

Writing like a mad grasshopper

Warning: this contains spoilers for both TINKER books 1 & 2

Warning: this is a rough draft and might never appear in the published work, nor is it considered correct in grammar, spelling, or any other manner of polishing.

Warning: author will SMACK anyone that points out "errors" in a rough draft

Discussion:

Welcome to the way I write - something like a mad grasshopper. I hop all over the story, until I have a rough draft and then go back to fill in gaps and smooth it all over. One reason is I have trouble figuring what should be in a scene if I don't know where the novel is going, but I rarely can finish an 'advance' scene because what lead up to it isn't written. Thus I don't work so much on an entire novel, or a single scene, but zones of the novel. The set up of the novel might be five chapters, which I write all at the same time, hopping back and forth, weaving plot threads in and out. At some point, set up will be solid enough that I start drifting into the middle of the book, following out certain threads and then jumping back again.

For example, I might write chapter six, realize for chapter six to work I need to go back in add some thing - maybe a word, or sentence or maybe a complete scene - to support what is now happening in chapter six. Back I go, I insert it....but it changes something in chapter five...or maybe I couldn't do all the needed set up in three and need to add something to five. Understood? Stay with me boy!

By the way, I don't recommend this method to anyone. While it works for me, it's a slightly mad way of writing.

This brings up to Tinker Two.

I posted earlier the first little bit of the first scene. Cool. Good. But it leads to doing research in the valley. I can't write this part yet because frankly, I don't know what they NEED to find. It might be a dead animal that doesn't fit into the ecology of Elfhome or Earth and they assume it's from Onihida, only to discover it isn't. (This is likely, but I don't know what type of animal I want yet.) It's a big blank, and instead of fighting with it now and maybe needing to change it, I'm going to skip it.

Then there's a fight with an oni monster and the reintroduction of Riki. Nope, don't know what the monster is yet. Skip.

Okay, third scene I have plan is to set up "what the book is about." I've decided not to focus on building another gate - mostly - but instead of the lost colonist. As you might remember, Riki told Tinker that the oni assumed that the gate would lead to Onihida or Elfhome, but it went to neither. How do they know? Well, there's no spaceships or

puzzled colonist on either. So they went "someplace else." In book two, I'm exploring the 'someplace.'

This lead to all sorts of questions.

1. Why do the elves allow Tinker to mess with the area instead of trying to 'shut it down.'
2. How does Tinker discover that the colonists are on the other side of Turtle Creek?
3. Why does Tinker care about the strangers who are the colonists?
4. And most importantly, why the hell are the colonists in the Pittsburgh area of their new world instead of some tropical beach?

Well, the first was easy - simply saying that the breach stays open and starts to widen, with evidence that the oni are trying to manipulate the area to their own use is enough for the elves to get behind Tinker - eventually. I'll have lots of politics going on as they initially say 'nay' and then have circumstances change.

The second is tougher. Initially I was thinking messages in bottles, but this takes it back to the last question. Why are colonists on the other side, pitching in bottles?

The third question, ignoring the first two, lead me to 1) in book one Tinker states that she semi-knows the colonists via Lain and 2) Tinker doesn't know who her mother is, or 3) Tinker's mother is a colonist. Yeah, Tinker has reason to fight to save the colonists - somewhat. Mom is a stranger, so to tie it closer to home, I figure maybe Lain has family on the ships too.

But there's this nagging fourth question.

So I read through TINKER again, and rediscover that I set up the dreams to see the future. Wait, what if I say that Tinker dreams that the colonists are there, and then goes fishing, and they are there (answer to four) because they too have been dreaming. Suddenly, it hits me in a flash - Tinker's mom is Lain's sister. Windwolf indicated that the ability is linked to genetics -- why not say Tinker's family is gifted with the sight? That explains why Lain, Tinker and Tinker's mom all can have dreams - and Oilcan doesn't.

