

DTD – 514, and the critical question of the nature of immortality

By Holly Lisle

The writing tonight went well. In fact, all the new front-end material has gone well. It's much cleaner, sharper, more focused than the material I was getting earlier (the stuff that has been moved toward the middle of the novel.)

Which of course is good.

Over the weekend, though, I addressed something that has been nagging at the back of my mind since I started Dreaming The Dead—specifically, exactly what sort of immortality my immortal characters have, how it works, and what its limitations are.

Initially, I'd been pretty broad in how I allowed my immortality to work. One guy lost a head and, because he had plenty of fuel (other folks' dead bodies) to draw from, grew another one and got up and walked away from the site of his own near death.

That's broad. That's a superpower.

And I'd promised myself that, because of the nature of the story I'm telling, I would not permit any superpowers. Immortality does not mean invulnerability...and over the weekend, I spent a lot of time running through my head the previous superpower-type immortality of some of my characters, versus the much more fragile immortality of someone who can live forever if he doesn't get hit by a bus.

Decide that my folks can heal quickly from most wounds—if they can put pressure on the bleeding, they have high-quality

cellular regeneration. Could grow a lopped-off fingertip back in an hour or two, a hand in a week if they could rest. They have better-than-average immunity to diseases—again, at the cellular level, they're fine-tuned.

But much, of the first part of what I wrote is now not going to make the cut. Out of the 34K words I've written, I know the first 3K are solid, and I can probably salvage some from the later portions, but I'm not looking at a light rewrite to update anymore. I'm looking at major cuts. At best I figure my real current wordcount is around 15K. I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out to be lower than 10K.

But I'm going to continue to work the plan here. Write the new scenes, then figure out what I have to cut and rewrite in the existing scenes, just making notes on it for the revision, and then move on to the next new material.

Funny thing is, I'm not the least disheartened by losing all those words I'm going to lose. I figured out how to make the book better, figured out what was bothering me, and figured out how to fix it over the weekend. So it was a damn good weekend for me.

How are your words coming?

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