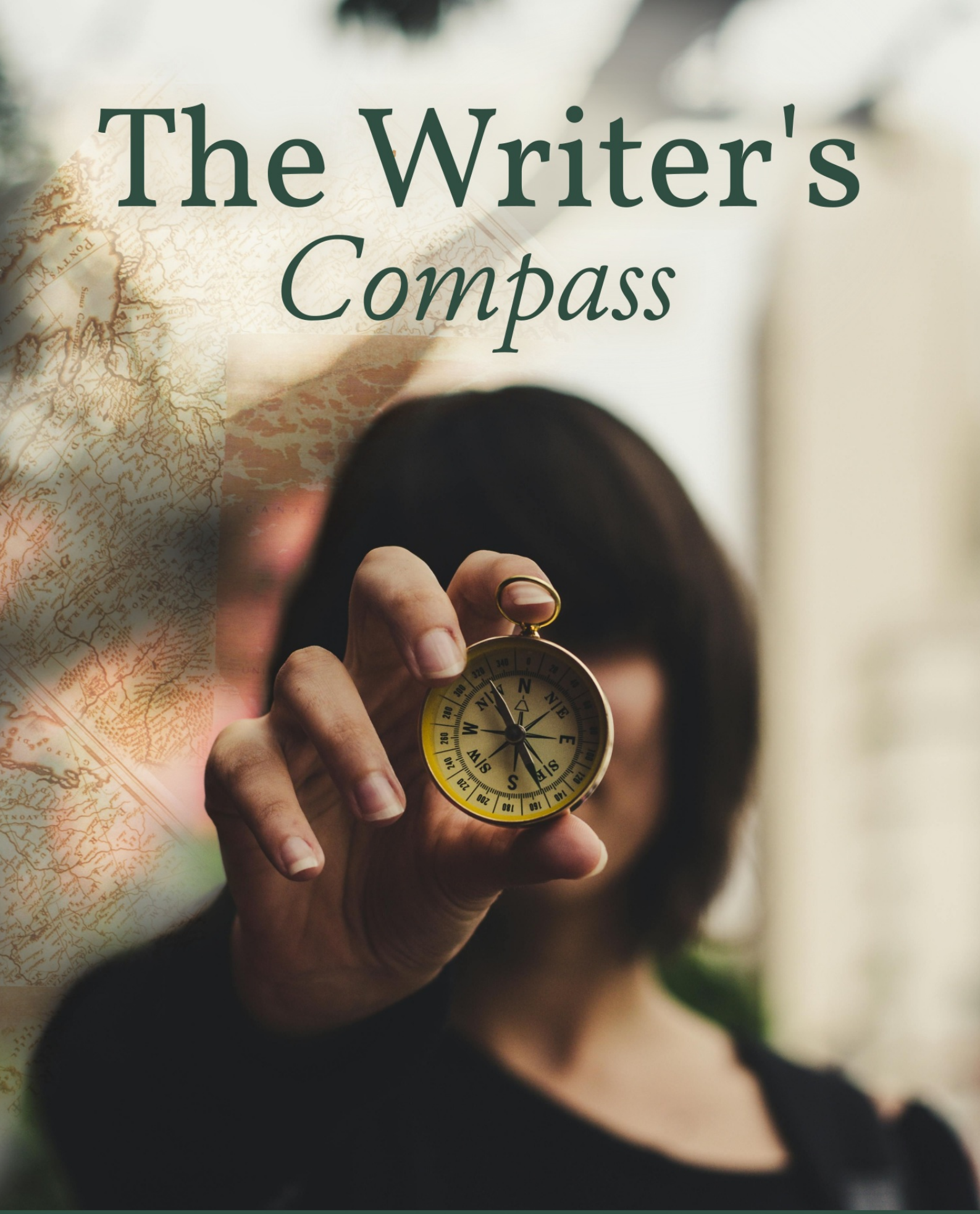


The Writer's *Compass*



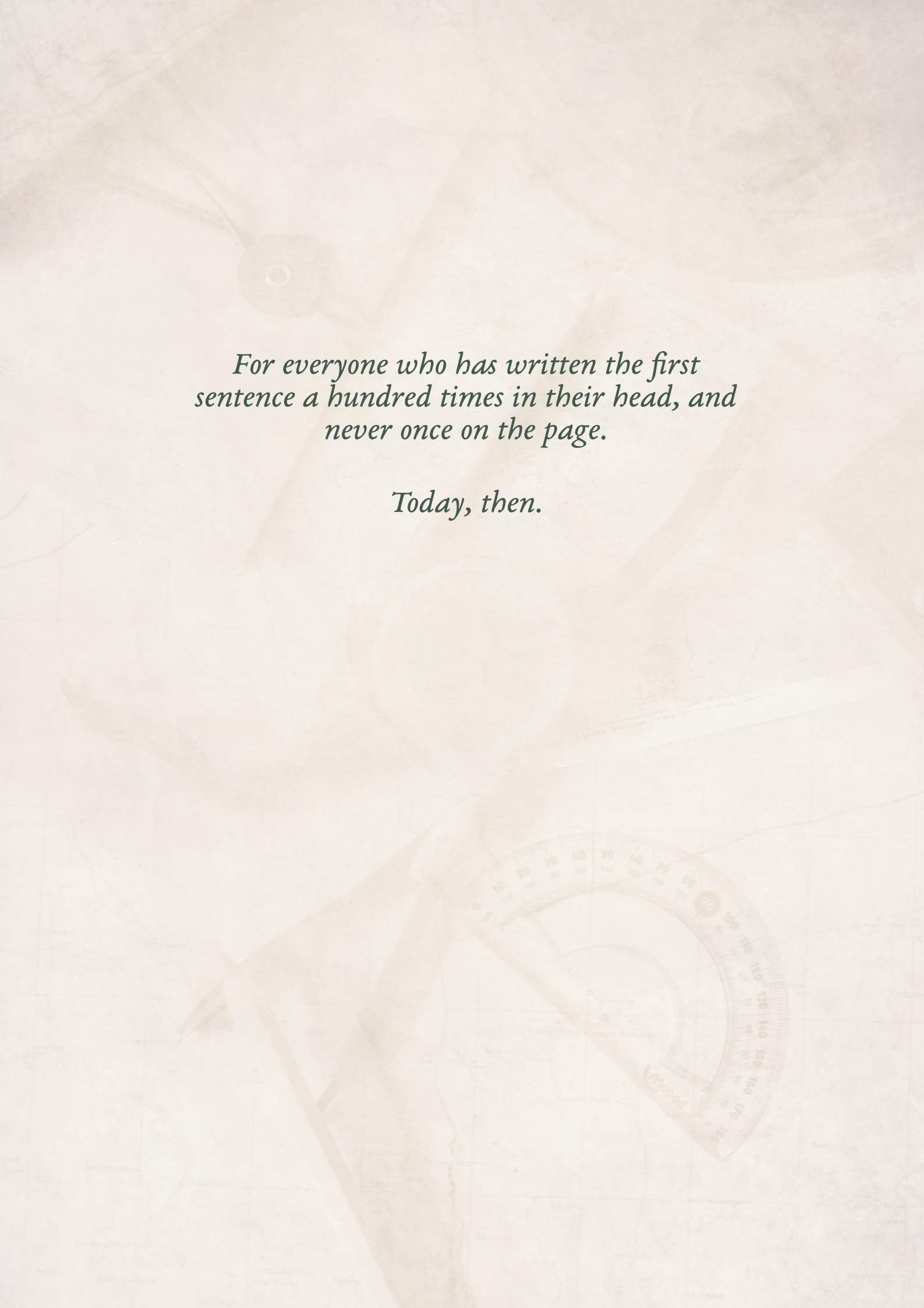
The Official User Guide for Quilva 1.0



The Writer's *Compass*



The Official User Guide for Quilva 1.0

The background is a light beige collage. It features faint, semi-transparent images of drafting tools: a compass at the top left, a ruler and a set square in the middle, and a large protractor at the bottom right. A map with various place names is also visible, serving as a base for the other elements.

*For everyone who has written the first
sentence a hundred times in their head, and
never once on the page.*

Today, then.

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Welcome, Writer!

This guide is not a manual in the usual sense. A manual tells you which button does which thing and assumes you will work the rest out. This book tries to do something harder: to explain not just how Quilva works, but why it works the way it does — because the why is where the software stops being a collection of tabs and starts being a way of thinking about your story.

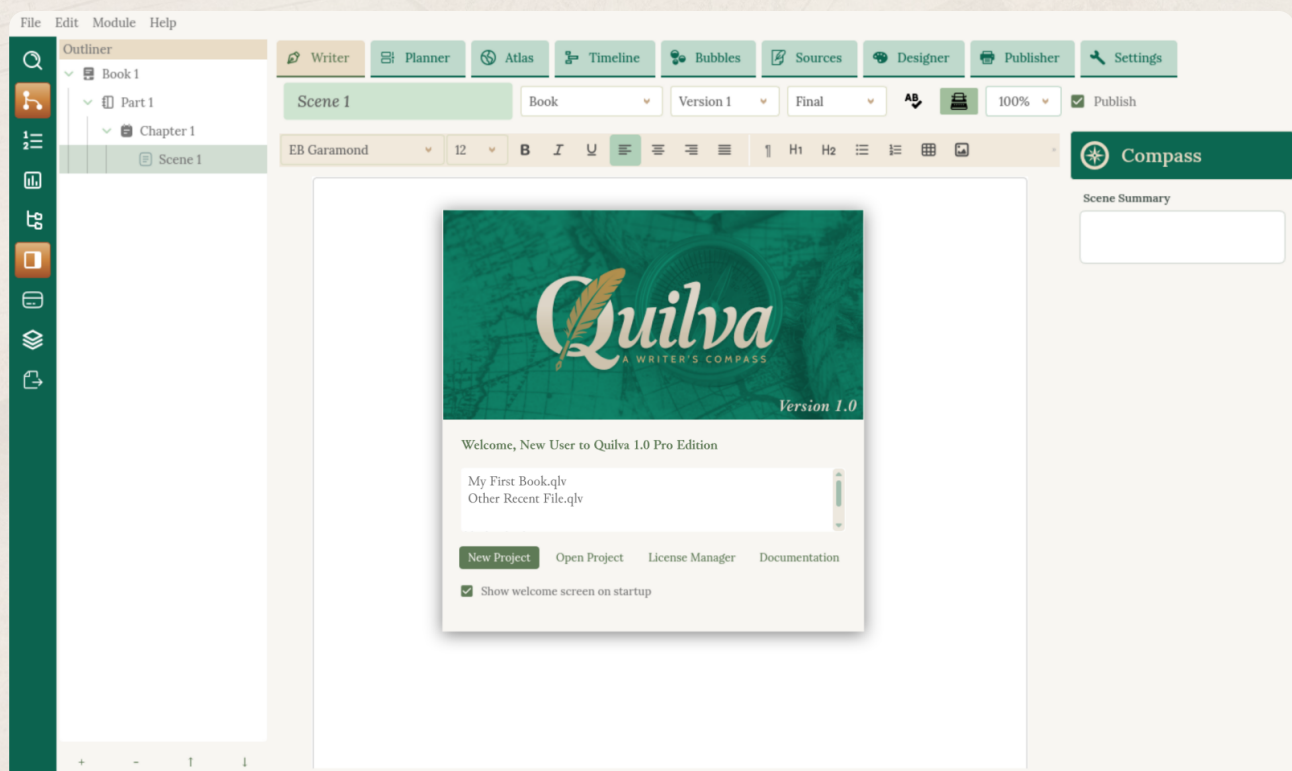
Quilva was built on a single, almost stubborn conviction: that a long creative work is a living network of relationships, not a flat document, and that software should honour that instead of fighting it. Every chapter that follows is really an argument for that conviction, told one feature at a time.

You will notice the book has opinions. It quotes novelists and screenwriters and the occasional anonymous craft maxim, because the tools only matter in service of the craft, and the craft has a long memory worth drawing on. Read it cover to cover, or open it to the tab you are stuck in. Either way, the goal is the same: to get the software out of your way so the story can come through.

— *The Quilva team*

Plan, Write, Design, Publish.

The Welcome Screen is ready to say hello. If you have not already done so, please download and install the software from the website. It is free to get started, and the content of this book is best experienced alongside the program. We thank you for choosing Quilva to write your next book — we think you've made an excellent choice!





~ CHAPTER ONE ~

A Mindset Shift

I. A Project, Not a Document

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

— Maya Angelou

Ask a dozen working novelists where their book actually lives, and you will get a dozen uneasy laughs. The manuscript is in one program. The character notes are in a second. Research images are scattered across three folders and a phone camera roll. The plot outline is on index cards, or a whiteboard, or the back of an envelope that has since gone through the wash.

The final layout — if the book ever gets that far — happens in something else entirely, weeks later, in a panic.

This is the quiet tax on long-form creative work. Not the writing itself, but the constant administration around it: the hunting, the re-finding, the reconciling of six versions of the truth. Every time you switch tools you pay a small toll in momentum, and momentum, as any working writer will tell you, is most of the job.

Quilva was built to refuse that tax. It brings structure, planning, world-building, drafting, reference material, visual thinking, and professional book production into a single, deeply interconnected environment.

It's one thing to make a plan, but it's something else entirely to stick to it. Quilva makes it easy to stick to your plan when writing, so that all your planning actually pays off.

A NOTE ON WHAT THIS GUIDE ASSUMES

This book assumes nothing about how you work. Whether you outline every beat for a year before writing a sentence, or you discover the story by writing into the dark and finding out what happens, Quilva is built to bend around your process rather than impose one. Throughout this guide you will see the phrase “the tools support you, not the other way around.” It is not marketing. It is the actual organising principle of the software, and you will feel its absence the first time you go back to anything else.

2. Stories Are Networks, Not Lines



Here is the core idea, stated once, plainly, so it never has to be repeated: a large creative work is not a linear document. It is a network. Characters connect to scenes. Scenes connect to beats. Beats connect to research. Research connects to the people and places it describes. A revelation in chapter twenty-two depends on a seed quietly planted in chapter three. The book is a web of relationships, and the writer’s real job is keeping that web coherent in their head while also writing beautiful sentences.

Everything lives in one portable project file. Every part of the application knows about every other part. Move a scene in the Outliner and it moves in the Planner, in the Bubbles mind map, on the Timeline, in the Writer’s Compass, and in the Designer — not eventually, not after a sync, but at once.

Most software treats a book as a long string of characters. Quilva treats it as the network it actually is. That single difference is why the program feels different to use — and why writers who adapt to it rarely want to go back.

Aside from that, it’s got planning tools that are honestly second to none, if we don’t say so ourselves. How many writing apps allow you to edit your story in weaving layers, dragging cards around like clips in a video editor?

