

The great Mystique whooped and jumped from the open plane. Cold air stung his cheeks as he somersaulted and dipped through the air. He loved showing off for new students, making their first solo dives. The small group zipped towards him, and Mystique plunged through the circle they formed. Once clear, he deployed his parachute, but it failed to open. Free falling towards the earth, he yanked again. Nothing. The ground rushed closer, and a student spotting Mystique's distress dove towards him. Together, they wrestled the parachute open, and it jolted Mystique upward. They floated to the ground, landing safely.



Last weekend, I participated in the [NYC Midnight](#) Micro Story competition. They assign a genre, action, and single word, all of which you have to work into your story within a 24-hour period. I can't share what I wrote, and won't know where I placed until in June.

What I can say is that I really enjoyed the experience. I received the assignment of historical fiction, sunbathing, and edge, and had to work them into a complete story that comprised only one hundred words. I spent most of Saturday running versions past a few people and researching my topic.

It stretched me to write outside of the normal genre I prefer. Then there was narrowing down which particular event I'd write about and formulating everything into those precious one hundred words. It's always amazing to me how changing one word can improve, or ruin, your entire piece when you have little to work with.

As the deadline neared for this week's story, panic set in. I hadn't settled on an idea or written anything to share here. I've used every spare minute this week, reducing the word count in the manuscript I'd like to pitch before the end of the year.

I decided to ask AI to select a random genre, action, and word for me. I was doing okay until the word was Mystique. My stomach dropped, and I considered asking for a different word.

Instead, I plunged forward, and by plunging forward I mean I curled up on my bed nursing a sore leg and a migraine. My brain was already in story mode, so I laid there running through several scenarios.

The one above is the only one I committed to paper, though. I changed words and removed a sentence to accommodate another, but it didn't undergo major transformations. The ease in how it came together made me question if it was a decent story or if my discomfort was clouding my judgment. I guess I'll let you be the judge of that.

The Reluctant Author
