

# Ohio 4: Big word count, weird scene – and now I'm in Chapter 5

By Holly Lisle

Urban fantasy is “where normal life and magic collide.”

Today's collision was big, fun, and above all, very strange.

I got 2339 words for the day (all new), and now have 15,906 total for the book, and did some heavy revision on the keeper scene I brought in yesterday.

I also deleted words, so I actually wrote more than what's showing.

BUT... I'm having a lot of fun with this scene, which is allowing me to bring in some creatures that are going to be both a blessing and a plague for my main character from now on.

*And a plague and a blessing for the town in which she lives.*

And... nah. I'm not going to give hints. But what I hoped would work is now working. And my scene tomorrow should be a lot of fun to write, too.

I'm going to leave it at that now, and go get my other stuff done. ☐

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# **Ohio 4: Net words while reworking and updating the moved text – 59 words net gain, 15,118 total**

By Holly Lisle

I've worked through a section of the cut-and-paste stuff I pulled in from Book 3 yesterday. I've written a lot of words. I've deleted a lot of words. I have a net gain of 59 words that does not reflect the amount of work I've done – but I already knew it wouldn't.

Tomorrow will probably be a lot like today, because I'll still be in this section, which is long, and which has a LOT of stuff that needs to be fixed and rethought, some stuff that needs to go, and some things that I'll need to make up from scratch.

Working through moved text doesn't have the fun to it of letting me be able to show my work.

But this was worth saving, I'm still getting there.

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## **Ohio 4: Friends, cannibals,**

**and 4,475 words (of 1250  
planned, plus how THAT  
happened)... and 15,118 total...**

By Holly Lisle

I wrote about 700 actual words today.

Following which, I benefitted by having vastly overwritten a big chunk of Ohio 3, in which I leapt ahead and did a ton of stuff that actually needed to wait until this book.

When I realized, back in Book 3, that I'd gotten ahead of myself, I set those words aside (counting their loss from Book 3 when I did so)... and today, got to add ONE piece of that word count back in.

I'm not sure that I'll be able keep them all – but today, I had fun with money.

With the concept of money, and the concept of trade, and with people who understand TRADE versus those who understand MONEY, and the very nasty complications that can occur when these two incompatible groups of people collide.

And I'll get to have some more fun with that tomorrow... and will probably end up a few words down rather than a few words up in the process, because the gigantic scene I'd pulled out of Book 3 is 4860 words long, and I'm positive that I got wordy.

But for today, I'm done, and moving on to other things on my list.



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**Got more of one scene than I wanted, but... 10,652 words total, and 1265 for the day.**

By Holly Lisle

Sometimes you write something knowing it's going to have to be edited down in revision – and today I ran long on a piece of my main character's past.

It was important, but I still have a pretty good idea that in revision, this is part of the book that will come out shorter.

But... got the words and while I'm running behind, now I have to get the other stuff.

# **When a house is not a home (and a READERS-ONLY request)... 1266 words, and 9439 total**

By Holly Lisle

I thought I knew what was going to happen today... and what happened did fit exactly inside my objectives for the scene, while at the same time turning everything I'd planned inside out and upside down on me and surprising me completely.

**And the cool twist of the day operated on the following writing principle:**

Always assume your characters are smarter than you, that they're not telling you the truth about the situations that they're in, and that when you think you have a thing figured out and are getting ready to reveal it, the character who was supposed to be shocked in the one who is going to say, "You thought THAT was the surprise? Oh, please... This is what's really going on."

I love that moment – it's pure Muse, it shows me how parts of my mind have been working outside of my assumption of what I think I'm doing, so that when it all comes together, I'm shocked. And delighted. And the pieces all still fit – just not the way I expected them to.

It happens to me a lot – and today, it was especially fun.

## A NOTE FOR URBAN FANTASY READERS ONLY

If you're interested in the way these stories are coming together, and you want to be in on the five-book/five-month launch when I finish them and take them live, you can sign up for my launch list here.

### Holly's "Not-Yet-Revealing-the-Pseudonym" Pre-Launch List

Once I have all five books done in first draft, I'll do the revision.

Of all five books.

At once.

This is what's technically known in fiction writing circles as a "a big pain in the ass" (seriously... that is a bona fide technical term) – but it's also the best way to make sure all five books connect deeply to each other, and the best way to get rid of weird "I changed my mind halfway through the series" continuity errors.

While I'm doing that, readers will start getting "urban fantasy girl" emails, where I'll be asking you some questions, and we'll be talking about urban fantasy in general, and mine in particular.

Once I have the revision done and have the books in Matt's hands (he's been my content editor for twenty-six years, and he's a great one), the folks on the pre-launch list will start being invited to discussions about cover art, series titles, characters you love and why... fun stuff that will at the same time help me figure out where in the Urban Fantasy landscape these books will fit (and that will let you figure out whether they're the kind of urban fantasy you like).

I'll be asking some questions, answering some questions, maybe

giving a few teasers, DEFINITELY giving away two free short stories for all launch participants... and once you're comfortable that these either are or aren't your kind of urban fantasy, I'll invite the folks who are pretty sure this is your kind of thing to pick up the actual novel. Five books. Five months. Absolute best prices on all of them during the launch.

Once again, **for urban fantasy fans only**, here's the sign-up form.

Holly's "Not-Yet-Revealing-the-Pseudonym" Pre-Launch List

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## **Today was fun ... 1344 words, 8,173 total**

By Holly Lisle

This morning, in spite of what felt like a hard start of my brain with its engine cold, once I got rolling, I flew.