3. Many Windows, One Story



Quilva is organised around a flexible hierarchy you define yourself in Settings. By default it runs *Book*, *Part*, *Chapter*, *Scene*; with planning Cards living one level below scenes. But a screenwriter might prefer *Screenplay*, *Act*, *Sequence*, *Scene*; a non-fiction author might use *Project*, *Volume*, *Section*, *Entry*. Whatever you choose, that hierarchy becomes the spine of the project, and every tab is simply a different lens onto the same underlying spine.

The following page gives an overview of all Quilva’s major modules.

The Outliner

The structural backbone. It lives on the left of the screen and is the single source of truth for your project's shape. Drag, drop, rename, reorganise. Everything else references it.

The Planner

A digital corkboard of colourful story cards — where ideas get arranged and woven together. Think of these story cards like post-it notes — each containing one, simple, clear idea.

Bubbles

A live mind map. Your hierarchy rendered as connected bubbles in a branching tree. Restructuring stops feeling like file management and starts feeling like sculpting.

The Timeline

A video-editor-style view of chronology, with parallel strips for main plot, subplots, and character arcs, so pacing problems and convergence points become visible at a glance.

The Atlas

Your story's living database — a categorised inventory of every character, place, theme, and idea, each with a profile icon, and a complete view of where it appears across the story.

Sources

An embedded, relational file manager. Images, PDFs, notes, and tables stored inside the project file itself and linked by narrative relationship or by folder.

The Writer and the Compass

The page itself — calm, focused, distraction-free — accompanied by a scene-aware sidebar that shows you exactly the planning you did for the scene in front of you, and nothing else.

The Designer

A vector-based graphic design tab, dynamically linked to your manuscript so design and writing never fall out of step. You design templates for pages, and then the pages you want will stick to those designs.

The Publisher

This is what takes all your writing, all your design work, and puts it all together into a nice PDF, ready for print or digital distribution. You can also export to other formats if you'd prefer to finish it somewhere else.

THE TWO-EDITION REALITY

Some of the tabs above — the Atlas, Bubbles, and Sources among them — represent the fuller worldbuilding and visual-thinking layer of Quilva. The Designer is a Pro-edition feature. This guide documents the complete experience so you understand the whole ecosystem; Chapter 2 explains exactly which tools belong to which edition so there are no surprises.

4. What This Actually Changes



When your planning, research, outline, notes and world-building info and images are finally organised and 'linked' in an easy to manage way, it changes the way you work. Once you get the hang of it, several things stop being problems:

- ★ Planning survives contact with the blank page, because the Compass carries it onto the page with you.
- ★ Restructuring becomes spatial and fast rather than tedious and risky.
- ★ Continuity becomes something you can see rather than something you hope you remembered.
- ★ Research stays attached to the part of the story it serves, instead of rotting in a folder.
- ★ You move freely between structural, visual, chronological, and textual thinking without losing your place.
- ★ The whole project stays portable, self-contained, and entirely yours.

John McPhee, who has thought harder about nonfiction structure than almost anyone alive, once observed that structure is not a cage but the thing that frees you to write. Quilva is built on exactly that conviction. The structure is not there to constrain your imagination. It is there to hold the architecture steady so your imagination has room to do something reckless.

“Structure is not a template. It is the consequence of taking the material seriously.”

— after John McPhee

What follows in this guide is a tour of every room in that studio — not as a feature list, but as a way of working. Your story deserves a home like this. Let us show you around it.



~ CHAPTER TWO ~

Getting Started

I. Choosing Your Edition

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.”

— Mark Twain (attributed)

This chapter takes you from first launch to comfortable. Quilva is a focused, self-contained creative workspace for writers working on longer, more complex projects, and the fastest way to understand it is to get a real project open and start poking at things. But a few decisions — which edition, where to keep your files, how the hierarchy works — are worth understanding before you dive in.

Quilva was built on Linux first, then ported to Windows and Mac, so it runs identically on all three. The side effect: it doesn't feel quite "native" on Apple — there's no simple "drag into Applications" install, since it still thinks like a Linux or Windows app (as of v1.0). Mac users, keep an eye out for guidance — it's straightforward, but worth flagging.

Quilva comes in one application with four ways to run it: a free Demo, a free Trial, and two one-time paid editions. Crucially, every one of them uses the same project file format. You can begin in Demo mode today and upgrade in a year without losing a single word, note, or card. If you're into design, there's nothing stopping you from making (and distributing) Designer templates for pro users to use — just with the free version.

Demo Mode

When you first launch Quilva it runs in Demo mode with no time limit and no expiry. You can start real projects immediately. The only restrictions are a limit of twenty scenes per project and watermarked PDF exports. If your project is small and you do not mind a watermark (or you export to Word instead), Demo mode could be a permanent, no-cost option for you to use Quilva.

The Free Trial

Request a free Trial key from quilva.com — no credit card, no commitment. The Trial unlocks the full Standard or Pro experience and is usage-based rather than time-based: you get a set number of sessions (typically fifteen) to evaluate everything properly without a countdown clock pressuring you. Need more? Contact support; the team is, in our own opinion, generous about extensions — the goal is to give you ample opportunity to assess the software before paying for it.

Standard Edition

A one-time purchase. It includes the complete Writer, Planner, Timeline, Bubbles, full screenplay support, and a solid Publisher — everything a writer who “just wants to write” needs for planning and drafting. The Publisher for Standard users gives you a decent amount of control over how your book ends up looking. You can still style headings, paragraphs, lists and tables in the Styles Editor, you just don’t have the absolute, precise, detailed level of control you’d get with the Designer. You also don’t get the Atlas. That’s not as bad as it sounds, since the Atlas’s tagging system still works throughout the rest of Quilva, linking things together, you just don’t get that central control panel and detailed world building.

Pro Edition

Everything in Standard, plus the Designer for book layout, advanced publishing, Card Stack templates, the Atlas, priority support, and the Human Authorship Certificate (which is a tool which helps you definitively prove to publishers that you actually wrote your book, not an AI). Pro is for writers who want to take extra control of their world building, organisation, and final presentation of their book. This is essential, in our opinion, if you’re self publishing.

LICENSING, PLAINLY

Both paid editions are one-time purchases with lifetime access and free updates within the same major version. A licence works on up to three devices. Upgrading from Standard to Pro later costs only the difference and is instant — no reinstall, no file conversion. A Pro project opened in Standard simply shows the tools Standard has; your content stays whole and safe the entire time.



2. Installation and Portability

Quilva runs natively on Windows, macOS, and Linux, with the same features on every platform. If you get it off the Microsoft or Apple stores, skip this section. Otherwise, it's designed to be portable and undemanding: roughly 500 MB of disk space, 8 GB of RAM. Download it from quilva.com — the Windows installer walks you through a standard wizard you've likely seen many times before; Linux is a self-contained executable; and macOS gets a folder-based bundle that needs a single first-run gesture (see below).

Windows users get the EULA during install; Mac and Linux users should read it on the official website, since there's no install wizard.

You don't need to run Quilva from system folders — it works as a portable program. You could keep the application and projects together on a single USB drive, so the whole system travels between machines. On Windows, just copy the application folder after installation to wherever you want it to live.

Project files are identical across versions and cross-platform. Because every project is one portable file, backups and sharing are trivial. All imported images and PDFs are embedded into the .qlv file, so there's no risk of "missing links" when moving between computers.

If you hit any installation trouble, email support@quilva.com and we'll gladly help. Non-macOS users can skip to the next page.

A NOTE FOR APPLE USERS

Quilva was originally built for Windows and Linux, and our team has worked hard to bring it to macOS. The result is a slightly less "native-Mac" install than you may be used to — so here's what to do. When you unzip the download, you'll see a folder containing Quilva.app alongside several supporting files and sub-folders. Your instinct may be to drag the .app into your Applications folder, but that's the wrong approach — Quilva.app reads from the files around it at launch, so moving it on its own will stop it from running. The folder itself can live anywhere — Documents, Desktop, an external drive — but its contents must stay intact.

First launch: because of the Windows/Linux-style packaging, macOS will often refuse to open Quilva the first time. To allow it, right-click (or Control-click) Quilva.app and choose Open, then click Open in the dialog. You only need to do this once — after that, double-click works as normal. If macOS still blocks it, open System Settings → Privacy & Security, scroll to the security section, and click Open Anyway next to the Quilva entry.

A polished, signed, notarised, and more native macOS installer is on the roadmap for a future release. For now, we thought a workaround was better than leaving you out.



3. Creating Your First Project

Launch Quilva and choose New Project (or use the file menu). Pick a name and a location — save the .qlv file. That single file becomes your entire workspace: outline, cards, world bible, research, manuscript, research files, PDFs, images, and final design, all in one file.

Every project follows a four-level hierarchy with flexible terminology you can choose in the Settings tab. The hierarchy is strict. You can't, for instance have a "writing unit" come directly under the book. It's got to live under a chapter level item.

Project Naming Convention

Level	Default	Examples you can choose instead
Project Type	Book	Series, script, screenplay, play, document
Major Division	Part	Act, section, volume, season
Subdivision	Chapter	Episode, sequence, part, unit
Writing Unit	Scene	Article, entry, post, note, item

You write full prose or screenplay text only at the *writing unit* level. It's basically rich text content — whether you call it an article or a scene. When you select a higher level in the Outliner, you get an index-card overview of that level's children — a Book shows index cards for its Parts, a Part shows its Chapters, a Chapter shows its Scenes. This makes reviewing and reshaping the story easy at every scale.

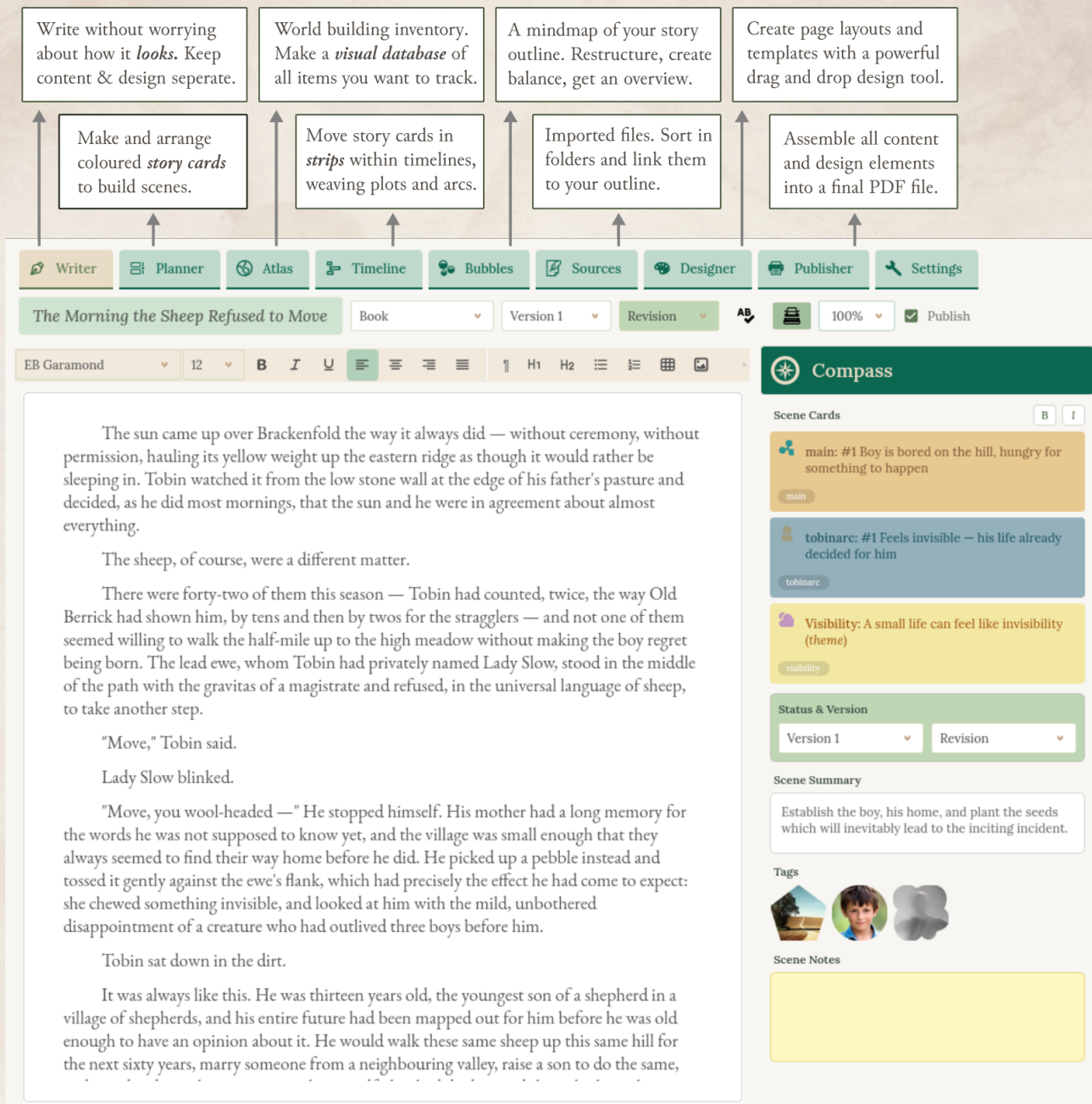


4. The Main Interface

Tabs across the top give you different ways into the same project: Writer, Planner, Atlas, Timeline, Bubbles, Sources, Designer, Publisher, and Settings. The Outliner sits on the left and is the structural spine (toggle it with Ctrl+Q). Most tabs also have a right-hand sidebar (toggle with Ctrl+W) that adapts to your current selection.

A FIRST-DAY TOUR WORTH TAKING

Make a throwaway practice project. Spend five minutes in each tab. Drag a few cards around in the Planner, watch them appear in Bubbles, then open the Writer and notice the same cards waiting in the Compass. Do not try to do anything "right." The point is to feel, viscerally, that there is only one project underneath all these views. Once that clicks, everything else in this guide will read faster.



5. Support and the Community

Quilva is made by a small team that reads every message sent to support@quilva.com. A surprising number of the program's features began as user suggestions, and contributors may be credited in new releases. If something breaks, behaves strangely, or could be better — especially with an eye toward the next major version — we want to hear it.

In the next chapter we shape the software to fit you, starting with Settings. Get that right and Quilva quietly disappears, leaving only your story.



~ CHAPTER THREE ~

Preferences

I. How Settings Work

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

— Will Durant, summarising Aristotle

Most software has a settings panel that you just don't go into or spend time in. But just a few minutes spent here pays itself back many times over — because how the program feels to you genuinely changes depending on what settings you choose. We want to give you the best start, and make Quilva feel more like *you*.

When the vocabulary matches how you think, when the page scrolls the way your eyes and fingers prefer, and when backups run the way you expect them to, you stop noticing the technical stuff and start noticing your writing. Help the program get out of your way by telling it how to behave.

