for each story you write, adapting both to fit each story seamlessly, using them to bring to life worlds your readers can live in and characters they can love.

And find joy by creating *what matters to you*, by creating characters you care about and giving them conflicts you pull from your life and experience...

And give each novel the attention it needs so that you love what you've done once it's finished.

I cannot guarantee that you'll get either rich or famous. But I promise you'll have fun while you work. Most of the time.

We all have bad days. (And those are handy when you have to write a character who's having a bad day.)

Your Turn

STEP ONE: Select a recent scene in your novel (NOT your first scene). Determine first what voice it's currently in.

Using the SECTION TWO worksheets, ask yourself:

- What effect do I want this scene to have on the reader?
- What emotion do I want to create?
- What do I want the reader to experience?
- What do I want the reader to take away from this scene?

STEP TWO: List words in the existing scene that support the tone you're trying to create, and words that do not support this tone.

STEP THREE: In a separated document, rewrite the scene in a new voice — if it's in first, write it in third, if third, then write it in first. You can decide whether you want to write it close voice (including the character's thoughts and experiences of sensations like smells and tastes) or distant voice (giving only the character's words and actions). While rewriting, focus on removing the words that don't fit the tone you want to convey, and replacing them with words that do.

Don't read past this point until you've completed the exercises.

Using What You've Discovered

Voice and tone both get much easier with experience, IF you're aware of them while you're writing.

This lesson exists to help make you aware of them if you weren't already, and to show you some techniques for moving voice and tone to what you need them to be to fit your story as you're writing *from now on*, and *in your revision*.

However, even if while working through this lesson you discover that you were all over the place with voice and tone in your first chapters, and even if you love something you've discovered while doing this lesson, **DO NOT go back and change the voice or tone of what you've already written.**

Don't touch your existing first draft.

Just TC whatever you've discovered.

[TC- From beginning, change voice from first to third and clean up tone to fit scene moods]

If you want to write the rest of the novel in the voice and tone you like better, you can do that with this week's pages, and from here on out.

Everything you're doing now is fixable in revision, but only if you get to the end of the book.

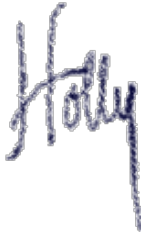
Next Week...

Next time, we'll be working with figuring out **What Happens Next** in the middle of your novel.

This is the writer's version of "How to get out of the desert alive when equipped with just a knife, a piece of string, and a hat. (Hint: Sometimes you're gonna have to eat snake.)"

But...

You can do this!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Holly". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Holly Lisle

Class Creator, *How to Write a Novel*