

Ack, ack, ack, eeeuww!

By Holly Lisle

Every once in a while, working your way through a revision, you'll notice that you've reused a phrase two or three times, or, if you really weren't careful, more. In **Gods Old and Dark**, I had six – count 'em, **six** – instances of 'sad smiles', which has to be a recent record for pounding a phrase into the ground.

Goddamn. This is the sort of thing that isn't so obvious when you're writing the book, because you're doing the writing over a period of months and individual words and phrases fade into the fog as you fight to come up with your next batch of pages. But when you're reading it, you start hoping for the horrific deaths of all these sad smilers.

Well, none remain. Not a single one. It's a boring image anyway. Ah, yes, the poor woman with her sad little smile, screaming 'pity me' from the slump of her shoulders to her big, woeful eyes. I did not take a flamethrower to the characters, though after about the third sad little smile I was ready. But I did replace all that pitifulness with better imagery and a bit more punch.

Thank God for revision.

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