The Settings tab sits at the far right of the tab bar, organised into three columns: general defaults and project terminology on the left, Writer defaults and the publish folder in the middle, saving and backups on the right. Remember to hit the save button on the bottom right after changing settings. Some changes happen immediately, but don't rely on that, it's better to restart for all changes to fully take effect.

So let's begin customising.

2. Making It Yours



Settings

Click Save Settings at the bottom of the page to commit changes to disk. Most settings take effect on the next restart; a few small ones apply immediately.

General

Default tab: Writer

Interface font: ☐ Sans ☒ Serif

Interface font size: 10 pt

On startup: ☒ Toolbar ☒ Outliner ☒ Tabs ☐ Stats ☒ Sidebar ☒ Welcome screen

Image max resolution: 1600 px

Project naming convention
Choose what you want to call each level of your project's structure. These labels appear throughout the app (outliner, dialogs, menus).

Project type: Book

Major division: Part

Sub division: Chapter

Writing unit: Scene

Atlas Icons
Atlas Icons: ☐ Small ☐ Medium ☒ Large

Writer Defaults

Mode and colour: Book Gray

Book font: EB Garamond

Script font: Quilva Nova

Size and zoom: 12 100 % ☒ Fixed Width

Scroll mode: Typewriter ☐ On Enter

Focus: Center Trigger: 75 %

Indentation: 40 px ☐ Auto Tab

Tools: ☐ Spell check ☒ All tools

Page counting
Book — words per page: 250 words
Script — lines per page: 42 lines

Publisher Defaults
Temporary directory needed for publishing:
publish_directory Choose...

Preview Pages (Max): 10 pages

Preview Word Budget: 3000 words

Auto save

☐ Enable auto save

Wait for inactivity of: 0 seconds

Save every: 1 minute

Backups

☒ Keep previous save (.qlb)

Always keep previous save. Restore by renaming .qlb to .qlv

☒ Enable incremental backups

Backups to keep: 2

Backup frequency: 4 hours

-backup2.qlb is more recent than -backup1.qlb. Rename to .qlv to restore backups.

Backup location

☒ Same folder as project
☐ Custom folder (used for all projects)
No folder selected Choose...

General interface defaults decide how *Quilva* looks and behaves on launch. What should you change? Well, *what shows on startup* is something you'll probably want to set. Maybe you don't like the toolbar or the tabs, or you want the right sidebar hidden by default. Maybe you don't like the welcome screen that comes up every time you start the application.

Do you use the Designer more than the Writer? *Set it as the default tab*. Do you prefer a sans font over serif for the interface? What about the font size for the interface? Just getting the application to look right is a start.

The *image max resolution* setting deserves an explanation, because it's not immediately obvious. Basically, all images you add to your project are scaled down if they're huge. This prevents a user from selecting a 50MB image just to set as a profile picture for a minor character, and the project rapidly bloats in size.

We recommend 800px or lower if you're mainly writing and planning. It keeps project files lean. 400px is perfect if you hardly use images at all for output and you just want basic low-res images for planning and reference. That would keep your .qlv files tiny so you can email them. If you're using the designer and need the images you import to be sharp in your resulting PDFs, then 1600px is a much better setting.

Atlas Icon size (small, medium, large) applies everywhere icons appear: the Compass, Planner, Atlas, Timeline, and Bubbles.

Project Terminology

This is one of our signature ideas, and we're pretty proud of it. You are not locked into "Book, Chapter, Scene." All four hierarchy levels can be renamed, and the new terms propagate through the entire application — Outliner, menus, dialogs, Bubbles, Compass, statistics, everywhere.

No matter what you call things, functionally they're identical. The writing unit is the part in the structure you actually write into. Those are like all your little 'sections' of your book or document that are merged together at publish time. The rest of the items above the writing unit are just organizational.

OUTLINE AND DESIGN LINK

Giving chapters and other structural elements good names really pays off later when using the Designer and Publisher. The 'dynamic text' feature draws headings from your outliner and can help you create dynamic designs that change text depending on where you are in the book. It also helps you to generate great 'table of contents' pages automatically. So not only are these names useful for planning, they're useful for design and publishing too.

Choosing terms that match your mental model removes a surprising amount of friction. A screenwriter thinking in "sequences" should not have to mentally translate "chapters" all day. As of version 1, here are your options. If you think of options you'd like, write to us and we may just include it in the next release:

<i>Terminology Options</i>			
Project Type	Major Division	Sub Division	Writing Unit
Book	Act	Chapter	Scene
Series	Part	Episode	Article
Script	Section	Sequence	Entry
Screenplay	Arc	Installment	Post
Play	Volume	Section	Note
Document	Season	Part	Chapter
Project	Book	Unit	Section
Collection			Item



3. Writer Defaults

This governs the day-to-day writing experience: default mode (book or screenplay), text colour (black or a calm medium grey — deliberately just those two), default book font and size, default screenplay font, default zoom, and whether book mode uses a fixed width (so it feels like a page).

Scroll Mode

You have two choices: *typewriter* or *snap scroll*.

Typewriter mode moves the page continuously so your cursor holds a fixed, comfortable position and never reaches the bottom — a genuine fatigue reducer over long sessions. The behaviour is exactly like a typewriter — the text above moves up on each new line, and your focus keeps the same spot when writing. A small detail, but significant nonetheless, as this can effect everything from focus levels, to mouse independence (no need to scroll up or down) and could even affect posture.

Snap scroll behaves like a traditional word processor, jumping only when the cursor nears the bottom. We thought this is a bit jarring, but it's the way most people do it, so you still have the option. The focus drop-down sets where the cursor rests after scrolling (near the top, one third down, halfway, two thirds); and then for snap scroll, the trigger value controls how close to the bottom of the screen your writing must be before it 'snaps' back up to the focus point, giving you more 'space' to write.

You can toggle between typewriter and snap scroll mode later when you're writing. It's the button that looks like a typewriter.

Other Writer Options

- ★ Spellcheck on or off. Useful, but can be very distracting.
- ★ Auto tab indents the first line of every new paragraph while you're writing. Standard for printed novels. Also set the indentation amount for each "tab".
- ★ All Tools? Buttons like H1, H2, lists, tables, images - they're buttons that seem 'extra' but can make your writing environment feel cluttered. Leave unchecked for minimal distractions.
- ★ Page Counting sets words per page (books, default 250) and lines per page (screenplays) so the statistics report realistic page estimates. If you want to know "how many pages have I written?" it's going to count your words and divide them by this word count as an estimate. Every book is different.

Publish Folder

Quilva needs a temporary working folder when assembling designed books in the Designer and Publisher — a place to mix Writer text with Designer layout into final output. Point it somewhere out of the way (a “temp_publishing” folder in Documents is common).

You won't need to open it yourself; Quilva manages it. Note that a valid, writable publish folder is required for a successful Designed Book publish, so set it before you need it.

4. Saving and Backups



Setting up how saving and backups work is something you may not want to think about right now, but it could really save you. May as well know your options.

Auto Save

Enable auto save and choose an interval (1, 5, 10, or 15 minutes). The standout option is “wait for inactivity,” which saves only when you pause — so Quilva never freezes the interface mid-sentence. Turn it on and forget it exists.

Backups

A save should never be the end of the line. Give yourself a layered safety net:

Keep previous save — every save preserves the prior version, so you always hold the current and the one before it.

Incremental backups — keep multiple numbered backups (up to 10). When the limit is reached the oldest is deleted and the rest renumbered, the highest number always being the most recent.

Backup frequency — every 30 minutes, hour, 4 hours, 8 hours, day, 3 days, or week.

Backup location — the project's own folder by default, or a single custom folder for all projects.

If something ever goes wrong, you restore a previous version simply by renaming the backup file back to a .qlv extension. If you don't want your folder cluttered up with multiple files with versions and backups, we recommend you select a dedicated “backup folder” for your writing, check all the options, and set backup levels to 10. You're really unlikely to lose your work if you do, and you know which folder to go when that day comes.

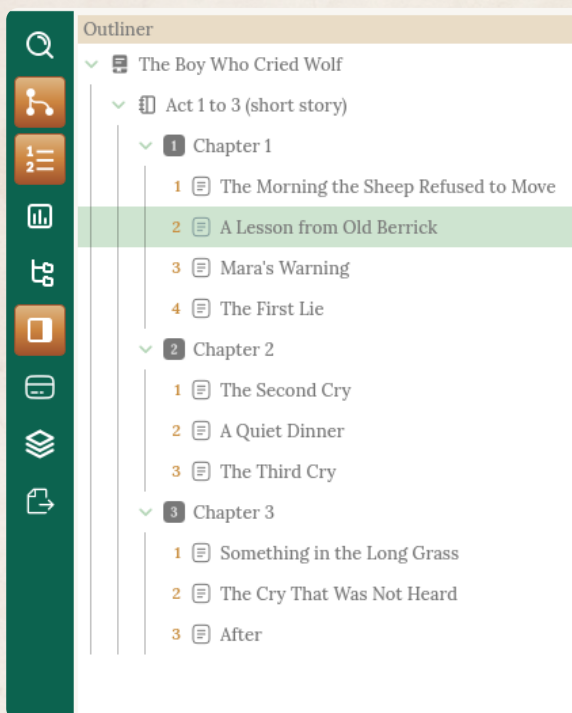
Next we step into the Outliner — the structural spine everything else in Quilva connects to.



~ CHAPTER FOUR ~

The Outliner

I. The Structural Spine



The Outliner is the quiet foundation of Quilva. The other tabs are more visually exciting — the corkboard, the mind map, the timeline — but they are all views onto the structure the Outliner holds. It is the single source of truth, the central brain that keeps the whole application in harmony. Think of it as your story's skeleton. Everything else hangs off it. Every project follows a clean four-level structure whose names you set in Settings: Project Type at the root, then Major Division, Subdivision, and Writing Unit. You write full text only at the Writing Unit level; everything above is an organisational container that supplies context and continuity. Cards live one level below the writing unit — but cards belong to the Planner and do not appear in the Outliner itself.

This mirrors how experienced storytellers actually work, whether they think in three acts, in Save the Cat beats, in the Hero's Journey, or in a private framework of their own. The Outliner does not care which method you use. It just gives the architecture somewhere solid to live.

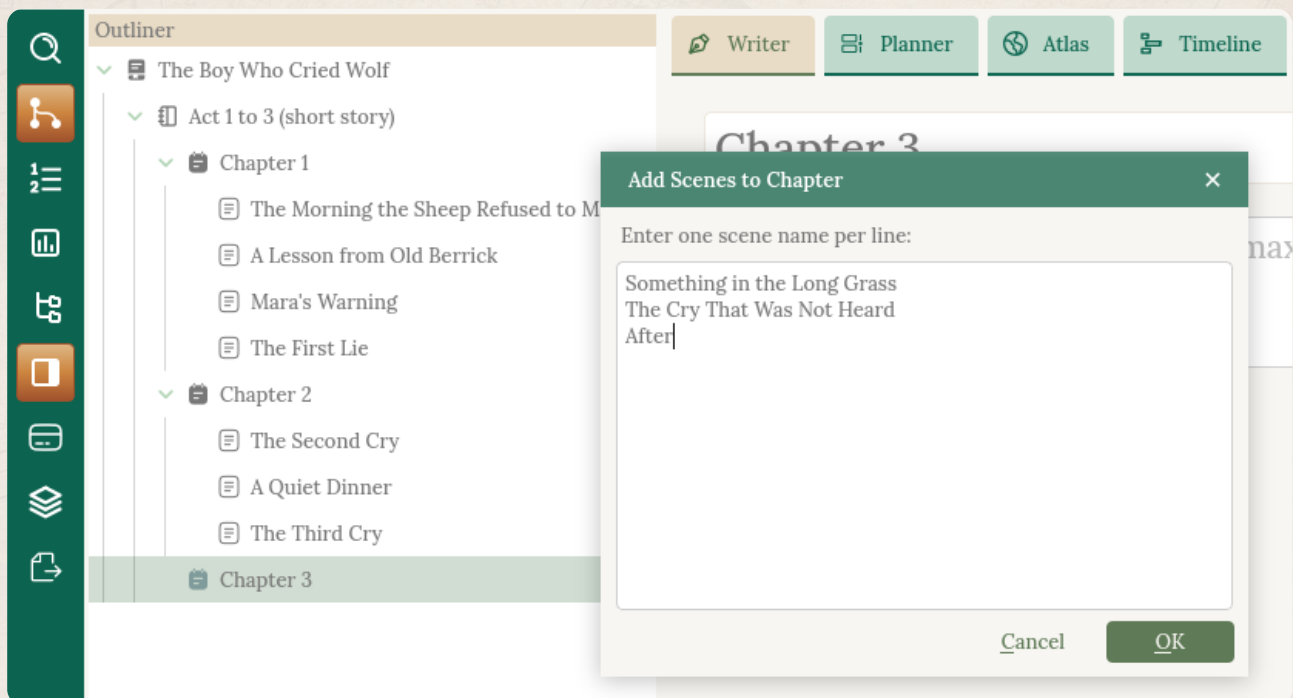


2. Working with the Outliner

The Outliner appears on the left by default (toggle with Ctrl+Q) and shows the project as a collapsible tree. Expand and collapse branches to focus. To add a new root item, right-click in the Outliner and choose Add Book. Right-click any item to rename, move, delete, or add the next level beneath it. You can also rename by double-clicking, and rearrange everything by drag and drop. Deleting a parent deletes its children — so the small up/down arrow and minus buttons at the bottom of the Outliner are there for precise, deliberate control.

The hierarchy is strict. You cannot have a writing unit, like a "scene" come directly under a book. It must live in a chapter. And you can't have one chapter be the child of another, as that would break the hierarchy.

Adding Structure Rapidly



Building an outline in Quilva is meant to feel fast. The Add Items command (Ctrl+E) is context-aware and adds children to the selected item:

- ★ Select a Subdivision (chapter) and a text box appears — type one scene title per line and Quilva creates them all at once.
- ★ Select a Major Division (act) and you can generate a whole set of chapters in one pass.
- ★ It always adds in the direction of children, so what you create depends on the selection.

BULK CREATION IS A MOMENTUM TOOL

The novelist Jane Smiley said a novel is a long answer to the question “what is it like to be another person?” — but before it is that, it is forty empty chapters that need to exist before you can fill them. Typing forty titles into one box and watching the skeleton appear in a single keystroke is not a gimmick. It removes the dispiriting hour of manual setup that sits between you and the actual work.

3. Index Cards in the Writer Tab

One of Quilva’s most elegant moves happens when the Outliner meets the Writer. Select a Writing Unit (scene) and you get the full editor. Select a higher level — chapter, act, the whole book — and the Writer transforms into a clean index-card view of that level’s immediate children.

Index card view is technically in the *Writer* tab, but we’ve mentioned it in the Outliner section in this book, because it really is more of an outlining tool than a writing one.

