

HUGE story win: Price? 2000+ words words cut today, net gain of 670 today, and 3267 to delete tomorrow...

By Holly Lisle

Today went really well from the story perspective.

From the wordcount perspective, not so much.

I deleted a ton of words back in chapter six, wrote a ton of new words in that chapter, and came up with a net gain of 670 words.

Tomorrow is going to be tougher, because tomorrow I'm going to end up deleting almost 3,267 words... though with luck, I'll end up being able to save the sentence at the end of that entire chapter...

And kids in school these days are probably a lot less likely to spread rumors that your mom or grandmother barbecued your father and served him to neighbors on the 4th of July.

150% 3,267 words

“And kids in school these days are probably a lot less likely to spread rumors that your mom or grandmother barbecued your father and served him to neighbors on the 4th of July.”

I like that line. I need to keep it. My character lived it.

Meanwhile, my difficult today and tougher tomorrow are brought to me by this single writing truth:

There is always a good idea.

There is always a better idea.

And there is always the right idea.

And today, I uncovered the right idea – the one that pulled all the keepable stuff in the book together. I lost a couple thousand words today.

I replaced them with the right words.

I'll lose several thousand tomorrow.

I'll replace them with the right words.

And in doing so, I will bring my MC's past to life for myself and my readers, increase the stakes she faces for the entire series of novels, introduce a truth about an upcoming essential character while hiding that truth in plain sight, and, if I'm lucky, scare the socks off my future readers while at the same time making them laugh.

It is for such days as this that writers live.



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Apparent betrayal leading to epic upcoming battle... and 1372 words

By Holly Lisle

Turns out, for my MC, the solution to her problem isn't going to be what you ask, or how you ask it. It's going to be who you ask.

And for me, the resolution for this comes from having my hero walk forward down a path that almost promises to get her killed, and seems to be a betrayal of everything she believes in...

But that isn't.

I'm so excited I'm almost jumping up and down.

Tomorrow's words are gonna be one helluva twisty twist.

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Down to the Closing Stretch – 1473 words today – and gonna run over 90,000 (but not, I hope, by much)

By Holly Lisle

God, stuff clicked today. Pieces from earlier chapters told me why they were there, my MC came up with this great solution to a big problem that introduced her to some big secrets her dead grandmother's lawyer has been conveniently failing to mention...

And I know my ending.

It's going to be big. Messy. Fun.

And it's going to need more words than I have left to land exactly on 90,000... but I'm okay with that. The extra is going to be SO worth it!

And I'm sitting here writing about a snowy February day (planned several months ago when I started writing this book) while watching a snowy February day outside my window.

How cool is that?

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First the time, then the weather. THEN the words.

By Holly Lisle

THE TIME

This morning, I dreamed a digital clock, which showed me 7:31.

I woke up. Immediately checked the time. It was actually 7:41.

My brain is ten minutes slow...dammit.

Anybody still have your copy of *The Brand New Human's User Manual*? If you do, could you give me the steps for resetting my brain clock? At least my software has updated to the digital clock, but I'm pretty sure my manual got lost in a move.

THE WEATHER

Right now, outside it's 16°. According to my weather app, we're not going to go above freezing for the rest of the week. The last time I saw weather like this, I was nine years old; I lived in Alaska, three miles upriver from Kwethluk, in an enormous 3-story log-cabin boys' dorm where my folks were dorm parents; and we heated the place with wood, which my father and the bigger boys in the dorm went outside and cut.

The entire compound had been, I suspect, a cold-war US listening post – though nobody tells nine-year-old girls this sort of thing. You have to piece that stuff together by yourself from context.

The compound still had a flag on one of the walls, though, that said Nunipistinguk – which in the local Yu'piks' dialect probably meant “Those Dummies Built a Basement in Tundra.”

(Every time the river rose over the banks – which was a recurring spring-thaw event – the basement flooded.)

(As a longish aside, because my one-room, five-grade school up in the boys' dorm attic, was in English and the kids there were all learning English, the only thing I ever learned to say in the local dialect was “I want another cup of coffee.”

The spelling is wrong, but I learned it phonetically. It sounded like “jolly goofamick gootooden.” I was nine back then, and nobody sane would have let me near coffee. (Votes are still out on whether someone wound as tight as I am should be drinking it even now.) So I never got to try the request out in real life.

(If you know any Yu'piks, ask if that's what it actually means. If it's profanity someone thought it was funny to teach a kid, I apologize. I much prefer to make my profanity intentional.)

Oh. And I still remember the word *gussak*. Which, as the nine-year-old outsider, I got called a lot by the other kids. It's derogatory. It derives from the word Cossack.

Anyway, the extreme low temperatures we're moving into in the north and east, if they hold, will be the most extended period of deep cold I've experienced since Alaska – so if you're up in the Big Purple Belt of coming freezing temperatures, here's some useful information I learned when I lived on tundra.

The coldest temperature I ever experienced was in Alaska, and it was -81°. Not a typo. (This was in either the winter of 1969 or the winter of 1970 – probably '70).

