

As the Author Learns

Bits & bites about publishing & writing from

J L Wilson

Author of mysteries, time travel, romances, & other books that defy categorizing

What's Happening?

We are in the Dog Days of summer and it isn't even summer! That officially starts next week. I'm so glad I've cut back on all the gardening I do. Otherwise I'm sure my efforts would get crisped by this heat. At least it gives me a good excuse to stay indoors and write, which is what I want to do anyway ☺

Since last I sent a newsletter, I finished my MacBeth book in record time, about six weeks. It truly did sort of write itself. As always, I finished the first draft, went through it and corrected some obvious gaffes, then I put it on the shelf and I'll review it later this year.

I keep a list that I call "Abused Words": words that I tend to overuse in a manuscript. The list shifts constantly, but there are a few I always repeat. In the first draft I tend to write the way we all speak, colloquially. So I might write "You've got to make up your mind."

But on a re-reading, that just doesn't read smoothly. I'll change it to "You need to make up your mind" or (better yet, depending on the context and who is speaking), "Make up your mind already!" That's one of the searches I do: look for the word 'got'.

That's just one example of the kind of re-write I do as I review my manuscripts. I search for obvious unnecessary words of direction (up, down, over, back, through). Then I look for action words like glance, turn, look, shrug. There are a few ways to phrase things that are correct but can be tightened ("came back" could be "returned", for example).

It seems like I find a new Favorite Word for every new manuscript and I have to check for that as well. In my MacBeth book it was "something" - as in, "It was a small knife, you know, like a dirk or something like that." I don't need that whole ending phrase. So I comb through the manuscript and start cutting.

I find I have to be in the right frame of mind to do this kind of editing. It's grindingly tedious but it's essential. And I also find that even though I take the time to do all that, my editor still finds repetitive phrasing. Sigh.

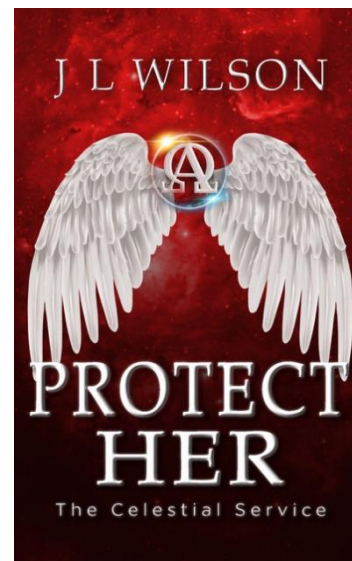
In Other News

I began preparing my big series for release, but I decided I'm going to postpone releasing the main series until next year. I discovered that there are things I still want to change. I've been working on this series for a long time, but two of the nine books need to be tweaked in a somewhat major way.

How did I discover this? It has been an enlightening experience for me. I uploaded my books to the publishing site I'm using (Draft2Digital) and prepared them as I would if I was going to release them as e-books. Then I downloaded the finished draft and transferred it to my iPad so I could review it, pretending it was a real e-book.

There were some glaring problems with two of the books. I have rewritten these books *so many times* that I think I lost track of how the reader will see the story. When I review it on my iPad, it's like I'm reading a book that someone else wrote. And I found myself jotting notes about character motivation and plot twists that seemed unnecessary or just plain odd.

So I've decided to put publishing on hold for a time. I will release the Celestial Service books this year. They're tie-in books to my main series but also standalone books. I've reviewed them and they're good to go. And I have final covers for them!



What's Next?

By the time I send my next newsletter, I hope to have *Save Her* released and will be finalizing files for *Help Her* and *Protect Her*. At some point this summer I want to start working with my cover person on the covers for the next nine books in the series. I also want to finish a rewrite of those two problem books, review the last six books for the series, and start thinking about covers for those trilogies.

I'll also have edits coming in for my Jane Eyre book releasing next year. It looks like I'll be busy this summer!