Give your scenes titles and summaries, and later, when writing, you can choose these summaries to appear in the Compass (right side bar) to keep you on track:

The Shape of Silence

The house had grown too quiet since the accident, conversations stopped half way, doors closed softer, and nobody mentioned the empty chair at the table anymore. The protagonist notices the silence isn't grief alone, but it's avoidance.

✚ @ The Empty Chair

Dinner feels strained, as nobody speak about the missing family member. Small silences between conversations reveal how deeply the loss has changed the household, even though everyone pretends life is normal.

✚ @ Footsteps above Midnig

Unable to sleep, the protagonist hears quiet footsteps and muffled voices upstairs, curiosity begins replacing grief, as they sense something hidden beneath the family's silence.

✚ @ Words through Walls

From behind a closed door, the protagonist overhears fragments of an argument, one sentence about "the truth" leaves them shaken and desperate for answers.

✚ @ The Clock Stopped

While wandering the house alone, the protagonist notices details frozen in time - a broken clock, untouched belongings, and rooms nobody enters anymore.

✚ @ Eyes that Avoid

The next morning, tension grows when family members avoid eye contact and act strangely around simple questions. The protagonist suspects everyone knows more than they admit.

✚ @ The Locked Hallway

At the end of the hallway sits a locked room nobody discusses. The protagonist becomes convinced that the room hides something connected to the tragedy.

✚ @ Rain Against Windows

As storms roll in, emotions rise inside the house. Old memories surface and the silence becomes heavier with guilt, fear, and unspoken blame.

✚ @ The Truth

The chapter ends with the protagonist outside the locked room, hand hovering over the handle, realising the answers they seek may destroy the family forever.

Tip: Tab moves you from one index card to the next. On the last one, tab *makes a new index card*.

- ★ Project view shows an index card to represent each major division.
- ★ Clicking a major division shows index cards for subdivisions.
- ★ Subdivision view shows an index card per writing unit.

Each card carries a title (which edits the item's name) and a summary (around 80 words is the sweet spot). Drag to reorder; the Outliner and the underlying structure update instantly. You can move fluidly between writing actual prose in a scene and reshaping a chapter's flow with cards, without changing tabs.

Status Colours

Status	Colour	Meaning
Idea	Soft blue	Early brainstorming
Draft	Warm peach	First full pass
Revision	Soft green	Polishing
Final	Clean white	Ready for publishing

These colours are consistent everywhere the scene appears — index cards, Outliner rows (the colors show when stats is toggled on) and also show up in the compass when you have *status and version* enabled in the Compass Editor. We'll discuss the Compass in more depth later on.

Overall, these colours help you visualise your writing units' various stages of progress, rather than something you need to manually tally.

A Work in Progress

These index cards represent a chapter evolving through different stages of creation. Blue for a new idea, peach for a first draft, green for under revision, and white for finalised prose. By default everything's white - final, and has no real colour until you give it one.

+

Ⓜ

A New Idea

ⓧ

These index cards hold raw concepts, sudden inspiration, unfinished thoughts, waiting to grow into something more.

+

Ⓜ

A First Draft

ⓧ

These cards contain early writing, rough scenes and imperfect beginning where ideas start taking shape without worrying about perfection.

+

Ⓜ

Under Revision

ⓧ

These cards mark pieces being edited, reworked, and improved as the story develops greater depth, clarity, and emotion.

+

Ⓜ

Finalised Prose

ⓧ

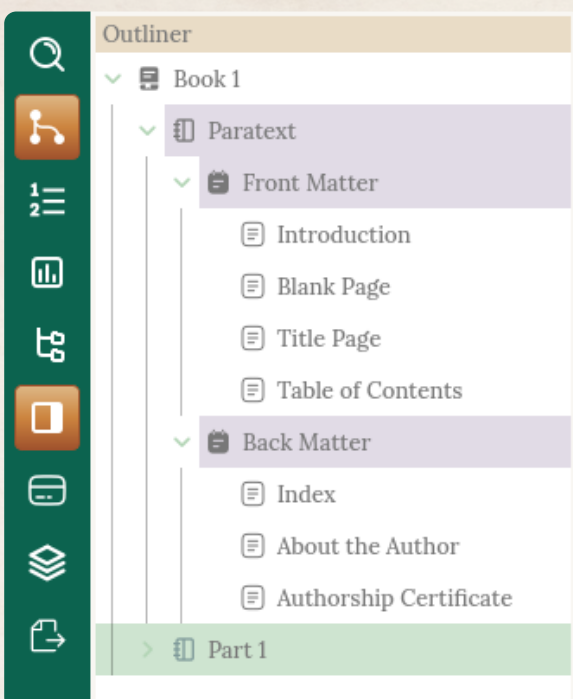
These cards hold polished writing that feel complete, confident, and ready to become a part of the finished story.

4. The Main Toolbar Tools

The vertical toolbar on the left (toggle via the Modules menu) carries structure tools available from any tab. These are some of them:

- ★ Finder (Ctrl+F) — searches the entire project: Writer text, cards, and more. As a project grows this becomes one of the most valuable tools.
 - ★ Outliner Toggle (Ctrl+Q) — shows/hides the Outliner.
- Numbers (Ctrl+L) — numbers chapters and scenes inline in the Outliner, so you can see at a glance “this is scene three, that is scene five.” The numbering is publish-aware: scenes whose Publish checkbox is unticked are skipped, so what you see matches what the reader will see, not what merely exists in the project.
- ★ Stats Toggle (Ctrl+Y) — shows word counts and estimated page counts inline in the Outliner. Writing units show words, subdivision levels show pages, and levels above show both. Also indicates status via colour coding.
 - ★ Add Items (Ctrl+E) — add structure to the outliner efficiently.
 - ★ Quick Publish (Ctrl+P) — instant PDF of the current Outliner selection, without opening the Publisher tab. It uses whatever settings you have in 'Quick Publish.'

5. Front and Back Matter



A finished book is more than its acts and chapters. There is a dedication, a copyright page, a table of contents at the front; perhaps an acknowledgements section, an author bio, a colophon at the back. The scholarly term for all this is paratext — the writing around the writing — and Quilva gives it a place of its own in the Outliner so it never has to be wrestled into shape during a panicked final week of design work. Paratext is a regular Major Division (Part / Act) item, except you name it Paratext. The moment you do, Quilva treats it differently from your story acts. It is not counted as a Part by the Publisher, its chapters are not counted as story chapters, and it carries a soft purple-blue tint in the Outliner and Bubbles so you can see at a

glance that it is something other than your narrative spine. The rule that does the work is simple: a chapter inside Paratext called Front Matter places all of its scenes at the very start of the book, before the first act; a chapter called Back Matter sends its scenes to the end. Each scene becomes one piece of paratext — a dedication, a copyright page, an acknowledgements section — sitting in the book exactly where convention expects it.

A scene with no body text becomes a blank page on publish, which is exactly how you get the deliberate blank pages a printed book needs after a title page or before a part divider. The fastest way to set it all up is to right-click a Book-level item in the Outliner and choose Add Paratext: Quilva creates the Paratext act with empty Front Matter and Back Matter chapters, ready for you to drop scenes into.

A book is not required to have Paratext — a clean novel can ship without it — but for anything heading to print, this is where the polish lives.

If you're more into design, you may not even use the outliner at all for paratext. You could create and design pages, one at a time, just for the start and end of the book, and use the 'regular content' in the outliner for the bulk of the middle. The more you use Quilva, the more you'll understand the options are endless.

For most writers the convention-driven approach is enough: write a copyright page in a scene, write a dedication in another, and let the Publisher place them. If you want absolute control — a hand-tuned title spread, an ornament-heavy contents page, a colophon set in a particular face — the Designer is still available to you, and Paratext content flows through it as readily as the story does. The Outliner gives you the easy way; the Designer remains the door for the hard way.

6. Why the Outliner Matters



A strong structural foundation does not limit imagination — it underwrites it. When you move a scene or chapter here, the Planner, Bubbles, Timeline, Compass, and Designer all reflect the change immediately. Nothing becomes orphaned. You can sketch broad acts first and drill down, or start loose and tighten later; the Outliner supports both while keeping everything else in step.

“Plot is people. Human emotions and desires founded on the realities of life, working at cross purposes, getting hotter and fiercer as they strike against each other.”

— Leigh Brackett

The Outliner is where those cross-purposes get their scaffolding. It is not there to constrain you. It is there to hold the frame steady so your imagination has room to take the big swing.



~ CHAPTER FIVE ~

The Planner

I. Card-Based Story Development

If the Outliner is the skeleton, the Planner is where the story starts to breathe. It turns abstract planning into something you can see, touch, and rearrange — hundreds of coloured cards spread across a giant table, your narrative shaped with your hands. Professional storytellers have used physical cards and corkboards for a century to work out beats, track subplots, and test structure. The Planner brings that tactile process inside the project, where it can never fall off the wall.

“Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.”

— E. L. Doctorow

2. The Philosophy of Story Cards

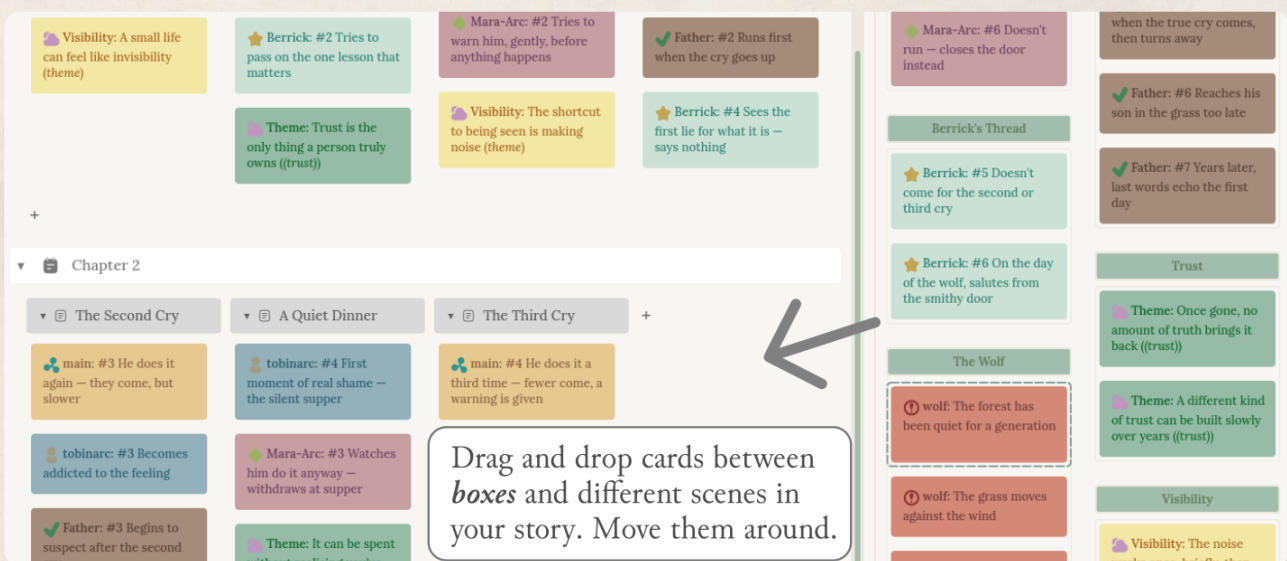
Cards are the fundamental unit of planning in *Quilva*. Each one represents a single beat, moment, idea, or detail. A card might hold a turning point, a character revelation, a thread of dialogue, a thematic note, or simply something you don't want to forget. They encourage the non-linear thinking great stories are often built from. You do not have to write in order. You can lay out the emotional high points first, map one character's arc across the whole book, or hold three rival versions of the climax side by side and see which one the story actually wants.

3. The Planner Workspace



Open the Planner and you see your project’s structure mirroring the Outliner. Each scene appears as a compact box — a “wallet” — holding the cards that currently belong to it, with a small icon that jumps straight to that scene in the Writer. On the right is the Work Area: a free-form idea space toggled with Ctrl+W and expandable to fill most of the screen.

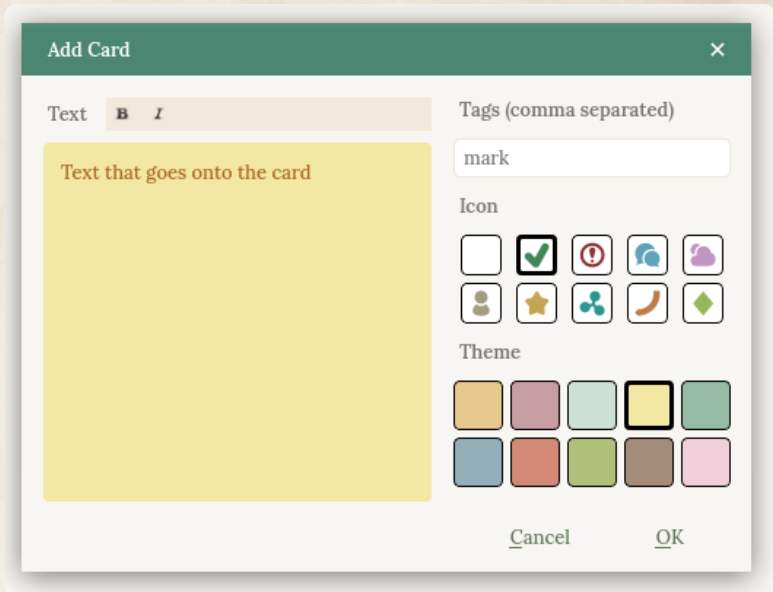
The Work Area is where raw creativity happens. Create named boxes — “Main Plot,” “Character Arc,” “Subplot A,” “Uncategorised Ideas” — drag them around, and treat the whole space as a thinking zone for beats that do not yet have homes. There is a special Uncategorised box for floating ideas you are not ready to place.



4. Creating and Working with Cards

To create a card: right-click inside a scene box or the Work Area and choose Add Card, or use Add Card (Ctrl+D) on the main toolbar to add to the currently selected scene. To edit one, double-click it (fastest) or right-click, Edit Card. Each card carries text, a colour, an icon, and tags.

Assign colours meaningfully and they become a language you read at a glance: red for high tension, gold for major turning points, cool blue for quiet reflection. Over a few weeks, a wash of red across a sequence will tell you it is overheated before you have consciously thought it, and a sudden splash of gold will show you exactly where your theme lands hardest. Filter the whole Planner by colour, icon, tag, or text to isolate one thread across an entire book. Tags are very useful, and you'll realise their full power in the Timeline and Atlas tabs.



5. Organising, Moving, and Weaving

Drag cards freely between scenes, between chapters, into the Work Area and back. Right-click a scene and choose Empty Cards to pull all its cards into the Work Area at once — invaluable when a scene is not working: rescue every good beat, delete the broken scene, and reweave the beats elsewhere. Click a scene's icon to jump to the Writer; click around the Outliner and the Planner scrolls to match. You plan, write, and restructure without losing momentum.

