

Dear Reader,

What a month it's been! At the end of November, I crashed — and hard. I slept in far more than was normal for myself and struggled to sit at the writing desk and concentrate long enough to put coherent sentences together. It was a strange feeling to need a vacation after a month of digging deep and writing my heart out.

I've taken part in National Novel Writing Month since back in 2009, and I never recall feeling so exhausted at the end. Perhaps it was from all the cheering, confetti throwing, and long meetings we had. Not that I'm complaining. I enjoyed every single minute of it, and even gave out little celebration bags at the end so my fellow writers could throw confetti for themselves.

Still, it left me worn. I looked over my notes for the Christmas story I'd intended to write and share here, and found that I was far more distracted than I should have been by the neighbor's adorable blow up [Peppa Pig](#). It sits on their porch, but occasionally she will spin in the wind and appear to be knocking on their door, and other times she just waltzes right down their porch steps and takes herself for a walk. It's become such a funny thing that I gaze out the window throughout the day to give my family Peppa Updates.

I spent a day wrapping presents while enjoying listening to a [Christmas book](#). I'm one of those strange individuals who rather enjoys wrapping presents. Making all those crisp corners and finding a bit of ribbon or string to tie around the gift. I wrapped all the books in plain brown paper and tied them with a red ribbon. They looked rather festive, and then I noticed that someone had wrapped books for me {oh what a delight!} and they are not in brown paper. It made me laugh, because I didn't realize there were books waiting for me until I'd gone to move on before the vacuum ran it over.

We've indulged in our local Christmas parade despite the frigid temperatures. The entire family went out together to pick up some little things for stockings. It's always tiring, but fun to see who can smuggle what back home without anyone noticing. The Scoffer needs a new bookmark. He may be the only one amongst us who regularly uses an actual bookmark, and I went to get him a new one with no luck. Most on display were feminine or for shows and

movies he's not familiar with. On the back of one row of bookmarks was, now brace yourselves for this, a [book whoopee cushion](#). I'm not making this up! I laughed so hard the barista working asked what I'd found.

We've made our Christmas menu and changed it at least three times. We are currently holding steady at stew, but I suspect it could change again between now and Monday. I still need to make the [peppermint pie](#) for dessert I keep telling them about. And make cookies, waffles, and homemade breakfast sausage. Which is a very unusual sounding combination, but rest assured, Dear Reader, we don't eat them together. We eat waffles and sausage for breakfast, and this year I'm all a flutter at wanting to make them mini. Last year, I baked Christmas cookies on Christmas Day, which was rather nice considering that crazy blizzard we had. Cooking helped warm the house.

I've spent considerable time on goals for the New Year as well. If you're one of those people who thinks goals should be a four letter word, look away while you can. I actually enjoy [goal setting](#) and stretching myself each year. This has been a tremendous year of personal growth, and I wanted to take the time to throw a little confetti for myself, and then take the time to commit new plans to paper.

But none of this equated to much work on that short story, and while I had some momentary panic about it, I'm okay now. I accepted I needed the break, and to tend to the many appointments we had booked into the first two weeks of December. I was gleefully looking ahead to the third week of December and pointing out all the empty spaces on our calendar. I stocked up on Christmas books, dug out some fluffy socks, and washed all the thick warm sweaters so I could curl up to read my selections.

However, as I sit here and update this small space on the internet, I'm looking over my writing goals for 2023, and admit I have a pretty big grin on my face. I've shared stories, articles, and book reviews here regularly this year. I've also shared portions of my manuscript with my local writing group as I jumped into the critiquing side of things. I submitted a portion of one of my manuscripts and received some good feedback on it. I finished drafting a fourth novel, and now have three in the wings that could use some attention come January.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

My writing goals for next year are slightly bigger, but only because they will further stretch me outside of my comfort zone. One goal I'll share here is that I'm hoping to share short, or micro, stories here in the new year. Most of them are based on writing prompts I get each day. It will be a stretch for me, because short stories are harder for me to nail. While working on one prompt, I found it had so many potentials I wrote four different short stories based on it. I may end up sharing all the different versions. Who knows?

What I know is that I'm going to take a slight break until the New Year. May you all enjoy the holidays with your family, dream big for the New Year, and delve into a delicious book in your spare time.

The Reluctant Author.

