

Happy PrepTober! I shall resist throwing confetti this month, because I don't have any in the vibrant autumn colors. Silly, I know, but I'm one of those crazy people who loves the "ber" months, and enjoys seeing their splendid colors.

Did you get all your [scaffolding erected in September](#)? I did not. Yep, you heard that correctly; I did not. I spent a great deal of time working through copious edits in a manuscript. My goal was to finish those before the end of the month. A lofty goal considering how many chapters I had to wade through, and I still have a handful left. As for the aforementioned [cat book](#), I didn't finish reading that either. In fact, I only read it while waiting in medical buildings for various appointments, but beyond that it sat beside my chair and I only shuffled it to look for the pencil I kept dropping.

Which means I didn't meet my September writing goals, but that's okay. I made progress, and sometimes that's even better than reaching the goal itself. I'm still up in the air with what I'll be writing in November, but it's time to get serious about the plan. After all, it's October, and that means PrepTober is upon us.

It's time to flesh out plots, outline our novels, and prepare for the chaos that November brings. If you're a pantsier, perhaps you detest the idea of outlining your novel and thus you'd consider me right on time. I've written both as a pantsier and plotter. Both methods work depending on the season of life I'm in. I prefer a good plot to work with, a reasonable outline. Okay, maybe my outlines get a little carried away.

Last year, one of my outlines was over ten thousand words. I'd woven in some background, created some specific dialogue, waded through what-ifs, and played with point of view, too. I had a character who kept changing ages, and goals for each character that moved around. By the time I dug into writing the actual story, I'd already worked through a few hang-ups. But, I still struggled with the opening, and by the time I reached the end of November, realized that I'd have to do a major rewrite because the goal of the main character had changed. It's one of the projects up for grabs this NaNoWriMo that I'm considering working on.

I'm waffling between that and writing something new. Or perhaps digging back into the

second project I worked on during Nano last year. It needs some major revisions, a few scenes added in. One character who plays a pivotal role needs to be fleshed out a little more and given page time. The big plot twist needs to be moved forward in the story, and one of the side plots needs to be fleshed out better, too.

I'm also toying with the idea of writing a handful of short stories. I struggle with short stories because I use a lot more words to get the point across when writing fictional pieces. But I had this idea years ago that I could flesh out several short stories to share here throughout the year. Once again, it's on my mind and an option I'm considering.

Of course I could be insane and attempt them all, working on scenes that need completing, a few short stories, and the whole new project. It sounds as jumbled in my mind as it does to write out here.

The beauty of PrepTober is that I can spend some time fleshing each option out, getting to know the characters, and working through outlines that will help me zone in on which story I'll work with. And, to be honest, having a side gig is always great during [Nano](#). It allows you to keep writing when you're feeling blocked or uncertain on a project.

I always encourage people to create a brain dump file in their [Scrivener](#) projects. Get all your crazy thoughts out of your mind before you settle in for a writing session. There's an entire book on this idea called [The Artist's Way](#). The book suggests three pages in longhand before writing, but I'm big on hearing ideas and making them work for myself. So, I have a Morning Pages journal I type into each morning.

Sometimes it can be emotional baggage I need to get off my shoulders, and other times it's just emptying the crazy thoughts running through my mind. Sometimes it's dribble about the weather, the look of the sky, the messiness of my house. The idea is just to get something down so that when I sit at my desk to write, I'm focused on the task ahead.

If you're participating in [NaNoWriMo](#), check out their [forums](#), if you haven't already, and see if your local group is hosting meetings. Many started meetings in September, and most are meeting at least once a week for Prep-Tober.



Author's Note:

It's been more than a week since I wrote this little piece. My local writing group had our first official PrepTober meeting earlier this week. I was still undecided on which project to tackle, so I spent three hours editing. Followed by juggling story ideas round and round for [NaNo](#). By the following morning, I'd landed on what I'd be working on, and was so excited about it I wanted a do-over for our first PrepTober meeting. If you're laughing now, feel no shame. I laughed about it too!

The funniest part about the choice I made is that it's the very story I'd intended to write this year way back in.... well whenever I came up with the idea. It was years ago, back when we were still living on The Island. I recall [reading a book](#) that many friends raved about, and I... disliked it. There isn't one specific reason for it, more like a million tiny little things. I'd decided I'd rewrite the story, but differently. Except, I want to write the story into a modern day setting and see where I can go with it. I figure some people will enjoy it and some people will feel the same way I did when I read the book that inspired me. Having been toying with this idea for many years, I already know the main characters. In one of the day dreaming sessions I had about the story a few years ago, I envisioned them in a modern day setting, so even that change to my original vision hasn't been hard to embrace.

Which means getting my Scrivener file set up hasn't been so difficult. I spent one afternoon this week working with ideas for a title. It's strange. I used to think up wonderful title names and wonder what kind of story would match it? Now I think up stories and don't know what to call them.

On my quest for a title, I took a brain brake and created a [PrepTober Bingo Board](#) for my local writing group. You can [download](#) it if you're interested. If you were to tackle everything on it, you'll be prepared for the first of November. I also threw together a [word count tracker](#). I mean, what better way to put off doing some actual writing than creating fun things to use if you were actually writing? The best part is that I didn't just create one work counter, I

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created two. One uses the dates in November, the other doesn't.

And if you're curious about this book cover and title, you'll have to hop over to the [NaNoWriMo](#) website, and [find me](#) so you can take a peek.

The Reluctant Author 