THE DECONSTRUCTION TRICK

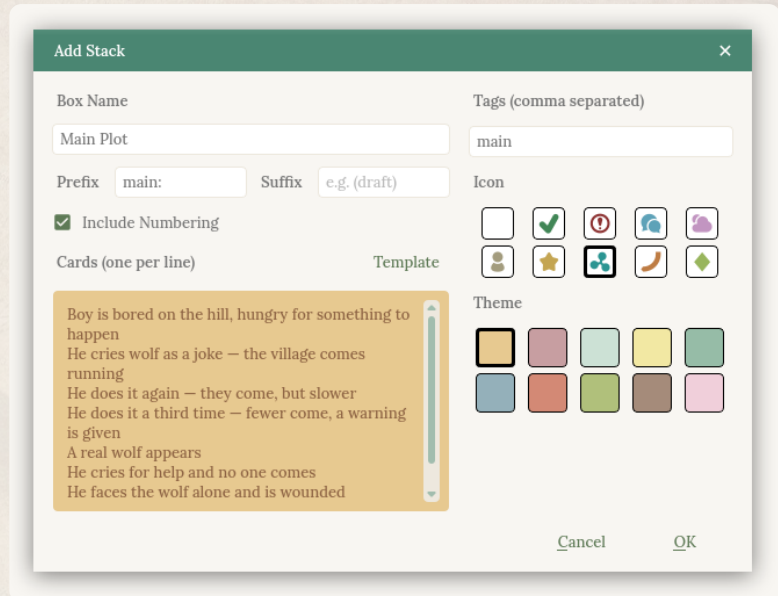
Hemingway claimed the only kind of writing is rewriting. The Empty Cards feature is rewriting made physical. A scene that has three brilliant moments trapped inside a structure that does not work is one of the most frustrating things in drafting. Emptying its cards lets you keep the gold and discard the setting it was stuck in — and watch those three moments find better homes in three different scenes.

Right click on a scene in the Planner, and select "Empty Cards." You'll wonder how you ever lived without it. Your cards are safe in the right sidebar under 'Uncategorised.'

6. Card Stacks — Instant Creative Fuel

A Stack is a group of cards created in bulk: each line you type becomes its own card. Press Ctrl+G (or the stack icon), and the new stack lands in a box in the Work Area, ready to be distributed through the story later. Every card in a stack can share tags, colour, and icon, and can optionally carry a prefix, a suffix, or be chronologically numbered.

On Pro, Stacks can be built from professionally designed Card Stack templates — ready-made mini-outlines for common plot patterns, character arcs, subplot frameworks, and genre beats. Choose one and Quilva generates a group of cards you then customise and place. Many writers reach for these when a section feels flat: it is like having an experienced co-writer suggest the complication you had not thought of. Stacks were designed specifically for layered, non-linear writing — build several in the Work Area, then plot how they interleave in the main board.



7. Practical Workflows

For plotters: use the Planner early. Lay out the major beats, colour-code by act or emotional tone, and build the roadmap before drafting. The visual overview exposes sagging middles and underdeveloped threads before they cost you a draft.

For discovery writers: start loose. Throw ideas into Work Area boxes, write scenes as inspiration strikes, then gradually pull finished beats onto the board as the shape emerges. The Planner grows with the story instead of preceding it.

For the hybrid — which is most writers — move back and forth: rough structure in the Outliner, creative play in the Planner, prose in the Writer, then more rearranging as new ideas surface. None of these approaches fights the software, because the software has no opinion about which one is correct.

“A story is a letter the author writes to himself, to tell himself things he would not otherwise know.”

— Carlos Ruiz Zafón

8. Weaving a Rich Story



Great stories are rarely single threads; they are tapestries. You might run one set of cards for the hero's external journey, another for the internal lie-to-truth arc, others for romance, antagonist scheming, and world-building revelation. Laid out visually, the natural intersection points reveal themselves — the places where two threads should collide, the payoff that has been waiting too long for its setup.

The screenshot shows the 'Planner' tab of a writing application. At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs: Writer, Planner (selected), Atlas, Timeline, Bubbles, Sources, Designer, Publisher, and Settings. Below the navigation bar is a filter section with a 'Filter Cards...' input, a dropdown for 'Any tag', two color-coded filters, and buttons for 'Filter', 'Clear', and 'Show tags'. The main content area is titled 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf > Act 1 to 3 (short story)'. It features two expandable sections: 'Chapter 1' and 'Chapter 2'. Each chapter section contains a grid of story cards. Chapter 1 has four columns of cards, including 'The Sheep Froze', 'Lessons from Berrick', 'Mara's Warning', and 'The First Lie'. Chapter 2 has three columns of cards, including 'The Second Cry', 'A Quiet Dinner', and 'The Third Cry'. Each card contains a specific plot point or character action, often preceded by a small icon (like a person, a star, or a checkmark) and a number indicating its sequence.

Chapter 1

- The Sheep Froze**
 - main: #1 Boy is bored on the hill, hungry for something to happen
 - tobinarc: #1 Feels invisible — his life already decided for him
 - Visibility: A small life can feel like invisibility (theme)
- Lessons from Berrick**
 - Berrick: #1 Remembers being thirteen on the same hill
 - Father: #1 A quiet man who shows love by showing up
 - Berrick: #2 Tries to pass on the one lesson that matters
 - Theme: Trust is the only thing a person truly owns ((trust))
- Mara's Warning**
 - Mara-Arc: #1 Sees through her brother from the start
 - Berrick: #3 Teaches the boy the distress signal
 - Mara-Arc: #2 Tries to warn him, gently, before anything happens
 - Visibility: The shortcut to being seen is making noise (theme)
- The First Lie**
 - main: #2 He cries wolf as a joke — the village comes running
 - tobinarc: #2 Discovers the thrill of being the centre of attention
 - Father: #2 Runs first when the cry goes up
 - Berrick: #4 Sees the first lie for what it is — says nothing

Chapter 2

- The Second Cry**
 - main: #3 He does it again — they come, but slower
 - tobinarc: #3 Becomes addicted to the feeling
 - Father: #3 Begins to suspect after the second cry
- A Quiet Dinner**
 - tobinarc: #4 First moment of real shame — the silent supper
 - Mara-Arc: #3 Watches him do it anyway — withdraws at supper
 - Theme: It can be spent without realising you've spent it ((trust))
- The Third Cry**
 - main: #4 He does it a third time — fewer come, a warning is given
 - tobinarc: #5 Understands he's broken something he can't fix
 - wolf: The grass moves against the wind

The Planner is where you read that letter back before it is fully written. It transforms planning from a chore into one of the most enjoyable parts of the work — the point where a list of ideas first starts to feel like a living thing. Next: Bubbles, the same story seen as a mind map you can sculpt.



~ CHAPTER SIX ~

Bubbles

I. Your Story as a Living Mind Map

“I don’t outline. I make maps. An outline is a list; a map is a place you can get lost in productively.”

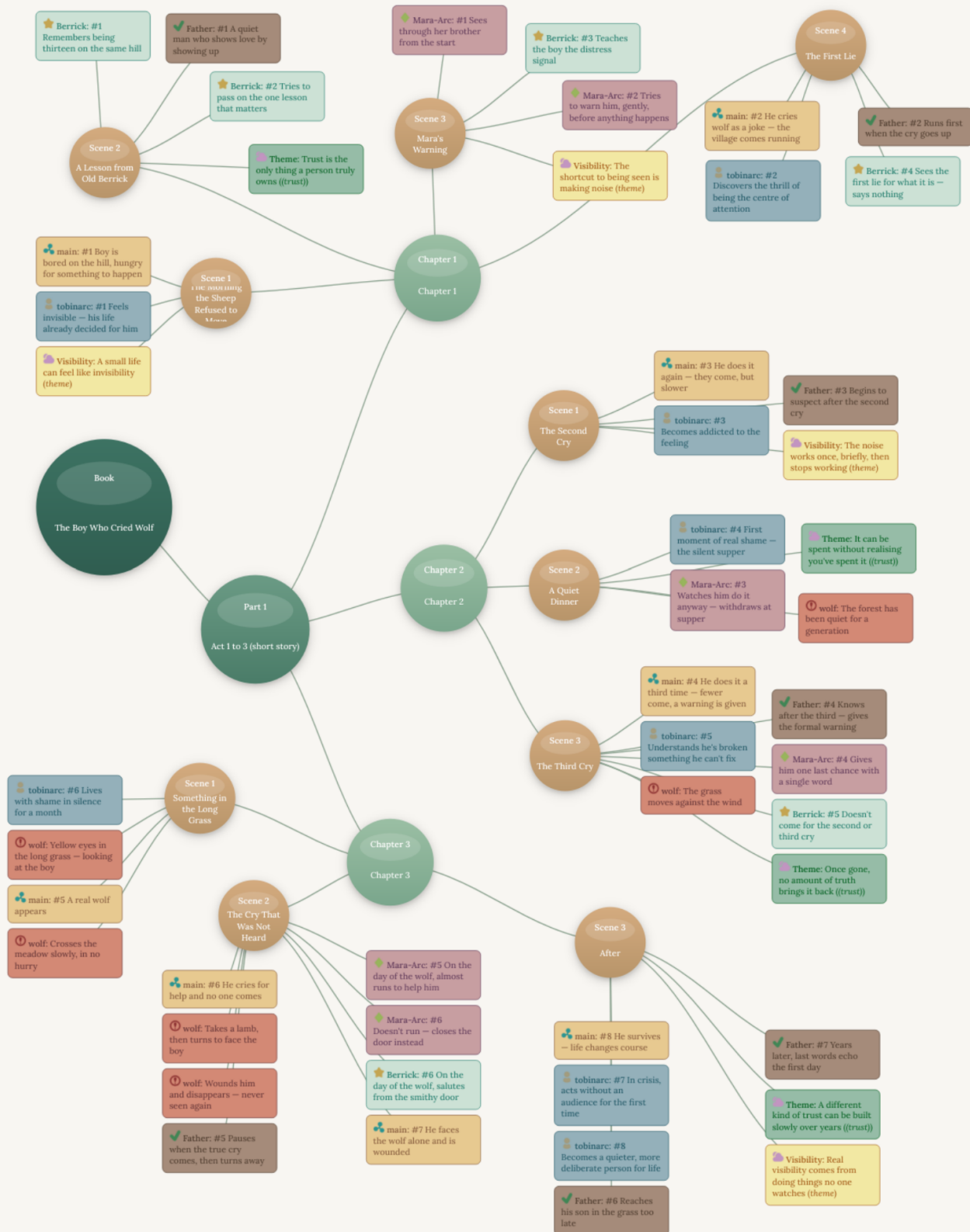
— a working novelist’s notebook

Bubbles is one of the most liberating tabs in Quilva. Where the Outliner is a hierarchical list and the Planner is a board of cards, Bubbles is a mind map: every part of your project is a labeled circular bubble, and the bubbles connect into a branching tree. For many writers this is the tab where the “aha” arrives — the moment they realise they can think about their story spatially, organically, and non-linearly without losing a thread.

2. Reading the Map

Bubbles reflects whatever hierarchy your project uses. Most structural levels are shades of green; scenes use a distinct red/orange tone so they stand out within the tree; cards cluster at the lowest level as direct children of scenes. Each bubble’s label shows its position and name — Chapter 5 followed by whatever you titled it. The result is an intuitive overview of your whole story’s shape in a single glance.

3. Sample of A Bubbles Map





4. Building Structure with Tab

The core interaction is wonderfully fast. Select a bubble and press Tab to create a child, which then becomes selected — so you can keep pressing Tab to build downward at speed:

- ★ Select the root and Tab makes a part.
- ★ Select a chapter and Tab makes a scene (now selected, so Tab again makes a card under it).
- ★ Select a scene or a card and Tab makes a card.

Type the card's text, press Enter to finish, Tab again for the next. Cards created this way in Bubbles get a random theme colour automatically — you are not asked to pick a theme or icon, which makes this the single fastest way to add cards anywhere in Quilva. Change the colour later if you want. Many writers brainstorm here precisely because it feels closer to a whiteboard than a form.



5. Non-Linear, Spatial Thinking

The canvas is open and forgiving. Grow one act to the left and another to the right; push a complex sequence upward; spread a subplot downward in its own cluster. You are never forced to build top-to-bottom or left-to-right. This is freedom specifically for writers who resist traditional linear outlining — you lay parts of the story out in the directions your intuition points, and the relationships between them become visible as you go.



6. Branching and Isolating Your Thinking

Bubbles truly shines with branches. Select a bubble and use Branch Visibility (Ctrl+H) to collapse its children, hiding an entire act, subplot, or character thread so you can focus without distraction; press again to expand. This invites bold experimentation:

- ★ Hide everything except Act Two and freely rearrange its internal scenes and cards.
- ★ Build separate visual clusters for different subplots, then weave them back into the spine.
- ★ Work on the ending with the beginning collapsed out of sight.



7. Fluid Restructuring with Alt-Click

Here is where structural editing becomes playful rather than painful. Select one or more bubbles — cards, scenes, even whole chapters or parts — then Alt-click the bubble you want them to belong to. Everything moves at once, children included, and the Outliner, Planner, and Timeline update in real time. The gesture is identical at every level:

- ★ Select cards (even from several different scenes), Alt-click a scene, and they jump to that scene.
- ★ Select scenes, Alt-click a chapter, and the scenes and all their cards move under it.
- ★ The same gesture re-parents chapters into parts, and parts into different books.

Move a late revelation into the first act just to see how it changes everything. Test a completely different order for a sequence. Pull a subplot forward to fix pacing. The friction is so low that radical experiments become cheap, which is exactly when writers do their best structural thinking.

CHEAP EXPERIMENTS, BETTER BOOKS

There is a principle in design: reduce the cost of a mistake and people take more useful risks. Most writers under-experiment with structure because in other tools, moving a thread is a half-day of careful copy-paste and a real chance of breaking something. When the same change is one Alt-click and fully reversible, you will try the bold rearrangement you would otherwise only have wondered about — and sometimes that wondered-about version is the book.



8. Canvas Control

Navigation is simple: scroll to zoom, hold the middle mouse button to pan, double-click any bubble to rename it inline. Let the map get gloriously messy during exploration, then clean it up in the places you want clarity.

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. Ctrl+click and drag a bubble to move it's children with it. | III. Multi-select with ctrl and shift, then alt+click on a new parent to re-assign. |
| II. Ctrl+H shows or hides children. They'll remember their relative positions. | IV. If you make a mistake, don't worry! You can always undo (Ctrl+Z) |

Bubble Tools	
Tool	What it does
Relax All / Relax Selected	Nudges overlapping bubbles apart without imposing the hierarchy
Auto Arrange All	Re-lays the whole tree by hierarchy in one click (not pixel-perfect, but instantly neat)
Tidy Branch	Auto Arrange scoped to one branch only
Arrange Cards / Stack Cards	Neatens cards under a selection, or aligns a handful of chosen cards
Centre on Bubble (Space)	Recentres the canvas on any bubble instantly

9. The Sidebar

The right sidebar (Ctrl+W) adapts to your selection and is one of Bubbles' quiet superpowers. Select a card and you get the full Planner card editor — nothing is lost editing here. Select a scene and you get a Summary box plus a pale-yellow, Post-it-style Notes box, alongside any linked Sources. Select a chapter or higher and you get a Summary and linked Sources (no yellow note above scene level).