The military guys – who I assume built and operated the place

before the US military decommissioned the site and sold it to the Moravians – had an Arctic thermometer outside the window of what was, to me, the boys' dorm-parents' suite (probably officers' quarters) which was situated on the floor beneath the boys dorm (certainly barracks). Anyway, I wanted to go outside to play, in spite of having seen the temperature.

So my dad walked me over to the door, opened it, threw the contents of a cup of hot coffee he'd been drinking over the steps down to the boardwalk – and the liquid exploded with a crack like a shotgun, and turned into brown snow.

What I Learned: Things made out of mostly water don't go outside in weather like that. Since a lot of us are about to have weather like that... be careful out there. Fingers, toes, and noses don't grow back.

THE WORDS

Today, my fingers flew. I got 1,386 words – significantly over my must-hit objective of 1,111. And I found out something so very, very cool about what caused the invisible car. It wasn't something I'd planned, it wasn't something I'd even imagined, but when the words started rolling, it just rolled out, and it gave me another scary thing to drop into my little Ohio town.

Also, I'm creeping toward identifying a character who's going to be very important in Book 3. I've known all along who he really is, but it's one of those things that I'm dripping into the stories a bit at time. And today, I discovered something new about him.

Excellent Monday, and I'm very happy with the results.

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I knew today was going to be rough. Deleted a couple thousand words. Net gain – 604 words (79,997 total)

By Holly Lisle

So... yeah. I wrote hard. I love what I got.

And I love it because Matt and I did a long live-brainstorming session last night, and he and I worked out a helluva better way to go with the story.

I deleted a lot more than I'd expected, though – some of it in places half a dozen chapters back.

So very worth it, however. Today's book is MUCH better than yesterday's book.

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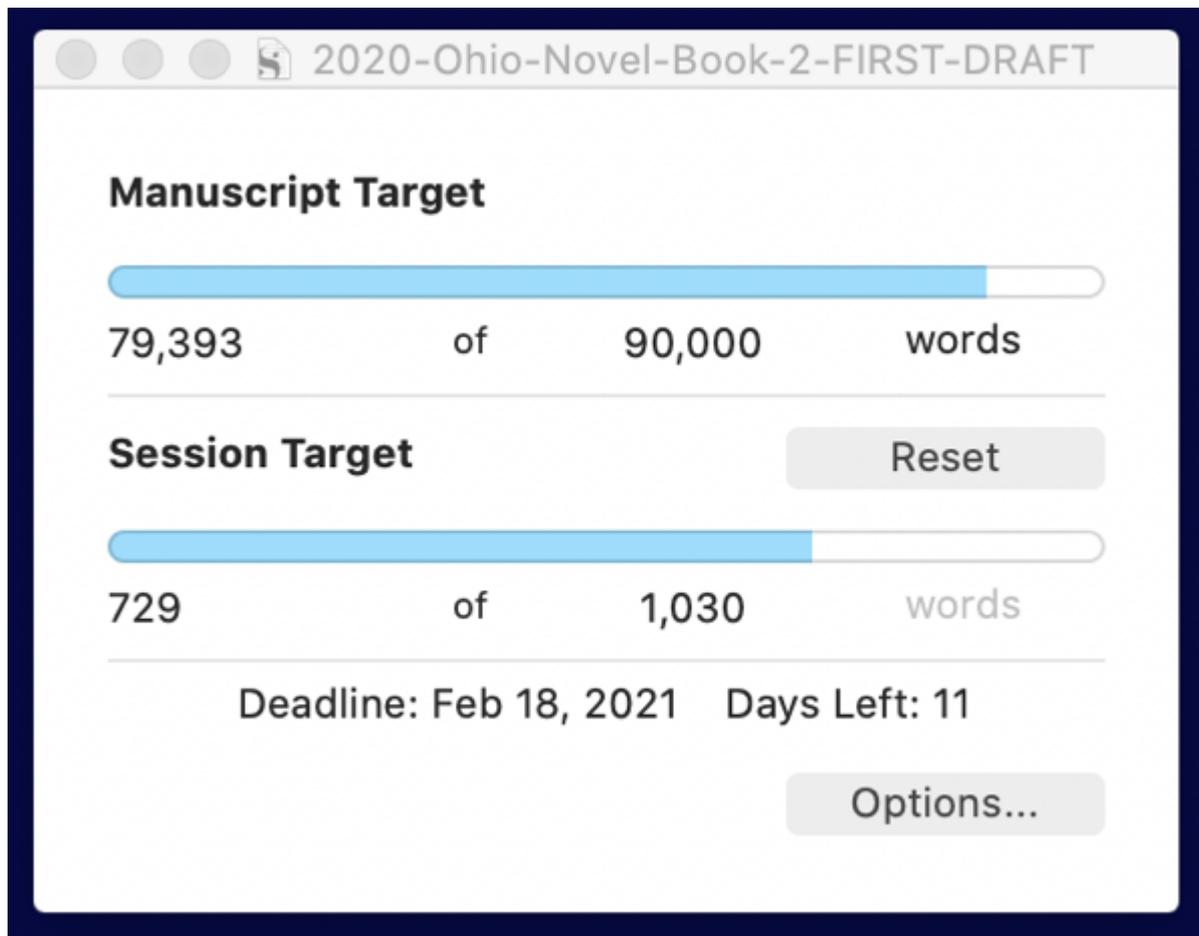
Yesterday and Today: Two days of writing because I ran out of blogging time yesterday.

