Globe Soup: Editing Stories for Contests and Publication

☐ Cut the first paragraph of your story if it still works without it. Keep cutting paragraphs until you find one you have to keep. Not one you want to keep, one you <u>have</u> to keep because the story doesn't work without it.

☐ Remove as much exposition as you can, especially at the start of the story. Readers would rather be a little in the dark to begin with than have everything spoonfed to them before the story has even begun.

☐ Remove *up* and *down,* except where absolutely necessary.

☐ Get rid of any superfluous words ~~that aren't needed.~~

☐ Remove *that,* unless it's needed for clarity. If it works without, cut it out.

☐ Swap complicated words for simple ones.

☐ Remove all dialogue tags, then add back in the few that actually clear up confusion over who is speaking.

☐ Change as many of the remainly dialogue tags as you can to *said.*

☐ Remove all filter words. This includes: *thought, felt, realised, wondered, believed, knew, decided, saw, noticed.* If a character in your story saw something, just show the reader what she saw. Don't filter the image through the character by saying she saw it.

☐ Change *went* to a more interesting verb in as many instances as you can.

☐ Replace *very, really, rather, and quite* – and the words next to them – with better words that don't need qualifiers.

☐ Remove as many adjectives and adverbs as you can. Use strong verbs instead.

☐ Change passive sentences to active ones.

☐ Look for any and all word combinations or phrases that might feel familiar. For example: *sparkling eyes, oozing blood, cacophony of noise, tendrils of smoke, shrouded in darkness.* Cut or replace with something else.

☐ Remove all chatty, unnecessary, or boring dialogue. If the line of dialogue isn't interesting or important on its own, remove it and summarise that part of the conversation in the narrative if you need to.