The story took a turn that surprised me, even as it still took me right through the events I was planning. It just didn't present them to me in anything like the way I'd expected, and I didn't end up where I thought I would. I landed someplace better.

There are villains... and they escaped.

Good guys... and they were left empty handed.

And a discovery about the nature of a key player that I'm

looking forward to continuing tomorrow, and that I damn near couldn't even pull myself away from today, because I discovered something so cool about, of all things... the owner of a private library that's sitting in my MC's house. And I wanted to find out the rest.

But I set limits on how much I write each day for very good reasons.

So I have **big** fun waiting for me in my end-of-the-week words. And I can't wait for tomorrow to see what happens next.

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## **A spiffy surprise for my main character – 1263 words and 6832 total**

By Holly Lisle

Today was a day for a bit of family history for my main character. It follows a big adventure scene, and reveals to my MC stuff she did not know about her grandmother – big stuff that ties into not just her present but to her past all the way back when she was in fifth grade.

The writing was fun – and I actually got almost a third more words than I get to count, because I spent some of the time doing essential worldbuilding that will let me, in upcoming novels (and probably retrofitted into the earlier ones during revision) – work in some very cool shit about Grandma.

Grandma was much, much cooler than my protagonist ever realized – and she always thought the old lady was awesome.



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**Special houses (may I never visit one on a bad day)... 1321 words of 1250 needed, 5573 total.**

By Holly Lisle

Sometimes I scare myself.

I write words every day in a process where I give over a lot of control to my Right Brain Muse.

**Small but important note:** *Right-brain muses – parts of the brain that don't do much with words and spelling, but that do hold images and ideas and imagination – are theoretical, with the theory coming from studies done of people who had medically severed corpus callosa to stop intransigent seizures. It might very well be that with an unsevered corpus callosum, the brain is much more equitable in distributing its workload to both parts. I, however, like thinking of my left brain as the one that has the logic and reliably shows up for work every day whether we feel like it or not, while I like thinking that the right brain as the one infested with the nightmares and ghosts and really gruesome ideas for things to do to my poor characters that it finds disturbingly funny.*

Either way, there is a part of my brain that comes up with wicked plot twists, that scares me, that makes me laugh, and that makes me cry, even though all the stuff it's pitching at me is stuff it made up – stuff that never really happened – and I try to put that part in charge of the writing as much as possible.

This morning, this part stepped into the scene I'd planned, muttered "Oh, honey, that's not even close to the worst thing that could happen in this situation" – and went to town.

Today I was almost a spectator to the words that rolled onto the page at ridiculous speed.

Today I scared myself.

No idea how much of this scene will survive in revision, but when my mind decided the bad guys were not going to win this round, it gave me something that I can see visiting me in nightmares for some years to come.

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# **NEVER GO BACK – Ohio 4, Day 2. Epic chaos begins. 1271 words for the day, 2945 total**

By Holly Lisle

I'm making good progress.

I'm also making a mess – I tripped over part of the mess in the last section of Book 3 when grabbing details there to continue into Book 4, where I discovered that I had not cleaned up the ending of THREE quite as well as I remembered.

**This, however, is where process matters.**

The process for finishing a series on deadline when you have to do all five books at once so you can revised them together and release them in series order over five months is this:

**Save revision and tinkering until all five books are complete in first draft.**

That way, once you know how the series ends, you can go through all the previous books, bring them up to the current story as determined by the epic ending you discovered while NOT following your outline, and make all changes just once, rather than continually dropping back, tinkering, smoothing, and debugging every time you figure out something that is better to bring to the current novel.

**Here's the thing.**

If you don't set this rule, and then never succumb to the temptation to break it (just this once – HAH!), the better ideas YOU WILL HAVE in each book will constantly have you tinkering with all existing previous novels, just to keep everything updated and matching – and by always going back when critical bits of the story are constantly changing – you will become a slave to the “better idea”, and you will never manage to get all the way to the end.

**And** you will delete good shit that needs to stay – only you can't see it in the heat of “I need to fix this.”

Worse, every better idea dumps you into tinkering mode again. Over, and over, and over.

**There will always be a better idea** (including better ideas that turn out to be breathtakingly stupid, series-breaking nightmares).

There will always be a “reason” to go back and tinker with finished books.

I didn't. I won't.

All five books get finished in raw, buggy first draft first.

ONE BIG REVISION comes second.



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**Finished all thirty Book Four sentences... Will start Chapter 1 tomorrow.**

By Holly Lisle

So there it is.

I already know the outline is not perfect.

I already know that there are parts of it I will change as I write them, that there are places where I will have better ideas, that there are places where I will decide a scene I've outlined is stupid – and will change it – and then will decide that I was right the first time, and go back in and do what I planned...

But this is the process – for me, anyway.

This is how my brain works... and I can't even say it's the way it works BEST.

It's just the way I've figured out that allows me to write first drafts that are good enough to keep while I revise them

into the stories I wish I could have created right out of the gate.

I have something that has shape and form and that takes me from where I am to where I think I want to be, and that allows me the room to find better destinations (and the net to save the story when one of them turns out to be an imaginary bridge over a very real cliff).

Now I'll go through the rest of my list of things to do for today...

And tomorrow, I'll start on page one, word one of Ohio Book 4.

I'm excited. I always am.



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