

# A monster, ice cream... and a Scrivener compile error. 1402 words today, and 88,431 words

By Holly Lisle

First, the compile error, because for a while, I thought I wasn't going to have any way to show my wordcount for the day.

There are things you have to remember to do when using Scrivener that must be taken care of the moment you do them.

Adding a new chapter file, for example, requires that you then go into your COMPILE section of the program and check the box noting that the chapter is to be compiled. Unchecked files are what keep all your background notes, worldbuilding crap, and other stuff that isn't going to show up in the actual novel from being counted in your word count. Most days, because I'm worldbuilding as I go, I have a fair number of words that DON'T get counted because they aren't actually part of the story.

If, however, you forget to check the box for something that is to be in the book itself, you lose your daily wordcount from showing up in your nifty little tracker, and while – when you do suddenly realize that you've written a helluva lot of words without moving the bar one bit, and you go in and check the COMPILE box – you have fixed the problem, and the NEXT words you write will show up in the progress tracker (and your manuscript print-out), your daily words to that point will NOT show up in the tracker.

So I had to highlight today's words from each of two chapters, and then copy the screenshots of today's INTERREGNUM and MONSTERY words to figure out when I was done.

1041 new words in INTERREGNUM.

361 new words in MONSTERITY.

- ☰ Chapter -19
- ☰ Chapter -20
- ☰ Chapter -21
- ☰ INTERREGNUM
- ☰ MONSTERITY
- ☰ Chapter -22
- ☰ Chapter -23
- ☰ Chapter -24

Which are named rather than numbered, because I'm tired of renumbering chapters. When I have the thing done in first draft, then I'll go back and renumber everything.

But I love what I got. I'm finally bringing together two people who met in the very early part of Book 1, because a big secret has finally come out.

Good writing day, in spite of my lapse in checking the right boxes BEFORE I started writing.



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**So... today was This Ain't Tolkien Day in my life, with delightful bad influences, 1257 words & 77,118 words total**

By Holly Lisle

I hate sleeping in. Seriously. I ended up today starting late, being more than an hour behind before I even started, and I had a bunch of non-writing stuff to do today along with everything else. THAT's still waiting for me.

However, words first.

I got 1257 of them, and *oh, MAN, do I love what I got*. I'm bringing some new folks into my character's world, and they are the antithesis of characters you'd find in J.R.R. Tolkien's world.

Which is as it should be. Much of what you learn from reading fiction both broadly and deeply is how other folks have written specific things, and why they wrote it that way, so that you can do it *differently while having damned good reasons for doing it differently.*

There was some light worldbuilding in today's work, and will be a bit more in tomorrow's.

Worldbuilding. And cookies.

And some wicked little creatures who are going to be such fun to write. I was chuckling evilly while I thought them up this morning. And am already eager for tomorrow, so that I can bring them in and start them on their path of chaos, havoc, mayhem, and fun.



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**The combat accountant arrives. The hero wanders, lost. And a monster speaks. 1333 words today, 67,484 total.**

By Holly Lisle

I'm now reworking every damn plot sentence, writing new ones before I get my words each day.

The series is gathering its own momentum, stripping off bits of "pretty" and "fancy" that I thought would have a place, and getting sharper and edgier as I go.

Lots of magic – but that is cleaner, simpler, and more straightforward than what I'd imagined and initially built.

The villains are gaining power.

The heroes are feeling overwhelmed.

And while the series isn't unfolding exactly as I'd planned, when the villains are gaining power in the middle book, and the heroes are feeling overwhelmed, *things are in fact going the way they need to.*

And today, my MC finally visits her accountant. She'll meet him on Monday – today she just made it past the secretary.

Monday, I think, is gonna be a LOT of fun.

\* \* \*

## A bit of extra for readers who like sneak peeks

I've argued with myself about including this in the blog:

It's a bit of worldbuilding that I did that probably won't end up in the book. As written, anyway.

I was working out the details of an important secondary character. The character is already there. Has been in the story all along, but invisible. Makes an appearance in Book Two, but not physically. It's... complicated.

But I was trying to understand this character, and because the paper was handy and I knew I wouldn't lose it, I started worldbuilding in my daily dot journal, and right in the middle of explaining what I needed to in upcoming scenes, the secondary character's voice showed up.