That yellow scene note is not a copy. It is the very same note that appears in the Compass while you write that scene. Write a reminder to yourself against a scene in Bubbles at planning time, and it is waiting for you in the Writer months later when you actually draft it. The Bubbles sidebar and the Writer's Compass are two windows onto the same scene-level information — which is the whole philosophy of Quilva expressed in one small, pale-yellow rectangle.

“The first draft is just you telling yourself the story.”

— Terry Pratchett

Bubbles is where you tell yourself the shape of it. Restructuring — once the most mechanical task in writing — becomes genuinely creative here. Next, the Timeline, where the same story plays out across time.



~ CHAPTER SEVEN ~

Timelines

I. Time, Threads, and Pacing

“Pacing is the management of the reader’s expectations across time. Everything else is decoration.”

— we made this up.

If the Planner is your corkboard, the Timeline is its sophisticated sibling — a horizontal, video-editor-style workspace that brings chronological clarity and surgical control over multiple story threads. For many writers this is the tab where the full scope of the narrative finally snaps into focus: pacing problems exposed, gaps revealed, convergences celebrated.

You create your own “strips” like in a video editor, and using tags, filter cards on that strip. This allows for *layered* planning.

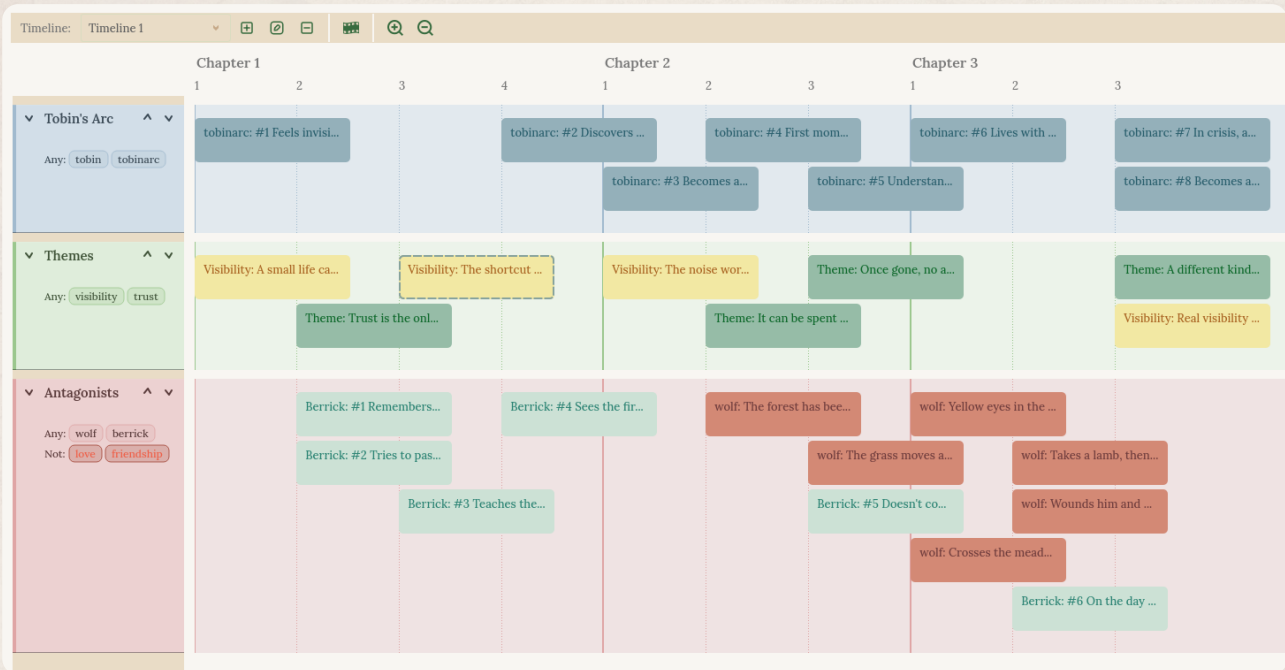
THE SHAPE OF A WELL-PACED BOOK

Kurt Vonnegut famously sketched stories as simple shapes on a graph — the rise and fall of a protagonist’s fortunes drawn as a line. The Timeline is, in a sense, that idea made interactive and multi-track. When you can literally see the antagonist’s strip building in counterpoint to the hero’s emotional strip, you are looking at the architecture of tension itself — the thing readers feel but can never quite point to.



2. How the Timeline Reads

Think of each card as a clip in a video editor. Scenes run left to right; vertical lines mark them, solid at the start of each chapter and dotted for scenes within a chapter. Cards appear as movable blocks placed at their scene. There's a left panel naming each strip with a collapse button, and the main strip area with the actual timeline, scene numbers along the top (hover for the full scene name), and your cards laid along it.



3. Strips and the Tag System

Strips are horizontal tracks, and each one is governed by smart tag-based rules — this is where the Timeline becomes extraordinary:

Time Strip Filters	
Rule	Behaviour
Any of	Show a card if it has at least one of these tags (an OR filter)
At Least	Show a card only if it has all of these tags (an AND filter)
Exclude	Hide any card carrying any of these tags

Combine these however you like. When you drag a card onto a different strip, Quilva automatically updates the card's tags to match that strip's rules, so it stays visible exactly where it belongs. The system is self-organising: it maintains consistency as the story grows complex, instead of leaving you to police it by hand. To add a card directly on a strip, right-click an empty area and choose Add Card — it is automatically tagged to match.

4. Multiple Timelines — Different Lenses



You are not limited to one timeline. The top-left drop-down lets you create, name, edit, and switch between as many as you like, all operating on the exact same underlying cards and structure. Common setups:

- I. A Primary Timeline for overall flow.
- II. Dedicated Character Arc timelines for individual journeys.
- III. A Relationship timeline tracking interpersonal dynamics.
- IV. Separate Subplot timelines for secondary threads.
- V. A Thematic timeline following how a central idea evolves across the book.

Switching between them examines the same story through completely different lenses with zero duplication of work. Because everything stays in sync, you can create a timeline called “Revision Experiment” and test radical chronological changes safely before committing them anywhere.

5. Workflows That Transform a Story



The Timeline turns abstract pacing worry into visible, actionable insight:

- I. Spot imbalances instantly — see at a glance if the B-story has gone quiet for six chapters or if revelations cluster.
- II. Weave threads deliberately — drag cards between strips to experiment with convergence points and watch the ripple.
- III. Run a pacing laboratory — shift blocks of cards and feel immediately when a section is too heavy or too thin.
- IV. Build a Key Beats strip — one strip showing only your major turning points, so you can check the big moments land at the right rhythm against the full story.

The right sidebar (Ctrl+W) is the same full card editor you use in the Planner, so you refine details without leaving the Timeline. Click any scene in the Outliner and the Timeline scrolls and zooms to it. Cross-reference Bubbles often — the spatial map and the chronological timeline answer different questions about the same story and complement each other beautifully.



~ CHAPTER EIGHT ~

The Atlas

1. Your Story's Living Database

“Worldbuilding is not the accumulation of facts. It is the discipline of knowing which facts the story actually needs.”

— a fantasy author's craft talk

The Atlas is where Quilva most clearly stands apart. It is far more than a place to park character sheets. It is the inventory of your project — a categorised, profile-driven database for every character, place, organisation, theme, and idea, and a real-time analytical view of how each one threads through the entire manuscript. Writers who fully adopt the Atlas often describe it as the moment scattered files finally cohere into a real, coherent world.

2. Categories and Presets

The Atlas begins with categories — intelligent containers for the elements of your story. Adding one opens the Add Category dialog, with a list of template options like: characters, locations, timelines, plots, ideas, among others.

Each preset pre-fills sensible, story-focused fields. A character template might start with name, alias, birth-date, age at the story, gender, personality type, desire, the lie the character believes, and internal monologue. These are not blank forms — they are creative prompts that push your thinking deeper before you have written a word. Keep, edit, or delete any field; add your own from a rich set of field types.

Category Custom Fields

Field type	Use
Text / Text Area	A single line, or a multi-line paragraph
Number / Date	A numeric value, or a calendar date
Drop-down / Radio	A single choice from comma-separated options
Multi-select	Several choices from a list
Rating	A 1-to-5 star rating
Checkbox	A simple on/off toggle
Colour	A colour value — ideal for hair or eye colour

If no template fits, choose Custom. A custom category asks for both the singular and plural form of its name (potato/potatoes, person/people) for use in the application.

3. Shapes, Items, and Profiles



Each category is assigned one of ten shapes — square, circle, diamond, five-sided polygon, and so on. The shape acts as a cookie-cutter mask: every item's icon image is cropped to it, and every item in a category inherits the same shape, giving each category a visual identity. Atlas icons show up in the Planner, Timeline, Compass, and Bubbles, so keep them recognisable to make the most of them.

To add an item, right-click a category and say "Add Character" (for example). As you type a name, a tag is suggested, though you can change it. Every item is identified by a tag — categories have no tags, items *always* do. Each item gets a profile built from the category's fields, with the Atlas icon and name at the top, plus a Tag, an Other Names list, and many other details depending on how you set it up.

WHY 'OTHER NAMES' IS QUIETLY GENIUS

Add Mjölnir to Thor's Other Names and every mention of the hammer surfaces under Thor. Add a character's nickname, their title, the name of their ship — and the Mentions panel suddenly tracks the character through every oblique reference, not just the times you used their proper name. Because Other Names is a live filter you can adjust at any moment, you can widen or narrow what counts as a mention while you watch. This is the difference between a database that stores your world and one that helps you understand it.

4. The Real Magic: Tags, Mentions, and Live Analysis

The screenshot displays the 'Atlas' interface for a character named 'Tobin (Character)'. The profile section includes a character image, a description 'The boy who cried wolf! We have finally given him a name', and fields for 'Tag: tobinarc', 'Other Names: liar', and 'Entry Type: Character'. Below this is a 'Notes' section with a rich text editor containing two paragraphs about Tobin Aldermere. The 'Profile Details' section includes fields for Full Name (Tobin Aldermere), Birth Date (2026-05-27), Gender (Male), Enneagram Type (3), Aliases / Nicknames (liar, boy who cried wolf), Age at Story Start (9), MBTI Type (ENFP), and Core Desire vs Core Fear (Wants to be seen). The 'Activity' section shows 'Chapter 1: The Morning the Sheep Refused to Move' with two text snippets. On the right, a sidebar lists 'Characters' (Tobin (tobinarc), maraarc (maraarc), berrick (berrick), father (father), wolf (wolf)), 'Themes' (trust (trust), visibility (visibility)), and 'Plots' (main (main)), along with 'Uncategorised Tags'.

Tags are the Atlas's superpower. Any tag created anywhere in Quilva is picked up here. Type a brand-new tag on a card in the Planner and the Atlas notices it is unfamiliar and files it under Uncategorised Tags. Right-click one or more of those stray tags and Convert To turns them into fully typed, profiled items in any category — “New York” stops being an anonymous string and becomes a Location with a name, an icon, and a profile.

Four types of information can be toggled, shown side by side with the profile. They are independent — enable all four, any combination, or none for a simple document-style entry:

- I. Custom Fields — you set up the form in it's **III. Mentions** — every place the item appears in the actual manuscript text, also includes anything in the 'other names' list.
- II. Cards — every card in the story tagged with this item's tag.
- IV. Sources — every image, note, or file with this item's tag.

5. Filter by Outliner Selection

Enable Filter by Outliner Selection and the Cards, Mentions, and Sources panels narrow to whatever is selected in the Outliner. Suddenly you can answer precise questions: How is this character developing in Act Two specifically? Have I overused this location across the middle chapters? Where does this theme actually appear in Part Three? This turns the Atlas from a reference into an analytical instrument.

6. Icons as Hyperlinks

Once an item has an icon, that icon appears wherever its tag is shown and tag display is enabled — the Planner, Timeline, Bubbles, the Writer's Compass, and the Atlas itself. Items without an icon show their tag as plain text. Clicking any icon or tag anywhere in Quilva jumps straight to that item's profile. You see a character's icon while drafting in the Compass, click it, and instantly refresh yourself on their desire, their lie, and their current arc — without breaking flow.

7. Best Practices for Atlas Mastery

- ★ Start from a useful preset and customise; do not build from scratch unless you must.
- ★ Use Other Names generously — it is what makes the Mention tracker feel almost magical.
- ★ Invest time in icons; a strong visual library makes the whole application feel alive and personal.
- ★ Review key items with all panels enabled before a major writing session.
- ★ Promote tags from Uncategorised as the story reveals what matters, so the world grows alongside the manuscript rather than as a separate chore.

“The reader must never know everything about the world. The writer must.”

— an editor's margin note

The Atlas does not just store information about your story — it helps you understand it. It reveals patterns, exposes imbalances, and gives you the quiet confidence that comes from genuinely knowing your world and everyone in it. Next: Sources, the embedded vault that keeps every reference safely inside the project.



~ CHAPTER NINE ~

Sources

I. Your Story's Private Vault

“Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”

— Zora Neale Hurston

Many tabs in Quilva help you shape and write the story. Sources does something quieter and just as vital: it protects, organises, and connects every piece of inspiration and research so nothing important ever gets lost or disconnected again. Think of it as a private vault — a self-contained library where images, notes, tables, and documents live inside the project file itself, and where each one is tied to the exact part of the story it serves.

2. Why Embedded Sources Change Everything

Ordinary file managers link to external files and break the moment you move anything. Sources embeds everything directly inside the .qlv project file. Move the project and the research moves with it. Email it to a beta reader or editor and everything travels along. Archive the finished book and your reference library is preserved with it, forever. No broken links, no “that perfect image was on my old laptop.” If you add an image and later delete the original from your computer, Quilva still has it — it lives in the project.



3. The Sources Interface

Like every tab, Sources has a toolbar across the top. Down the left is a list of folders; the center shows the current view as thumbnails, like a file browser; the right is a preview panel that adapts to what you select. Select a Note and the panel becomes a note editor. Select a Table and it becomes a table editor. Select an Image and it becomes an image previewer (middle-mouse to zoom, drag to pan). Select a PDF and it is viewable in place.

Folders

Folders are a single level deep — no nesting; you have folders, and items in them, and that is deliberately it. Create one with the Add Folder toolbar button or by right-clicking. Almost every folder is one you make yourself. The single exception is automatic: when you add a profile image to an Atlas item, Quilva creates a folder named after that category and places the image there, so a Characters category produces a Characters folder of profile images.

