

NaNoWriMo is only two weeks away as I write this, and I'm working on my November writing goals. I'm a planner by nature. Sometimes I become a little too obsessed with the plan, and I have to remind myself it's just a tool to help me remember all the things I'm supposed to tackle in a day.

I mentioned my main project would be a retelling of the Nativity in a modern day setting. Of course, this means it will hint at the original, but won't be identical. More of a nod than a retelling. I expect some people will notice the subtle elements, while others may take offense at my creation. In fact, I've worried so much about the second half of that sentence, it's stalled my progress more than a few times.

As I sit back and reread that last sentence, my gaze is pulled to the words floating in front of me on my word wall. They land on a quote which says, "Actually, I can."

It's difficult to escape the worry that people will hate something you've poured your heart into. Or that they will misunderstand the truth of what you were saying.

The problem is, if I allow myself to only write what I believe may not offend people, I'd pass by a lot of beautiful stories begging to be written. The world is a sticky, messy, beautiful place, full of joy and heartache, and since my ideas come from the real world, it means my writing is also sticky and messy. People are prone to making mistakes. They often do things they shouldn't and say things they later regret. These are the stories I most admire. Stories that take place in a real world, with real flaws, and eventual redemption.

I'm still plotting and planning my main project. I know who my main characters are, but I'm still figuring out the smaller details that will make them relatable people instead of just names on a page. There's this odd sense of joy and surprise each time I work with new characters. I may have named the character and even considered adding them to my story, but it never fails that each character ends up dropping some unexpected bit of themselves in my story.

One year, in the middle of a fight scene, one of my characters disclosed his backstory. It was absurd timing and caught me off guard. I had to go back through the story and weave it in

with subtle hints until the moment came to reveal his bigger picture. I'll also confess I was quite peeved with the character for some time, because how dare he stop in the middle of a fight scene and say, "Excuse me Miss, but I have something important to relay to you." As I've been working through revisions of a story, this character appears in, when I come to his scenes I smile, nod, and forgive him.

I accept the above paragraph may have sounded pretty weird if you're not a writer, but I assure you it's normal in the writing world. We create stories and characters and think we know them and start writing their life story, only for the characters to revolt, change tactics, and scowl at us while they declare that we've misunderstood them. And maybe that's why the fear of having a story misunderstood arises, because it's not just the story I wrote, but it involves characters who've become odd friends to me.

I'm working through revisions on a [NaNo](#) project from last year. Most of the story is written, although it's disjointed and many scenes need more depth. I had a sudden realization the opening scene of the story might need revising. One character kept insisting what she had to say was so important it should happen much earlier than it does.

It left me staring at the screen for a good five minutes before I retreated to pull my hair back so I could concentrate better. I still haven't resolved the crisis and have been caught spaced out when people were talking to me. It turns out, last night while I was folding laundry, most of the house was talking to me and asking questions, of which I heard zero.

Which leads me to my November goals. On top of writing the larger project and attempting to finish a first draft of the story, I've also jotted down a half dozen short story ideas that I'd like to tackle as well. Short stories are my downfall on the mere basis that I weave too many words together. What better time to practice than [NaNoWriMo](#)? I can use them for low brain days, or when I'm jammed on my main story, which is currently called [Letting Go Of Before](#).

I'm debating adding some revisions from last Nano to the pot as well. Crazy much? Yes, yes, it is. My writing group likes to welcome new members with introductions followed by, "But don't mind Kendra during November. She's a beast." It's a compliment, and I take it as one.

Can I write an entire first draft, six short stories, and revise a 150k novel? Chances are slim I can accomplish all three, but the hope is that between them I can meet my goal of writing each day, and come out of it with at least 2 completed short stories and a new rough draft for a novel.



I'll confess, Dear Reader, that sometimes being sucked in so deep on a writing project is also a pitfall. It's hard to detach my mind from the story I'm working on, which means even when I'm present, a part of me is not. Point in case, yesterday, I woke up at 5:17 am. How do I know the precise time?

Because I didn't just wake up. I sat bolt upright and said, "I know how the story starts!" Then I grabbed my phone and checked the time to see if it would be acceptable to get up and stumble through the house to find my computer and start writing.

I've been deep in conversation with my family before and stopped abruptly to run for pen and paper. Somehow, my brain carried on a normal conversation and continued to work on a plot hole in the story I was writing.

My family seems to identify a look I get when I'm about to dart off and abandon them to jot down whatever popped into my head. They are kind, loving and forgiving like that. So much so that while explaining the whole weird waking up at 5:17 thing to my husband, he said, "Well, did you write it down?"

Don't be too shocked, Dear Reader, but I did not. Not at 5:17 in the morning, that is. I wrote it down later, after spending another hour attempting to sleep while running the idea over in my head from various character's view points.

If you're participating in [NaNoWriMo](#), have you set your goals for the month ahead? If you

need a buddy to help cheer you on, don't hesitate to [reach out](#)!

The Reluctant Author.

