



Hello fellow novelists!

Did you know that on the day you turn ten you've been alive for 87,660 hours? That's a lot of hours! An hour can feel really long when you're in math class or waiting for your birthday party to start.

This may sound like a weird fact, but 87,660 is something I like to think about when I **JUST CAN'T WRITE ANOTHER WORD!** When I'm bored with my book, and all I want to do is go eat some chips or watch TV. When it seems like I'm never **EVER** going to finish writing.

Why does 87,660 help me? It proves that things happen a little bit at a time.

You don't get to be ten all at once. You get to be ten an hour at a time. And you can't sit down and just write a novel all at once either. You write a novel one word at a time, one paragraph at a time, one page at a time. So when you start to feel sluggish, and bored with your own book, maybe you need to remember 87,660. And write one more word, one more paragraph, one more page.

Part of the problem is that the middle of a book is often the **WORST** part to write. You begin with a fresh blank screen and a good idea, and usually the words kind of flow. And at the end of a book, you're excited because you can see the finish line, so you dash for it, thrilled to have accomplished something.

But the middle is the pits---you lose steam and the clock starts to tick slooooooowly. While the difference between page one and page two feels momentous, the difference between page 101 and page 102 usually doesn't.

But it is! It's huge! The page that matters most is whatever page you're

writing this very second. Every page you write is a page you don't quit on!

If you quit now, and don't finish, you'll spend the rest of your life thinking, "I almost wrote a novel!" And you don't want that---take it from me!

I wrote *Up and Down the Scratchy Mountains* in 2001, and stopped before it was done. I stuck it in a drawer and forgot about it. And always, in the back of my brain, there was this nagging thought of what I'd almost done. So then, one day, I pulled it out again, tacked on an ending, and sent it out to editors and agents. After a little while, a very nice editor at Random House wrote me back!

So you just have to keep going! If you get bored, leave your chair and jump up and down for a few minutes, or bribe yourself with a gummy worm at the end of each page you write, or take a moment to imagine who will play each character in the movie version of your book.

Maybe tape 87,660 on a sign above your desk like I've done. It'll be a little reminder that everything happens a little bit at a time.

With tons of excitement,

Laurel Snyder