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Never Publish Your First Book and other rules I broke

I follow the rules. I'm a Chartered Professional Accountant and an INTJ (if you're familiar with Myers-Biggs typology). As long as the rule is logical, I'll make sure it's followed.

Writing doesn't have rules. There are conventions, expectations, tropes, and plenty of advice. New writers should pay attention to the collective wisdom of those who already tried things the hard way. "Never publish your first book" is one of those pieces of sage advice. Some of those who followed such advice heave a sigh of relief because looking back they'd "rather burn it" than publish it. Those who went ahead and published one of their "practice" novels now regret it.

But I'm going to publish the first novel I wrote. I have logical reasons for this transgression. I'm counting the 740,000 words in 21 stories I wrote and published free online as my practice stories. And I learned a lot writing and sharing them, as well as reading other beginner writers in our shared fandoms. And of course I've learned so much from my beta readers and critique partners, as much as in eight years of studying craft. So I'm feeling confident this manuscript is at least good enough.

Another rule I'm breaking is: don't mix genres. That bit of advice is less applicable these days and in fact readers (and publishers) look for mixed genres, although my cozy science fiction romantic fantasy might be a bit further off the beaten trail than the book world prefers. What bookstore shelf would you find this on? Hopefully I'll choose the right keywords to connect readers who like the stories I like with the books I write.

So at least two rules broken with one novel. To everything there is a season.

Publication news:

- Read my interview with Gill James about flash fiction "Juniper" on her blog

You can find links to all my published stories on my webpage including a link to the above blog post. Most magazines are available to read free online, the anthologies are for sale by the publishers. Please share them with your reader friends.

Happy Labour Day long weekend! I hope you're enjoying the long-awaited arrival of summer (it's another beach day) and thanks again for being with me on this journey!

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