

Not much sleep – but so into the story, I forgot to stop: 1408 words, 54,404 total

By Holly Lisle

I had a rough night (one of those where you need sleep, and want sleep, but it won't come) so only managed to doze for a few hours by the time I woke up this morning, and I was not as perky as I prefer to be.

I did not have my "+10 Well-Rested Bonus" going.

Nevertheless, as I read through yesterday's work to catch up with where I was starting today, the Ohio 3 story caught me, and dragged me into it, and when I looked up, I'd run over on my wordcount, and had written words that work, and now I have a great new conflict waiting to show up in tomorrow's words.

I like the fact that writing fiction can remove lingering darkness from the real world, can let you burn that darkness as fuel for the writing, and turn it around, and leave you happy at the end of the writing day.

None of the nightmare goes into the story – its creator deserves only to be forgotten. But anger can be burned productively, so that when you're tired, you have that extra fuel that can be turned into something good, and interesting, and even fun.

I don't know of many jobs that can make that work. This is the only one like that I've ever had.



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Trailing end of a storm, and laying the groundwork for the bigger one that follows: 1,311 words, 52,996 total

By Holly Lisle

I liked today's words. They rolled in after the yesterday's words without too much fuss at the beginning, and left me with a nifty little twist at the end.

In my main character's yesterday, terrible things happened. In her today, much nicer things happened.

But tomorrow, I'm going to explode a little mystery that has been floating along for two and a half books now, and it's going to land on my unsuspecting MC like the proverbial ton of

bricks.

It was hard to not just keep going because it's going to be fun to write that scene... **But** I don't push past my planned words anymore, because I know the misery into which "keeping going because it's fun" leads.

Very quickly, it takes you into "write until you drop"... and into hating to sit down to write because there is no end in sight. Ever.

Having a standard daily word-count objective, and going to or over **but not a lot over**, is what I've found works best for me. It keeps the job joyful, and makes me eager to get up and get to work every day.

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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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Shower thoughts and second

chances – 1388 words, 48,880 total...

By Holly Lisle

I'm pretty sure I've talked before about getting ideas about the day's work while standing in the shower. Today was a spectacular case of that.

I'd thought I knew what today's scene was going to be – it was dark, and grim, and scary, and I was all geared up to get in there and get the words, and as I was zipping through my shower (always the step before heading in to work), the still, small voice in the back of my mind said...

What if your Main Character in Terrible Trouble doesn't go where you planned?

She and her companion will still be in Terrible Trouble™, you'll still have "what's waiting on the other end" waiting on the other end... but...

What if, instead, you make this one tiny change to what you were going to do, and see where that takes you instead?

I held that question in my thoughts as I zipped through the speed version of rinsing shampoo; ran a few possible variants on the tiny change while toweling off (though I'm pretty sure I removed some skin in my hurry to get to the computer); and hit the story where I'd left off yesterday with the new, better, tougher, more-difficult-to-write scene in mind.

I love what I got, in spite of the fact that by the end of it, I was typing through tears.

By chasing "what if", and by then following the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of that to their logical conclusions, today I wrote my favorite scene in the series so

far.



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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.

Today went so well I didn't want to stop... 1398 words, and 42,825 total

By Holly Lisle

Oh, MAN. Today's scene was fun, and I'm only halfway through it. It was hard, hard, painfully hard to stop...

But I've left myself in a great place to pick up on Monday. AND... for what it's worth, I'll hit 45,000 words and the half-way mark on the novel AND the five-book series next week.

As tempted as I was to keep writing, thinking that I could do that today if I wanted to... I've learned the hard way that the trick to being consistent on your writing is to know when to stop, and not just keep pushing past your objective.

When you do that, you start writing to failure.

WRITING TO FAILURE means that you keep expanding your word counts every day, pushing yourself harder and harder to do more than you did the day before, until you break. This is a self-inflicted form of writer's block.

It's mean, and I've done it before (a couple different times with commercial deadlines, in fact).

When you break, the words dry up, and you sit there staring at the screen, and you discover that by constantly punishing your

creative brain, it has locked you out. **Writing to failure** is a great way to never finish the story, or the book... and a superb way to kill a writing career.

In any case, today I stopped when I ran a few words past my goal, and while it was fun, and while I'm excited to find out what happens on Monday when I come back to it.

ANYWAY...

While I was writing the scene today, a minor character from a previous book appeared suddenly, volunteering something that's inside a big box he brought with him, because my MC helped him once – and because he liked the little personal gift my main character gave him when she did it.

And she has not opened his gift yet, **so I don't know what's in it.**

That's cool. I'll get to find out on Monday.

Now on to all the other stuff on the Friday list.

Have a wonderful weekend, and see you again next week.

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Ohio Novel: 1303 words... and out of time.

By Holly Lisle

Just a note that the words today did not come easy, that added that I started out by creating negative numbers by debugging a

redundant chunk of yesterday's scene, and that in spite of that, I did hit my goal.

My MC is in big, big trouble.

But now I have to go do all the other stuff on my list.



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