

November rolled in with a gust of warm air, a charge of excitement, and a frenzy of typing. There were late nights and early mornings, never a great combination. We reveled in virtual word sprints, where many of us learned how fast we could type when the screws were put to our thumbs. We partied at write-ins, both virtual and in person, and laughed until our sides hurt.

We wrote in unusual places, some of which shall never be mentioned, all in the spirit of garnering the Incognito Badge. We made ourselves weep and laugh as our characters charted their own paths. We gnashed our teeth and begged for mercy when our villains terrified us and made us question our dark inner thoughts.

We shared our joys and woes, our victories and our struggles. We shared some of the chaos we wrote, the pieces that made us laugh or cry. The ones that backed us into corners that we struggled to free ourselves from. We planned, plotted, and pantsed our way through the month, typing deep into the late hours.

We created new worlds, and playfully argued over ownership of new characters. We reminded each other to get sleep, to get fresh air, to eat. We offered sympathy to those who fell prey to the ugly germs marching their own way through November. We shared our “Eureka” moments with plot twist memes, and then found ourselves in a new frenzy of typing. We survived other countless meme attacks, created our own badges, and learned that sometimes stepping back from our goals was the most caring thing one could do for themselves.

We paused long enough to partake in the annual Thanksgiving fun, before we jumped back in, neck deep, and took off running again. Our families learned to recognize our moods by the pace of our typing and lack of appearance after meals as many of us made the long slog up the mountain in our attempt to earn the coveted Daily Par badge.

We reminded each other often to back up our writing, not only earning us a badge, but saving some of us from the horror of losing a month’s worth of work. We saved, we typed, we shared. We made friends, hopefully we avoided making enemies, and cheered each other on day after day.

And when, at last, November had thoroughly drained us of all that we had, confetti was thrown, the end was written, and we crashed as December looked around the room and wondered exactly what she'd missed out on.



I know that many of my readers may not be fellow Wrimos, but I wanted to share the fun and excitement that my local writing group can make out of November. We really did hit the month off with a write-in that began at midnight.

I hit the ground running around 9am on the first, committing my first scene to "paper". By the fourth of November I had officially typed my 50,000th word much to my own shock and delight. I truly credit the numerous sprints our group held throughout the day and the dedicated meetings where we also sprinted for our lives.

I've participated in many NaNoWriMos previously, but this is my third one with a writing group, and each year I feel the excitement of others as we all leap head first into the chaos.. It's a true delight to read snippets of other's stories, and help each other brainstorm projects and characters. There's laughter and chaos as someone throws out an idea, and we pounce on it, twisting and turning it until we finally attempt to work it into our stories.

It still amazes me that within minutes of putting out an SOS one can have near immediate help. Be it the need to know what an office looked like in 1968, or the desire for a word sprint partner as you try to buckle down to business. My local writing group never fails to rise to the occasion, and if it weren't frowned upon I'd cover them all in confetti at our final "We survived" party.

There is something infinitely more exciting about writing when you are teamed up with others who understand that you can't stop while in the middle of a plot twist for fear you'll forget where you were going. When you can look at someone and say, "Don't laugh, but..." and hear them say, "Oh, I do that too!" Or you can explain the hours of research you've been

doing on poisons and not have anyone panic.

I hope that if you're part of a local writing group it's as encouraging and delightful as mine is. Don't misunderstand my excitement and delight for perfect harmony. We come from many different walks of life, but lay our differences aside {most of the time} to come together on the one thing we all have in common: the love of words and stories.

I'd be remiss if I wrote anything about Nano 2022 and failed to mention my family. They showed incredible patience when I became so distracted I forgot about the laundry in the washer, thawing dinner, or came running down the stairs screaming, "Quick, we're gonna be late for that appointment!" They didn't bat an eye when I sat in the car or the bookshop typing like a mad woman on my phone, while they carried on with life as normal.

They humored me the day I walked down the stairs in my pajamas, bed hair living the highparty life, and burst out with, "I have it! I have the ending!" They didn't complain when I remained seated at the dining room table only half paying attention to the nightly ritual of watching Mystery Diners.

Nor did they bat an eye when I failed to hear my phone ring, or notice incoming text messages. They simply sighed and said, "I guess you didn't see my message huh?" Imagine my shock one day when I realized I'd missed 54 messages and three phone calls! (Thankfully none were emergency quality.)

There really should be badges for our family members, because while we Wrimos are busy committing thoughts to paper, breathing life into characters, and harping on about research, our families take the hit. They send you photos of the dinners they attempted to make, and failed on. They gently point out that it's a good three hours past your bedtime, and remind you to take your medication. They bring you ice water so you won't dehydrate and fall prey to lurking migraines.

So, to my family who patiently waded through the November fog, without once bemoaning the fact that I was writing yet again: Thank you, I love you too.

The Reluctant Author