By Holly Lisle

Yesterday was great. I got 1417 words, and read through them this morning while getting into the story, and they can all stay.

Yesterday counts as a GOOD day.

Today? ... Not so much.



Today, I took Bugs Bunny's "wrong turn in Albuquerque" and wrote a significant chunk of fiction that I realized just a couple minutes ago would have broken my world.

Yeah. The whole world, the characters, the stakes, the feel of the future books in the series – it was a bad, bad break.

So I'm wrapping up for the day, giving my brain time off, coming in tomorrow and deleting most of what I accomplished today... and then taking a second run at "what happened after she hit him with her car?"

With *she* being one of my primary series villains, and *he* being – to the reader, at least, a complete unknown.

Tomorrow, I have to come up with something completely different.

Because it's entirely possible to think, "oh, this will be so cool"... and run with it... and then realize the price you'd pay

for that few minutes of *cool* is the creation of a series of books you don't want to write.

Just glad I caught it before I'd run farther with it.

So tomorrow I'll start with -729 words, and try to get 1250 total for the day in spite of that.

If I don't make it, I'll do my best.

This is the job. Some days it's harder than others.

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Can't brag -2328 words, but a lot will disappear tomorrow

By Holly Lisle

I wrote about new 1200 words today, and then put in a saved scene from my discarded first draft. It's a great scene, but a lot of what it related to in the first draft has changed. So tomorrow, I'm going to have to go through and cut a bunch of the cut-and-paste stuff to fit the new direction.

And tomorrow my MC (who has by this point been alternately

chased, chomped, haunted, and once even digested), for the first time comes face to face with her BIG enemy.

She's going to realize she's in trouble.

So while I won't end up with negative words, I'm not going to show a lot of progress from today.

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Wrote a song for Ohio Novel #2 today – 1024 words and out of time

By Holly Lisle

I came in a bit short on the word count today, but working my way through the creation of lyrics for a Celtic Rock Band and having the lyrics include an essential clue my main character has to figure out in order to bring a new kind of help to one of her allies took some time and the peculiar kind of hard work that writing to a rhyme scheme and meter always includes.

I love what I got.

And today I got to work in a bit of stuff that introduces a character who's going to be important in Book 3 (and beyond.)

I also managed to bring back to life a writing class that has been unavailable for about two years. It's a nine-week free class – The Beginning Writer's Working Tour.

I know I have some writers following this blog, too, so this is for you guys. This particular free class focuses on one essential fiction skill each week for nine weeks, and serves as a nice introduction to writing better fiction. As well as a way to ease back into writing fiction if you've been away for a while, or stalled, or blocked.

And with that, I'm done for today. ☐

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Long, Hard Day – BUT... Replotting and WORDS accomplished – 1488 Words, (73,883 TOTAL)

By Holly Lisle

Today I realized that I'd planned and outlined more than I can fit into 90,000 words.

I figured out my number of chapters, figured out that I'm averaging 3000 words per chapter, and had to remove about five segments of story from my existing outline – and now will finish the book in just five more chapters, one of which I wrote a lot of today.

Which meant re-outlining the ending. I'm not doing any cliffhangers in this series. Every single story has to stand on its own, in spite of also holding down a big piece of the action of a whole MUCH larger story that will take place over five books.

But I did the re-outline, tightened up a lot of the action, and replotted the ending.

And discovered that by doing this, I'm gonna have a LOT of fun doing the rest of these chapters.

Hope you have a wonderful weekend. I plan to.

And I'll be leaping back into the novel fray with delight and enthusiasm next Monday.

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Trauma, memory, and my main character – 1283 words

By Holly Lisle

I got some of my favorite words in the series this morning. (1283 of them, in fact.)

My MC (main character) had a BAD morning a couple chapters back, and finally made it back home in this chapter – worse for wear, but not as much so as one would have reason to expect.

She's discovered – as a lot of us do – that there are things she left in her past that haven't quite finished with her.

She'd discovered – as a lot of us do – that she isn't exactly the person she believed herself to be, and as memories catch up with her, she's realizing that she might not have as much reason to like herself as she thought she did.

Like everyone, she has some monsters in her closet.

Hers just have bigger, pointier teeth than yours or mine.

And at one point way back in her past, one of those monsters might have been her.

And I got to pull in some bits from my own experience on dealing with trauma, and how it catches up with you even years after the fact and shakes you when you're vulnerable and unprepared.

She's tough, my MC.

She'd better be. Because I know what's coming down the road for her over the next couple days of writing, and she doesn't.

Oh, yes. Because some of my characters tend to eat the way I'm eating at the time, she's making good use of keto. (Except for the cookies.)

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