<i>Item Types</i>	
Type	How it Behaves
Note	Quilva's lightweight rich text. Created directly, or produced when a Word/RTF document is imported (as a simplified note, not the full document)
Table	Built in the table editor, or imported from CSV — so anything Excel exports as CSV comes in cleanly
Styled Box	For quotations, sidenotes, message boxes, and so on.
Image	Embedded and shown as a thumbnail, downscaled on import to keep the project lean
PDF	Imported and viewable in the preview panel

WHY IMPORTS COME IN 'LIGHT'

A 4000×7000 reference image might be reduced to around 800 px wide on import, and a Word document arrives as a simplified note rather than a full rich document. This is not Quilva being lossy for its own sake — it is what keeps a project that contains your entire research library from ballooning to a size you cannot email. The downscale ceiling is the Image Max Resolution setting (100 px up to 4K) in Settings, shared with the Designer. You decide where the balance between fidelity and file size sits.

4. The Real Power: Linking and Tagging



Every item can be linked to any part of your Outliner using the paperclip (Link to Outliner). Select one or more source items, select something in the Outliner — a book, part, chapter, or scene — and click the paperclip to associate them. Links are many-to-many: one castle photo can attach to every scene set there; one poison-research PDF can link to every chapter it informs. Linked items show a small paperclip on the thumbnail; Filter by Outliner Selection then narrows the view to just the sources tied to the current selection.

Every item can also carry tags — a comma-separated list, exactly like card tags. This is the mechanism that connects Sources to the Atlas: a source tagged with an Atlas item's tag automatically appears in that item's profile under Sources. Research stops being a passive file and becomes an active participant in the story.

5. How Sources Surface Everywhere



Because items are linked and tagged, they appear exactly where they are needed rather than sitting in isolation:

- ★ Atlas — sources carrying an item's tag appear in that item's profile.
- ★ Bubbles — selecting a scene or chapter shows its linked sources in the sidebar.
- ★ Writer's Compass — sources linked to a scene can appear in the Compass while you write it (toggleable).
- ★ Designer — right-click an image (or several) and Copy, then Paste from Sources in the Designer; notes pasted this way become dynamic text objects you could later add live updateable tags to.



6. Creative Ways to Use the Vault

- ★ Build a visual reference library for characters and locations that appears in the Compass while you write.
- ★ Keep research PDFs and tables linked to the exact chapters where the information matters.
- ★ Create mood boards for different sections of the book.
- ★ Store evolving outlines, cut scenes, and alternate versions as notes — a living scrapbook that grows with the project.

Many writers treat Sources as an idea bank: a place to drop a promising fragment, an image that sparks an emotion, a half-formed thought with no home yet. Because everything is linked and tagged, those fragments rarely stay lost for long.

THE FREEDOM OF SELF CONTAINMENT

There is a particular calm that comes from knowing your entire creative world — manuscript, structure, cards, world bible, and reference library — exists inside one portable file you fully own. No cloud account that can lapse, no service that can disappear, no folder of links waiting to break. Sources may not be the flashiest tab in Quilva, but for many experienced users it becomes the most quietly cherished, because it removes the low background anxiety that follows scattered research around for an entire project.

“You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club — and then keep it where you can find it again.”

— after Jack London

Sources is where you keep it. Next, the heart of everything: the Writer and the Compass, where all of this planning finally meets the page.



~ CHAPTER TEN ~

The Compass

I. Where Planning Meets the Page

“Writing is easy. All you do is stare at a blank page until drops of blood form on your forehead.”

— Gene Fowler

This is the heart of Quilva. Everything else — the Outliner’s structure, the Planner’s beats, Bubbles’ architecture, the Timeline’s chronology, the Atlas’s world, the vault of Sources — exists to support this single moment: you, the words, and the story arriving on the page. The Writer is designed with deep respect for the writer’s fragile creative state, and its greatest strength is that it never asks you to leave your planning behind. That is the job of the Compass.

2. The Writer: A Calm, Purposeful Space

Open the Writer, pick a scene, and the interface adapts to how you work. There are two modes. Book/Prose is a clean, distraction-free editor with font controls, a formatting toolbar, an optional fixed-width layout, and spellcheck. Screenplay mode is strict by design and correctly formatted from the start: Tab cycles through elements, Enter jumps to whatever’s next, headings and character names capitalise themselves, and Shift+Enter adds a parenthetical. Switch between editors anytime—you can even keep prose and screenplay versions of the same story in one project, sharing a single outline.

KEEP A SCENE WITHOUT SHIPPING IT

Every scene carries a small Publish checkbox in the Outliner. Untick it and the scene stays in your project — visible in the Outliner, searchable in the Finder, still part of your planning — but the Publisher will ignore it entirely, and the Numbers tool will skip past it as it counts. This is the right place to park a scene you are not sure about, an alternate version of a chapter you might revive later, or notes-to-self that should never reach a reader. Nothing is lost; nothing is shipped.

3. Thoughtful Writing Tools



- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>I. Auto Tab indents the first line of every new paragraph — classic novel style.</p> <p>II. Typewriter scroll keeps the cursor at a fixed, comfortable height while the page moves above it.</p> | <p>III. Focus settings choose where the cursor rests or snaps to.</p> <p>IV. Stats mode (Ctrl+Y) shows word count and page count stats at the top right.</p> |
|---|--|

Versions and Status

Every scene can hold up to four versions — write completely different drafts of a scene and switch between them instantly from the version drop-down. Each version carries its own status (Idea, Draft, Revision, Final) with the consistent colour coding that appears on index cards and, when Stats is on, in the Outliner. Content, status, and word counts are all stored per version, so a bold experiment never overwrites the draft you trust.

CURATED FONTS

Quilva bundles roughly 200 hand-picked fonts across 20-plus categories in the designer — EB Garamond, Lora, Merriweather, Crimson, Baskerville, and many more — each with proper bold and italic variants, all licensed for commercial use. Because they ship with the app, your book looks identical on any machine, years from now, with no “missing font” nightmares when you send the file to an editor. The font choice is project-wide by design: change it once and the whole manuscript follows, which is exactly the consistency a real book requires.

The Writer has far less font options than the designer to keep things simple while you write. Fonts and other assets can be added to quilva using the .qlva asset format.

4. The Compass — Your Intelligent Writing Companion

If the Writer is the stage, the Compass is the director standing just off to the side, quietly handing you exactly what you need and nothing more. Toggle it with Ctrl+W. It appears on the right whenever a scene-level item is selected, in both book and screenplay mode, and it is scene-aware: as you move between scenes it refreshes to show what matters for the scene you are now writing. This is the practical reason Quilva encourages small, manageable scenes over one giant document — a well-structured outline turns directly into focused, scene-by-scene guidance.

Click the Compass heading to open its editor. Every panel is optional and reorderable (a checkbox toggles visibility; Move Up / Move Down sets order):

<i>The Compass Editor</i>	
Panel	What it Shows
Summaries	The summary of any hierarchy level — book, part, chapter, scene — each toggled independently, so the whole-book summary can stay in view while you write a single scene
Cards	The cards assigned to the current scene — the beats you planned, kept beside the prose
Notes	The scene's own pale-yellow note — the same one shown in the Bubbles sidebar
Tags	The scene's tags, as Atlas icons where the item has one, or plain text where it does not
Sources	Files, images, and notes linked to the current scene from Sources
Status and Version	Where this scene sits in its development cycle

This is the feature that makes Quilva's planning genuinely survive contact with the page. In most systems, beautiful plans get abandoned the instant drafting begins. In Quilva the plan travels with you, scene by scene, gently supporting every paragraph — and deliberately showing you nothing else, so you can think about the scene rather than the whole novel.



5. Retreat Mode — Pure Stillness

Press Ctrl+R and everything else fades. Tabs disappear. The Outliner vanishes. Menus retreat. The screen becomes just you, the page, and — if you choose — the Compass, still toggleable with Ctrl+W from inside Retreat mode. It is one of the most peaceful focus environments in any writing software, and the daily combination many writers swear by is Retreat plus Compass: the solitude of a minimalist editor paired with just enough structural awareness to keep a long book on course.

WHY ONLY BLACK OR GREY?

Text colour is deliberately limited to black or a calm medium grey. This looks like a missing feature and is in fact a considered one. Every decision a tool offers is a small tax on attention; a font-colour picker is an invitation to spend twenty minutes choosing a shade of teal instead of writing the scene. Quilva removes the temptation on purpose. The same philosophy explains the curated font library rather than every system font, and the absence of social-style distractions. The interface is engineered to reduce decision fatigue so the decisions you make are about the story.



6. How They Work Together

- I. You plan beats in the Planner and arrange them in the Timeline.
- II. You build the world in the Atlas and gather references in Sources.
- III. You structure everything in the Outliner and Bubbles.
- IV. Then you sit down to write — and as you select each scene, the Compass assembles exactly the cards, summaries, characters, and images that scene needs.
- V. When you want total stillness you enter Retreat mode; when you want to see structure you exit and the full interface returns instantly.

“Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”

— Anton Chekhov

The Compass is what keeps the glint of broken glass you imagined three months ago in front of you at the exact moment you write the line. You are never alone with a blank page, and never overwhelmed beside it. For many writers this combined experience is the single reason they do not want to work any other way. Next: the Designer and Publisher, where the manuscript becomes a book.



~ CHAPTER ELEVEN ~

Design, Publish

I. From Manuscript to Book

“Typography is what language looks like. A book’s design is the silent voice the reader hears before the first word.”

— after Ellen Lupton

This is the culmination of everything you have built. After the planning, the world-building, and the drafting, the Designer and Publisher transform your living project into a finished, professional book. Presentation is not cosmetic. The rhythm of a page, the use of white space, the way a chapter opens — these shape how a reader receives and remembers a story. Quilva gives you professional-grade control while keeping design dynamically tied to the manuscript.

2. The Designer (Pro) — Dynamic Book Layout

The Designer is a vector-based page-layout studio built directly into your project — think of it as a focused version of a tool like Illustrator or CorelDRAW, tightly bound to your book’s structure. It is not a separate program you export to. Your written content is the dynamic layer; the Designer controls the presentation layer — pages, typography, spacing, imagery. Edit a paragraph in the Writer and it updates in the designed pages (if you choose to do it that way). Reorder chapters in the Outliner and the book reflows. Structural change is non-destructive to the design you worked hard to get right — which is one of the most powerful aspects of the whole program.



3. Layouts, Content, and Pages

The Designer uses two linked systems. A Layout defines the rules of a page — paper size, margins, content type (Book or Screenplay), fonts, indents, and whether a page can sit on a left (verso) or right (recto) side. The Content List, in the Design tab, is the list of your actual design work, each item linked to a Layout. Reuse one Layout for the whole book, or give every content item its own.

Think of a page in the Designer not as a single page used once but as a template used over and over. Every page has a Page Type that tells the Publisher where it belongs:

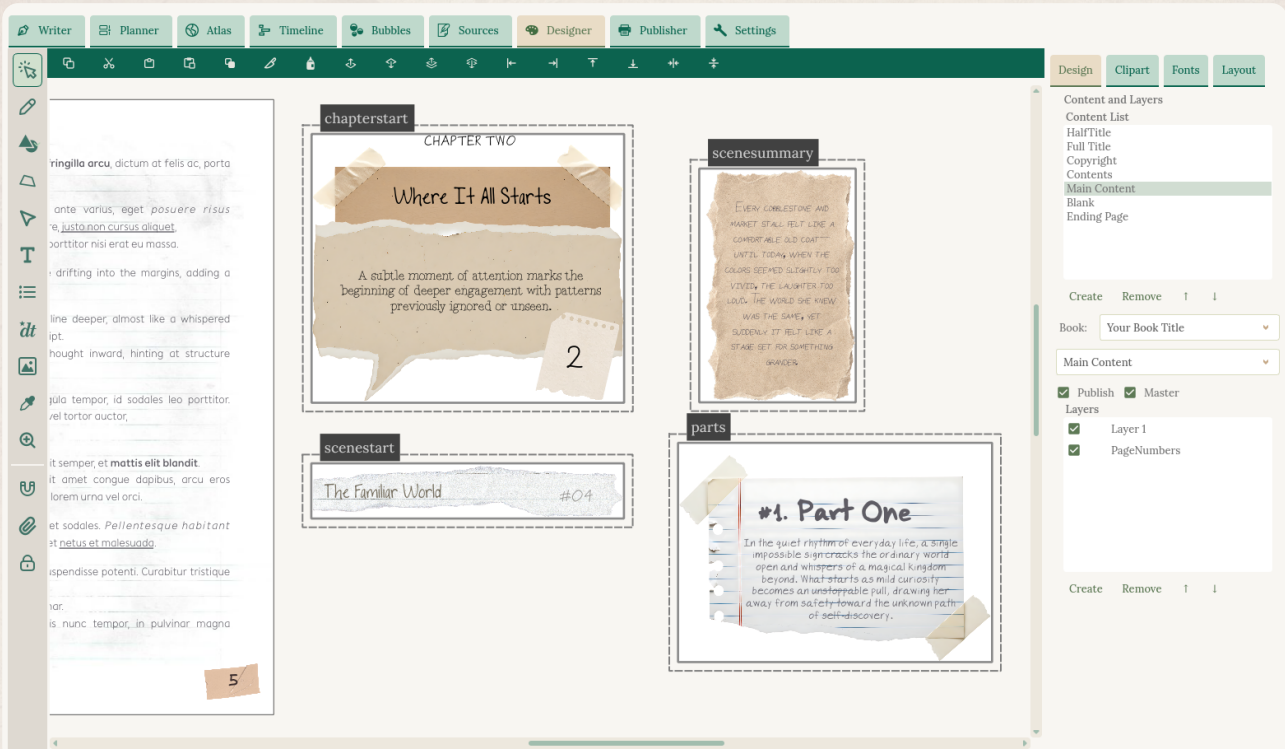
<i>Layout - Page Types</i>	
Page Type	Where it Goes
Main Content	The body pages — the bulk of the book
Paratext	Front matter and back matter - these layouts are placed before and after Main Content
Chapter Start / Act Start	Templates automatically inserted before each chapter or act
Within Scene	Inserted within or near every scene — ideal for illustrations or breaks
Blank	Automatically Inserted (when needed) to keep proper verso/recto parity
Only Frames	Frames only, no body text — perfect for a contents page
Single Instance	Used once, at its point in the Content List order
Referenced	Inserted in the Writer

THE MASTER CHECKBOX

Exactly one content item per book must be marked Master. It defines the main typography, margins, and page style — the Publisher uses the Master's layout as the default for all Main Content pages. Before publishing, make sure your Master has the Master and Publish boxes ticked, contains a page set to type Main Content, and uses the correct content type. Set more than one Master per book and the Publisher will not know which voice the book should speak in. Almost always you want the Master to be a page spread — left and right pages designed separately — so inner and outer margins stay symmetrical.