### As follows:

*Stand you then on this fair ground and call forth hell?  
You do not know hell as I do. I am its beast,  
And it has burned my flesh and ground my bones –  
Devoured me, left nothing back but rage.*

*I know you, bitch – you pup of coward curs!  
I've seen that face across a thousand years  
And heard time and again your snivelling welp  
With tail tucked 'tween your legs...  
And now I'm here.*

*I know your shabby soul, and I have come at last  
To eat you whole, and cleanse us of your reek.*

This is raw first draft, it doesn't rhyme, and when I look at it, it's simply a weird mood piece... and as I said, it probably won't be in the book. At least not as poetry – and why the damn monster spoke to me in iambic pentameter I cannot even begin to guess. My mind runs in iambic pentameter on occasion, but again... I don't know why.

Anyway, I've already written this character into the story back in book two, I think – where I met it in terrible and terrifying circumstances.

And now it's pushing to come back.



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**Great Ohio words (1264) and  
Summer of Writing Fiction  
2021 goes live today! S0FW**

# DAY 1

By Holly Lisle

Last week, the story hit some pretty rocky shoals, and I had to do a lot of backing and filling.

Today... none of that. The backing and filling left me in a really good spot, and I found my characters and the conflict today the second I sat down, did a scene that started in a direct and practical fashion, and then had the joy of watching it gain momentum on me, at the end turning into something sort of poetical and beautiful.

And because my older son was trying to stay awake while driving home, I read him what I'd written, and he loved the parts of it that had gone poetical. (No actual poetry – just a nice metaphor spun out in a conversation between two women about hope, and the future, and the people you might someday meet.)

1280 words for the day, 63,455 words in Book Three, and...

## **Day One of *Summer of Fiction* Writing 2021**

For writers, the SOFW 2021 event starts at [HollysWritingClasses.com](https://HollysWritingClasses.com) today. It's a free event and free membership), and if you write fiction (or would like to), you're invited. Full details are available at the site linked in the header above and in the first line.

I'm already playing, as are a lot of other folks – a lot of other writers are also joining in. And I'll just state here that the event will fit itself around any writing you're already doing – you don't have to start a new project, or write a whole novel over the three months, or fit a schedule

set by anyone else.

My objectives, just to give you an idea, are to write five days per week, hit 1250 words per day, and come out the other end with about 75,000 words of first draft (which will have me finishing up Book 3 and starting Book 4).

In other words, doing exactly what I was already doing, but posting progress, encouraging other players, and answering questions other writers might have during the event.

I've provided a ton of free resources (and a bunch of paid ones if you already know you want to write fiction for a living and want to use the summer to get serious about that).

But mostly, this is a bunch of writers encouraging each other, hitting their goals, and then hanging out and talking shop, and having a really good time. I hope you'll come hang out, too.

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# **The Gray Room: 1462 words, and 57,533 total**

By Holly Lisle

Today was a pretty good Friday.

I wandered around in the weeds a bit there at the start, trying to get to the center of today's scene, and Monday I'll have to do a bit of clean-up.

But I have now established the ongoing pursuit of a mystery I

introduced in Book One, and I have the MC gearing up next Monday to dig down into what really happened way back on the day that changed her life forever.

And I'm about to introduce the last member of my MC's support team – this one tucked away because the first of her critical helpers is a bit of a weasel, in spite of being on her side.

I'm looking forward to the weekend down time, and to letting the next bit of what's coming perk in the back of my mind.

Hope you have a great weekend.



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# **Life, and hell and what it isn't, and the one Rule of Thumb... 1358 words today, 51,684 total.**

By Holly Lisle

I came up today with a good working definition of what Hell isn't... and got my characters all the way out of the mess I left them in last week by going through... well, that... (though of course with the seeds of the bigger mess already coming at them because of having lived through last week's mess).

And I also got all my other stuff on the list done, in spite of having ignored "words first" today.

The outline I built for this book is exactly like the outline I built for the first two, in that I am only using it as a wall off of which to bounce better ideas.

As such, it's a pretty good wall, because every single time, I look at what I'd planned for the scene, and my mind shows me the "something better" that still fits inside the structure, but that is unexpected, and darker or funnier or sometimes both.

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# Homecoming, and a breather before stuff gets worse – 1446 words and 50,326 total.

By Holly Lisle

Yesterday, I made myself cry while I was writing, and today I picked up from where I left off, and dammit, made myself cry again.

It's happy stuff, but about real things long lost, long gone, irretrievable now...

And while I can feel the joy my characters are experiencing in this brief respite before things get bad again, and then get really bad (because I could imagine what it would have been like to be my main character) I never got to experience the couple of beautiful moments she got to live through today.

