

My MC is having some PTSD and a bit of existential horror today

By Holly Lisle

Discovering what you're capable of under extreme duress will do that to you... and she had the EXTREME duress of being mostly dead for about half an hour.

During which she did some things she can't explain...

And the ICU discovered some things about her that modern medicine, the doc, and the nurses can't explain.

FUN, FUN day today.

Also...

It's amazing how much you can have done by ten AM if you have ass in chair at seven.

I got 1345 words of my planned 1250 (and have also been keeping up with the slightly larger 1300+ Scrivener has been suggesting to help me hit my October 29th deadline).

The deadline isn't hard and fast – it's just in there to keep me focused. But even after I fell behind while having to do a big re-think, re-outline, and some re-writing, I'm pleased to find myself still heading toward hitting the finish date for Book 4.

After which, Book 5.

And the Hell Revision. 450,000-ish words of One-Pass Revision.

But the process is working, and day to day, it's fun.

Something bad is watching.

And I'm flying toward it through lovely little neighborhoods of fifties Mid-Century Modern homes and sixties bungalows, moving down sidewalks that hold back carefully manicured lawns and 19th Century mansions shaded by centuries-old oaks...

Down to the places in the town that have been around not just for a couple centuries... but for eons.

God, I love this world.

1435 words, and 44,430 total. Really fine day all the way around.

Want to be invited to the launch when these books go live?
Join the invitation list.

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Oh, today was GOOD... main character in deep soup, her dear friend in deadly danger...

By Holly Lisle

First, though, the words – 1393 out of my 1250 words-per-day objective. 40,171 total. At 45,000, I'll pass the halfway mark on Book Four.

But... oh, boy. I hated having to stop for the day. There's such incredibly bad stuff happening, and this guy my main character loves so much is in horrible trouble.

Today was about big, bad things coming at my MC... and about her knowing they were coming, and getting ready to walk out to face them unarmed to save a dear friend...

And about how being someone who shows up when others need help can sometimes pay off when YOU need help...

And it went well.

To say the least.

I was up at at the desk just after seven AM, and now, just after ten AM, I discovered that I wrote 2555 words (way more than my 1250-word/day objective), and I now have 38,865 total written on Book 4, and I love the way this novel is coming together.

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**Today, 1983 words and a scene
WAY out of order... (and
yesterday...)**

By Holly Lisle

Ran out of time to blog yesterday – so this is going to have to cover both days.

I got 912 words yesterday, and did some more worldbuilding. It was an important day because I figured out the big element in an upcoming scene –

And TODAY wrote that great scene, forgetting that it was going to have to be the big MID-NOVEL conflict scene.

So after writing the majority of that scene today, which I love, by the way, I moved it to Chapter 17.

And tomorrow, I will write the scene in Chapter 7 that I should have written today.

Good words. Wrong place. It happens. With modern word processing (as opposed to the manual typewriter I used when I was getting started) it's no big deal.

Cut and Paste is AWESOME.



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Down into the DEEP dark... Outline 4 completely redone.

By Holly Lisle

After the weekend break, I came in this morning to a blank outline for Ohio 4, and no idea what was going to go in there... except that it had to be big.

I suspect, however, that while I was playing a lot of No Man's Sky and having fun in my new solar system with three suns discovering alien lifeforms and building a new base, my subconscious mind was tinkering around with the problems I have with the current Book 4.

Because today, I sat down, and thirty line-for-scene sentences leapt from my fingers to the document in just under two hours.

And they answer my questions. They retrofit the shock I had last weekend into what already exists so seamlessly that books One through Three can stay just as they are...

(WELL, they're first draft, so I'm still going to have to revise and debug, but this massive revelation doesn't mess up anything in them)...

And I have my Book Four ending.

And I have the conflict for Book Five that is so compelling, and scary, and kind of heartbreaking, that I can't wait to write it.

THIS is what taking down-time – walking away from the story for a while, doing things that are not thinking about the book, and just letting things bake – does for me.

I can never look at writing fiction as neat, or orderly, or simple. I can never think it's easy, even after all these years.

I can never think that I know, absolutely and confidently, where the story is going, or that as I'm writing, I'm writing the best story or the best ending.

I can, however, know that I have a process to get to the best ending.

It's messy. It's a lot of work.

But, holy crap, does it ever manage to surprise me in the best possible ways.

So... that was today.

Tomorrow, (even though I know I'll be changing things all the way to the end of Book 4), I have to do a new 30-scene line-for-scene outline for Ohio 5.