Immediately I know what the set up scene has to be. Attack of the monster leads to Tinker to be knocked unconscious and she dreams of her mother, who is dreaming of her. I want to keep the vision surreal and very dream-like, but I also want the alert reader go "Aha!" shortly before Tinker does. This is mind, I wrote the following...

Tinker fell a long time in darkness.

She found herself in an elfin forest, the ironwood towering around her, the world solemn as a cathedral.

Something white flickered through the shadows, brightness in humanoid form. Tinker moved forward, weaving through the trees.

A woman darted ahead of her, her clothes shining as if formed of fiber optics tapped to a searchlight -- brilliance weaving through the forest dimness. But the clothes changed as she disappeared and reappeared - first a fluid dress, then some type of white bulky overalls, and then back again.

It came to Tinker, knowledge seeping into her like oil into a rag, that she knew the woman and they were searching for something -- something that shouldn't be in a forest like this.

"We're looking in the wrong place." Tinker called.

The woman paused between the trees. She wore an elfin court dress, long sleeved, cut low, tight in the bodice with a skirt that flared out. It shimmered brighter than fairy silk; it nearly hurt to look at her. A red ribbon covered her eyes and trailed down the dress, blood red against the white. On the ground, the ribbon snaked out into the distance.

"You fell down the hole and through the looking glass." The woman cried back. "It's here! Look for the turtles!"

Yes, there should be turtles.

Tinker scanned the woods and saw dark figures flitting through the trees. Men or elves dressed in black capes with long-nosed masks. They kept to the shadows, calling "Lost! Lost!" in harsh voices. Hampered by the masks, they needed to tilt their heads this way and that to see the ground.

"Look!" Tinker reached out to catch hold of the woman, to warn her. "It isn't safe."

She missed, grabbing air.

The woman stepped backwards behind a tree, emerging from the other side wearing an ash gray overall with mission patches sewn to the shoulders. "Quick, we need to find it. We're running out of time."

Tinker stared at the name embroidered on the woman's overall but the letters all scrawled out of focus, refusing to be known.

I'm dreaming.

The woman caught her hand and they were flying low, like on a hoverbike, dodging trees, the ground covered with a checkerboard design of red and black. At a clearing, they stopped.

Statues of oni stood in circular clearing, moss growing on the stone, but their eyes flicked toward Tinker and the woman. Tinker saw that the ribbon coiled into the clearing and vanished into the ground. Feeling with blind fingers, the woman worked hand over hand, following the ribbon out into the clearing. The bare forest floor was black, and grew blacker still, until the woman was sheer white against void with a thread of red wrapped in her fingers.

"Wait!" Tinker whispered. "It's not safe. Don't go out there."

"If we don't find it, we'll stay lost forever." The woman continued to work her way along the thread, farther out into the void.

Tinker hovered at the edge of the clear. "I'm afraid."

"You have to help me find it!"

Tinker took hold of the thread and followed out into the darkness. Beyond the edge of the clearing, she started to float as if weightless.

"Don't let go," the woman warned. "Or you'll float away."

Tinker tried to grip tight to the red ribbon, but it was so thin that she kept losing track of it and developed the alarming habit of drifting nearly out of reach before finding it again.

At the center of the clearing the thread dove into ground.

Tinker, though, had lost hold again and starting to fall upwards. The woman caught hold of her, pulling her close and wrapped the red thread tight around her fingers, making a cat's cradle. "There, no matter what, we'll always be tied together."

Turning away, the woman pulled on the ribbon and pearls started to pop out of the ground, strung on the thread.

"It's a necklace." Tinker said. "A pearl necklace."

--- end --

The scene ends there because I don't know if I need more yet, so why bothering to polish out the end at this moment. I want to write the next scene where Windwolf is re-introduced and they talk about the fact that dreams can foretell the future. Later, once I figure out how Tinker figures all this out, I'll go back and insert/change/delete things to support her discoveries.