

The Ohio Series: Taking the measure of a novel

By Holly Lisle

Yesterday was Marketing Day, and I got the first half of the 4th edition of *Create a Plot Clinic* finished. Next week if all goes well I'll finish and do a new cover, and take that class live and wide.

Today, I worked for several hours, and got 1010 words of the 2000 I'd planned. I'm working on Chapter Two, finding my way through the story, and building Smits Corner, a town based on one of my two favorite towns in Ohio. While I was writing, I was crawling through images from Google, and remembering places I knew as a kid (places that look even better today – go figure).

And having my MC, a cop currently named Tori Gage, looking around her long-abandoned hometown and having a sudden bad feeling – what she describe as...

All of a sudden I was pulling off into a parking space, trying to catch my breath. This wasn't nostalgia.

This was pure unadulterated fear, cold and dark and running into my gut like ice water, the five-second warning a good cop feels responding to a domestic when all of a sudden you know it's going to go bad. And it's going to do it in your direction.

Ladies and gentlemen, the magic just showed up.

I have no clue yet what it is, and she knows even less than I do... but she can feel it.

And it just identified her.

This is where, when you're writing, you take the measure of your novel. Where you start understanding what you're writing isn't what you thought you were writing. Might be less cozy, meaner, bigger.

Don't get me wrong. This is small-town urban fantasy where the protagonist is a displaced big-city cop finding her way back home after too long away.

But this bugger just growled at me and showed its teeth. And when I look under the desk, the eyes blinking up at me are red, and they glow in the dark.

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