

Editing in Nightmare

By Holly Lisle

I cut out too much of the story while writing this. I was trying to keep it short, to fit the story into a cramped 200,000 words, with an injunction from my editor that it would be better if I could bring it in at about 150,000 words. (This is not my editor being evil. This is a fact of life necessitated by publishing constraints, by the cost of paper and other goodies, by the fact that a price point over \$25 for a hardcover guarantees a measurable drop in sales. The **book** needs to be shorter because it needs to be shorter. But the **story** needs to be longer.)

I'm discovering that in writing shorter, I've shortchanged the main story, shortchanged the characters, left the action to the side. The scenes I have in there at this point aren't bad. But, dammit, they're bones without meat or sinew to hold them together, and they aren't holding together. They aren't living. I wanted, in editing this, to cut it down. Cutting won't fix the book. It needs to be longer, and making it longer is going to cause problems for my editor.

I'm not even to the halfway point on this day's pages, and I've already found seven places where I have to have, at bare minimum, one additional scene in order to make the narrative coherent. And **adding** pages is not going to make anyone happy. This is miserable work.

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