



Hi Writers!

There are two kinds of people in the world: people who divide the world into two kinds of people, and people who ...

Okay, but there is one "division of two" that writers encounter all the time: people who want to write a novel someday, and people who've actually written one. (There's also a third category of people who don't want to write a novel, but since I'm one of those divide-into-two types, I'm ignoring them for now.)

It sometimes seems to me that everyone, and his brother, and his dog, has an idea for a novel. (And most of them would be happy to tell me about it, if I'd agree to write the story and then split the profit with them.) And maybe even worse are the people who don't have an idea for a novel, they just think they might like to write one someday.

If you've joined NaNoWriMo you've already taken the first step toward moving yourself from category A: wannabe, to category B: real writer. But to move yourself into that very small group of people who've written a novel, you have to finish the thing.

And no, writing part of a novel doesn't count. How lame is it to say, "I started to write a novel once, but I never finished it."

Finishing your novel is tough. (Which is why category 2 is so much smaller than category 1.) When you're enmeshed in the middle, and you think about all the pages and scenes you have to spin out to reach the end, it seems to stretch out forever. Which leads to my best tip for reaching the end of the

story...

Don't look ahead!

Even having published twelve novels, and written a lot more, I still have to take that first draft one day at a time. I tell myself I'll accomplish today's writing goal today, and I try not to even think about tomorrow's goal until tomorrow---much less the next week's!

(The group of people who've actually written a novel in one month is really small!)

I'd also like to add (and I'm not sure the NaNoWriMo people will approve of this) that it's OK if you don't finish on the dot of November 30th. Even if you run a week or two--or a month or two--over the end of November, as long as you get the novel finished you still get to place yourself in category 2. "Why yes, I wrote a novel last fall. It was a lot of work, but..."

But if you keep working on it, sooner or later you will finish. If you keep your butt glued in that chair, if you just keep cranking out your personal goal every day, then one day you'll look up and the climax of your novel will be just a few scenes away. Then you'll be writing the climax. (Which feels a lot better, because now the end is in sight.) And then you'll find yourself typing "The End" at the bottom of the last page. You'll feel exhausted, and thrilled, and delighted that it's over---but kind of lost too. Writing this novel has become so much a part of you that, even though it will be nice to get your life back, you're going to miss it.

And whether you go on to write another novel or not, whether you never write anything besides blogs and email for the rest of your life, you will have become part of group two: the people who have actually written a novel.

Hilari