Life is made of soft warm spaces that buffer over and occasionally soften the inescapable sharp points tucked away beneath.

Today, I got to focus on the soft warm spaces, and I'm glad I did.

Tomorrow, it's back to the pointy bits.



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# **My poor, poor characters! 1673 words, one scene that had my gut in knots... and a small and lovely win**

By Holly Lisle

I was up early, which helped. Six AM gives you a bunch of extra day to work with.

But while I didn't know what I was going to write this morning when I came in and sat down, I knew what the writing had to do.

And all I can say is that I pity the characters who show up out of my subconscious mind when I'm holding auditions for roles in novels.

Such awful, scary, *scarry* things happen to them.

This was the day where scars were born.

And this was the day when a couple of my key characters were hoping that they could hide in the closet where I wouldn't find them so they didn't have to show up for work.

But they walked into the page (grudgingly and trudging) and embraced their roles (while calling me by some impressively bad names)... and my hands flew. This was the Bad Things Happen, Bad Things Get Worse, And THEN... part of the book.

Second half of the midpoint for the novel, and for the series, AND for the character.

It will get worse for her, of course. Still two and a half more books to go, and the darkest darkness comes in book five.

But today was where my MC had to prove that she CAN do what she believes she cannot do, because without this moment, without this action, she would never have a chance of getting anything that she loves through to the end.

She knows she is and has always been simply the wrong kind of person to do what has to be done – except she also knows that she's it. The one person. The one chance. If she doesn't do what has to be done, there isn't anyone else...

And while I was mentally gearing myself up to write this, having absolutely no clue what was going to happen today – only knowing why it had to happen... the still small voice of my Muse whispered, "We haven't heard from Sam in a while..."

And the click that followed was a piece of my own childhood ripping itself out of my earliest memory and throwing itself onto the page, fitting disaster with survival, fitting monsters with home, holding my main character up and keeping her focused and resolute during an unarmed walk through an inescapable and unthinkable hell.

Today was a very, VERY good writing day.



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**I DID IT! I passed both the novel and the series midpoint!**

By Holly Lisle

Passed the halfway point today with 1350 words, and 45,819 total. And I LOVE the words I got.

And as is fitting, the trouble I put my character into got worse – much worse – today.

And while I don't know yet exactly what I'm going to do tomorrow, I do know my main character's situation is not going to improve.

I wave in front of the the words “raw maw”... and let you chew on that image for a bit.

I got a late start, but when I got rolling, the words flew, and the minor character I’ve used before, who stepped through to help her this morning, broke my heart just a little bit.

He’s never gonna big a major player – but he’s a sweet, sweet guy, despite all appearances.



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# **Definition of a GREAT writing**

# day... [wicked glee below] 1644 words, and 44,469 total

By Holly Lisle

Today was... awesome. *Wickedly* awesome.

But before I get to that, I'm going to note that I'm 531 words away from hitting the NOVEL mid-point and the SERIES midpoint.

With that said, here is where I am right now.

I was tempted to run even longer than I did, but I left myself at an absolutely perfect spot to pick this up tomorrow, and here's why.

When I stopped writing this morning:

My main character is about to step into terrible danger to save someone important to her.

She is weaponless, helpless, and going into a situation in which the person she is trying to save is going to be fighting her (for a good, but also for a terrible, reason). Any mistake she makes will kill both of them, and everything she **MUST** do runs counter to everything she has ever learned about what she *should* do in situations like this.

It's the perfect midpoint.

Which is to say, it's the main character in a bad situation that has suddenly become so much worse than anticipated, or planned for – where she cannot do anything she knows how to do well, where everything she wants to do is prohibited, where any mistake she makes will get her and everyone she cares about killed...

And where doing nothing will have the exact same ending as doing the wrong something.

So she's going to do something she's never done, and is pretty sure she can't do, knowing any mistake will be fatal...

And she's going to see how THAT works out.

The thing is, today I wasn't writing the scene I planned.

But because of my process, I didn't have to, because even as I was writing against my outline, I planned toward being where I needed to be today to get this.

**Line-for-scene outlining combined with a workable novel structure** – they work overall even when little pieces blow up and crash and burn.

I knew I needed to have something here around which to swing not just this novel but the two that follow it...

And everything I'd planned for this point wasn't good enough.

But what my gut / Muse / left-brain Editor – right-brain Muse pitched at me in my 30-word replacement sentence this morning **was**.

I had an exciting few hours of writing, and I cannot wait to see what happens tomorrow.

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