I already know I won't use some of it. Maybe most of it.

But just as I cannot hit a target I cannot see, so I can't make a better target for the final book unless I can see the target that's already there.

Today changed everything. So tomorrow, I build the new final target that, while I'm writing Book 5, I will try to beat.



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“No plan survives first contact with the enemy...”

By Holly Lisle

Or second contact...

Or third...

The quote may come from Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, or Carl von Clausewitz, or Dwight D. Eisenhower... or just some dude who knew shit.

But it's true – and it isn't just true about war.

It's true about any sort of creation that requires spontaneous adaptation to unknowable but expected change. Like writing fiction.

I outline while knowing the nature of outlining, which is this –

The thing fictional characters do when presented with a story

plan is to act around the plan – to do something that will beat the plan. Fictional heroes and villains alike invariably act like real human beings. That is, they work to improve their own odds of success inside the story, and by doing so, they invariably shift the odds in their favor, and invariably surprise me.

These surprises are good for the story – if they surprise me, they will surprise the reader.

They're just such a pain in the ass... because my heroes AND my villains keep blowing up my nice, neat, carefully plotted outline.

But anyway, that's where I am today – several hours into my workday, having to stop to re-plot the next few scenes of my outline to maintain the structure of the story I'm building so that I can keep the cool shit one of the little jerks just did.



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Three steps forward, two steps back: Ohio 4, Chapter 7... and done, I think, with stuff brought forward from Ohio 3

By Holly Lisle

I am, much to my delight, just about out of the stuff I saved from Ohio 3 to use in Ohio 4. It's good stuff, and reworking it so that it fits the current worldbuilding is interesting, and fun...

...But constantly ripping out old words as I insert the better new ones is not my favorite process.

First draft is – for me – about hitting my stride and telling the story the first time... meeting fresh new situations and seeing how they turn out.

And for the last week-ish, I have not been getting to do pure first draft. I've been doing "saving of stuff I wrote into the wrong book the first time." Which is practical... but kind of a pain in the ass.

In the screenshot below, I have the first three chapters of Ohio 4 – all new material. Then PRE-A through PRE-D – all stuff that I just dragged out of Ohio 3 into this manuscript. Then chapters four through 7.

OHIO-4

- ☰ Title Page
- ☰ Copyright
- ☰ Dedication
- ☰ Story Summ...
- ☰ Chapter -1
- ☰ Chapter -2
- ☰ Chapter -3
- ☰ PRE- A
- ☰ PRE- B
- ☰ PRE-C
- ☰ PRE-D
- ☰ Chapter -4
- ☰ Chapter -5
- ☰ Chapter -6
- ☰ Chapter -7

As of today, I've used everything I'm going to from PRE-A-
PRE-C now. And just skimming through D before I wrote this, I
think I can let that stuff go into the trash. None of it
counts as words unless I move it into an actual chapter, so
just dumping it won't affect word count.

If I do that, tomorrow I'll start in with brand new words... and
I'll get to start running again.

For today, I have a net gain of 332 words, and a total of
29,070.

Oh, yeah. And writers who have more series-marketing chops than I do have suggested that I not completely discount Urban Fantasy in favor of Contemporary Fantasy just yet. From my descriptions, some have noted that it sounds like it could fit in with the older and broader definition of Urban Fantasy that started with Charles deLint and Peter S. Beagle...

So I'm going to hang fire on any hard classifications of this until the whole five-book series is done and revised.

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Bending space-time, dealing with elf shot, and 1344 words today.

By Holly Lisle

I'm now, much to my surprise, Ohio 4 is at 28,400 words. After the unwelcome but necessary "not writing" work yesterday, today was fun and exciting, and I got to know a lot more about my newest folks in the series.

I had to do a bit of retrofitting on some of what I got on Tuesday – that day off to deal with other things did give me a bit of perspective when I went in and started to work.

And my MC's best friend is still in trouble.

But now, on to the other stuff on today's list.

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Ohio-Novel Monday: Still working through the rewrite of the stuff I saved last Friday

By Holly Lisle

I did a lot of words. Pulled stuff out, put stuff in, and at the end of it, I don't have 1250 words to show for my time, but when you're fixing and tinkering and replacing chunks of text, that's the way it goes.

I like this section. I love the characters, I love the conflict, I love the *weirdness* of it.

But in first draft, I really prefer writing new words to rescuing old ones from a previous book.

The count for the day? 549 net words, and 24,791 total.

However, this does mean that I am now significantly past the the 25% mark on the book.

Onward!



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