

Middles again

By Holly Lisle

The bane of my existence, middles. I'm a great starter. I'm a great finisher. But by gawd do I die the death of the thousand cuts on middles.

Figured out, while outlining, that I have a problem, in that the story closes in tight too soon. I want to limit Alan's and Phoebe's access to the outside world late in the book, but I pulled that part of it in way too soon, and now I'm realizing that some of what I have at the near-beginning is going to have to get bumped back to early middle, so that I can open the story up again.

Rrrraaaaagh! So now the process is: Go through what I have, figure out where the story accordioned and where it can be stretched again, and also see if I can introduce a couple of other characters in. Right now I'm suffering from too-tight cast: Phoebe, Alan, the ghost, and the killer. You can do a hundred thousand words with a cast that small, but it starts to feel a little claustrophobic.

So tonight, with this big naked white patch in the middle of the novel, I need to do a bit more clustering – characters and their relationships to others, middle action, and multiple lines of conflict. (Running a bit thin on the conflict in the middle, too.)

And while I'm doing this, I'm losing 2000 words a day, and I'm not going to be able to put off revisions on **Wreck of Heaven** too much longer.

Time to pull a Pooh – sit on a fallen tree somewhere and hit myself in the forehead, saying, "Think, think, think," until something falls into place.

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