4. Frames — Smart Insertions

Frames let you place design elements — borders, ornaments, illustrations, dynamic text — at precise points during publishing. Created within Layouts, drawn on the canvas, then filled with content in the Design tab, frames carry insert check-boxes (Chapter Start/End, Scene Start/Body/End, Act Start/End, Book Start/End). You can also drop a frame at an exact spot by typing in the Writer. Combined with Dynamic Text, frames produce chapter headings and scene dividers that stay perfectly in sync with the story.



5. Dynamic Text — Design Smarter

Dynamic Text lets elements update by context. Write a chapter heading once and it becomes "Chapter One," "Chapter Two," and so on automatically. The codes are extensive—book, part, chapter, and scene names and numbers, page numbers, summaries, even card lists—with simple HTML for bold, italic, underline, and line breaks, plus conditional [hide:...] tags. For example:

```
<b>Chapter [ChapterNumber]:</b> <i>[Chapter]</i>
```

renders as "Chapter Two: My Custom Chapter Title" in one place and "Chapter Four: Another Chapter" in another, all from one template. Test it by moving through the Outliner and watching the canvas update; accurate page numbers are resolved when you publish.

Relative or Absolute Counting?

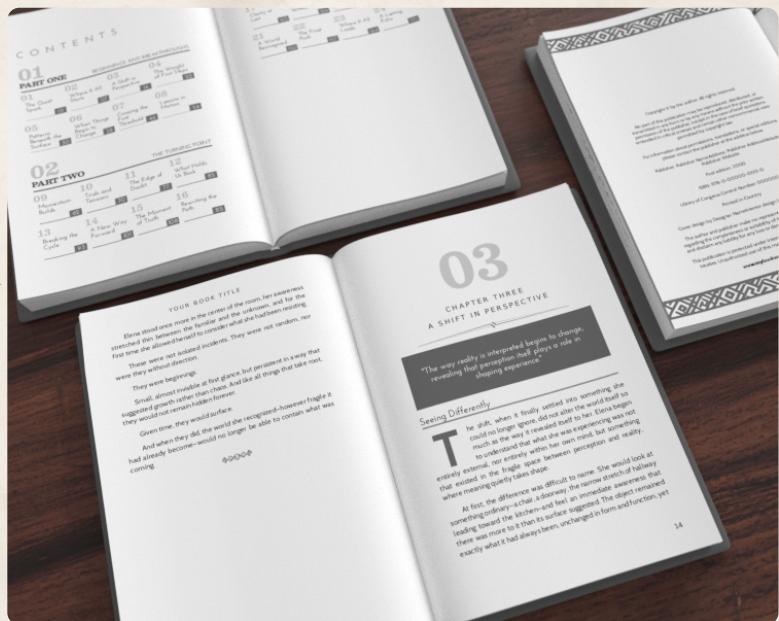
Codes like [ChapterNumber] count from the start of the whole book—useful for spines, running heads, and anywhere the reader expects a single rising sequence. But sometimes you want a local count: scene three of this chapter, not scene forty-seven overall. The relative family of codes counts within the immediate parent instead. Each comes in numeric forms (with optional zero-padding) and word forms, so you can pick what reads best. In a multi-part book, a template using [RelChapterNumber] will read "Chapter One" for the first chapter of every Part rather than counting into the dozens—the convention many literary novels follow.

6. The Publisher — Professional Output

Quilva has four publishing modes, each suited to a different stage of a book's life. The trick is knowing which one you reach for.

Quick Publish

A fast, clean PDF of whatever you have selected in the Outliner — no Designer, no setup, no waiting. This is also where you export to Word (.docx). Use it for daily exports, critique partners, and anything that simply needs to look presentable on a page.



Styled Book

The middle path between Quick Publish and a fully designed book. Styled Book takes your manuscript and applies a Style — a reusable bundle of typography, colours, headings, spacing, borders, and the other usual page-design parameters — to produce a properly formatted book without you opening the Designer. If you have ever used a CSS stylesheet on the web, the analogy is exact: the Style is a separate, named thing; the book is your content; the Publisher marries the two at output time. Styles live in your Style Library, which is shared across all your Quilva projects (more on this below).

Designed Book

The press-ready path, driven by the Designer. Every page, frame, ornament, and dynamic-text decision you made in the Designer is honoured; the result is a complete, professional PDF you can send to a printer. It takes a little longer to compile (typically two to five minutes) because of the precision involved.

Quicker Previews

It's worth mentioning you can preview your work "one chapter at a time" when making design changes, and you do this by hitting the "Render Active Section" button, which significantly reduces wait times. This tool is definitely for the power user who is treating their book's presentation like a work of art.

Screenplay

Quick, correct screenplay output — industry-standard formatting straight from your project, plus an export to Fountain for moving the script into any other screenwriting tool you wish.

7. The Style Editor — Reusable Book Design

The Publisher tab carries two sub-modes: Preview (where you actually publish) and the Style Editor (where you shape Styled Book output). Open the Style Editor and you can create a new Style, edit an existing one, or remove one you no longer want. Inside a Style you adjust the parameters a designer cares about — fonts and weights, heading sizes and hierarchy, body colour and accent colour, paragraph spacing, indents, borders, scene-break ornaments, and the rest. Sample content updates in real time as you tweak, so the design decisions stay visible while you make them. Save the Style when you are happy.

The Way Light Travels

From the Sun to the Forest Floor

Sunlight falling on a leaf undertakes its longest journey by far before its very last millimetre. Eight minutes from the sun, skating through ninety-three million miles of empty space — and then, at the canopy, a slow scatter *through layer after layer* of green. A photon that crossed the solar system in a blink will spend more time inside one fern than it spent in transit. The *forest floor* sees only the survivors.



By the time light reaches the ground it has been filtered, deflected, partly absorbed, and turned a hundred shades of green. What remains is enough to grow moss, lichens, the small ferns that thrive in low light — a quiet ecosystem entirely fed by what the trees above could not be bothered to catch. Every shaded forest floor is, in a sense, made of leftovers.

Figure 1 — Light through a forest canopy

Forest Songbirds — Field Notes							
Bird	Length	Habitat	Song	Diet	Range	Seen	Notes
Wren	10 cm	Hedgerow	Loud trill	Insects	Wide	Often	Bold
Robin	14 cm	Garden	Sweet warble	Worms	Wide	Daily	Tame
Thrush	23 cm	Woodland	Repeated phrases	Snails	Wide	Dusk	Shy
Blackcap	13 cm	Scrub	Flutey burst	Berries	Mid	Summer	Migrant

- Page
- Heading 1 (H1)
- Heading 2 (H2)
- Paragraph
 - Font family: EB Garamond
 - Font size: 16 px
 - Style: ☐ B ☐ I ☐ U
 - Colour:
 - Background:
 - Text align: justify
 - Line height: 150 %
 - Letter spacing: 0 px
 - Word spacing: 0 px
 - Case: none
 - Margin: T 0 px B 12 px
 - Padding: T 0 px R 0 px B 0 px L 0 px
- Border
- Image
- Table
- Unordered List
- Ordered List
- Styled Box

To use a Style, switch over to Preview, choose Styled Book as the publishing mode, pick your Style from the list, and you will see your own book rendered through it — not the dummy sample. Change your mind about a font choice a month later? Edit the Style; every book that uses it updates.

STYLES ARE SHARED

A Style isn't tied to one project—it lives in Quilva and is referenced by every book that uses it. Change the heading font on a Style shared by five books, and all five update the next time they're opened. Great for a consistent series look, but a landmine if you forget. When polishing one book's look, a safe habit is to duplicate, rename, and tweak the copy. You can also export Styles to a .qlva file to share with other writers, imported via File, Add Quilva Assets.

8. Quilva Assets — The Wider Ecosystem



Styles are one citizen of a wider system. A Quilva Asset is any reusable, install-level piece you can bring in from outside your project: Styles, Designer templates, fonts, icon packs, ornaments, and more. Assets are distributed as .qlva files, and you bring them in via File, Add Quilva Assets. The system is also how the team and the community share resources: download a .qlva pack of literary-fiction Styles or a set of fantasy chapter ornaments, add it once, and it is yours forever.

QUICK PUBLISH, FOR EVERY DAY LIFE

Not every export is a press run. Quick Publish (Ctrl+P) generates a clean, simple PDF of the current Outliner selection — a single chapter for a critique partner, a scene for yourself — without opening the Publisher tab.

9. A Complete, Living Production Environment



Quilva preserves the traditional separation of writing and design — but keeps both seamlessly connected, integrating only at the publishing stage. When writing, don't think about design. The book stays a living project right up until you export the final PDF.

“A well-made book is an argument that the words inside it were worth the trouble.”

— a book designer's credo

The Designer and Publisher are the fulfillment of Quilva's core promise: one environment, complete ownership, from first idea to finished book.



~ CHAPTER TWELVE ~

You and Quilva

I. The End of the Beginning

“A writer is a person for whom writing is more difficult than it is for other people.”

— Thomas Mann

you have now had a glimpse into every area of Quilva. This final chapter brings the pieces together into some suggested workflows, recaps some of the most important concepts, and looks at what it means to make Quilva a long-term creative home.

This eBook has barely scratched the surface of what Quilva can do. This is not an understatement. An entire book could be made just on the Designer, what all the different tools do, understanding layouts and content more deeply, working with assets, layers, dynamic text, creating templates and packaging them as .qlva files.

The Publisher was pretty much glossed over in this book, but there are a lot of settings that give you fine control over the presentation of your work, and lots of tips and tricks that could save you a lot of time, and non linear workflows that are truly powerful.

The Atlas and Timeline were glossed over to, as what you can achieve with these tabs truly is remarkable when it comes to seeing your story from different angles. But, as was said from the beginning of this book - this isn't a 'user manual' in the traditional sense. It has hopefully been a way to give new users an introduction, or taste, into what makes Quilva unique.



2. End-to-End Workflows

For Dedicated Plotters

Build your skeleton in the Outliner first. Move to Bubbles for spatial architecture and quickly rearranging your plan. Make card stacks in the planner to define subplots and threads, then weave them into the story. Use the Timeline to isolate threads, track character relationships, and balance pacing and convergence. Flesh out the world in the Atlas, gather references in Sources, and finally write scene-by-scene with the Compass active. It will feel like raising a building from the foundation up, and it's the way we intended Quilva to be used.

For Discovery Writers

Start wherever feels natural—free exploration in Bubbles and the Planner, ideas dropped into Stacks to work out later, or a rough structure in the Outliner. Write the scenes that inspire you, do some world-building in the Atlas, and let the story grow in whatever way it leads. Play around with the order of events with the Timeline, moving pieces of the story around like a puzzle. You could later bring order to the story, since your structure can catch up to the story instead of having to come first.

For Designers

Many people don't know that you can design templates and package them as Quilva asset files, and you can do this using only the free demo version. It costs nothing to start building assets for other Pro users, which you can freely sell or distribute without our consent. We've designed it this way in order to encourage the creation of templates, styles, and more.

For Series and Complex Projects

Lean on multiple Timelines, specialised Atlas categories, and liberally linked Sources to manage long arcs. Bubbles becomes invaluable for seeing the shape across many books, and the Atlas's Filter by Outliner Selection lets you audit a single character across an entire series.

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| <p>I. Keep the Finder open in a second window for very large projects.</p> <p>II. Use Stacks and the Work Area heavily during early brainstorming.</p> <p>III. Toggle Stats regularly to stay aware of pacing and balance.</p> | <p>IV. Be bold with version history — four versions per scene means experiments cost nothing.</p> <p>V. On Pro, build your own Card Stack and Designer templates for the genres you return to.</p> |
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3. Power-User Efficiency

We're going to rapidly cover some unmentioned features for you to experiment with. You can 'link' items in the Designer or Sources tabs to places in your outliner using the paperclip. You can copy and paste images and notes from Sources into the Designer. You can "insert" Sources listed in your Compass directly into your page by right clicking. You can assign different styles to different inserts to really control styling. Dynamic text is very powerful in the Designer, there's a complete reference in the online docs. Use 'Only Frames' page type in the Designer to build creative, procedural 'Table of Contents' pages. Study other Designer Templates to truly understand how they work. Insert pages or frames from the Designer directly from the Writer by right clicking and selecting, Insert (item). Use Styled Boxes to really control how certain elements come up on pages. Use the 'ignore blanks' checkbox for a frame to skip adding if empty - perfect for adding/removing illustrations linked to scenes.

There are loads more, but these ideas should give you more than enough to begin experimenting.

Useful Hotkeys - Not An Exhaustive List

Shortcut	Why it's useful
Ctrl+R	Toggles 'Retreat Mode' - which hides most of the interface except the page you're writing.
Ctrl+W	Toggles the right side bar, which most of the tabs have. Sometimes you don't need it.
Ctrl+Q	Toggles Outliner visibility (For MacOS users this is Cmd+I)
Ctrl+E	Expand upon your outline by adding multiple acts, chapters, or scenes (one line per item)
Ctrl+D	Add a card to the selected scene. (Ctrl+C was taken!) You don't have to be in the Planner.
Ctrl+G	Add a Group or 'Stack' of cards, one per line, which ends up in a box in the planner sidebar.
Ctrl+H	Branch Visibility - Show/Hide branches in Bubbles, essential for creating a tidy mindmap.
Ctrl+F	Finder (project-wide search) and filter between types of data
Ctrl+Y	Toggle Stats - to preview word counts and page counts. Colours in Outliner indicate status.
Ctrl+L	Toggle Numbers in Outliner for Chapters and Scenes. Skips scenes that aren't 'Publish' checked.
Ctrl+P	Quick Publish - export a PDF just of the section you're working on for quick sharing.
Ctrl + J	Jotter. The quickest way to create a complete outline. Use tabs to indicate hierarchy.
Tab	Build structure (Bubbles and Index Cards) / element cycle (Writer screenplay)



4. The Human Authorship Certificate

We live in a strange moment for writers. A machine can produce a passable novel in an afternoon, and the honest author has had no concrete way to stand up and say “I actually did this.” The Human Authorship Certificate, a Pro feature, is Quilva’s answer — and it is worth understanding precisely, because its integrity is the entire point.

While you write, Quilva keeps a small, private notebook of how you write — not the words, the patterns. It notices keystrokes (a real novel is hundreds of thousands of them, with no shortcut), pasted text (one paste, two keystrokes, five thousand words — an unmistakable ratio), imported documents (treated as paste, since their origin cannot be vouched for), deletions (a quietly positive signal — real writers cut and rewrite), and genuine time at the keyboard (the clock pauses when you walk away; an app left running overnight earns nothing).

NOTHING LEAVES YOUR COMPUTER

This matters and the team is emphatic about it. Quilva does not phone home. It does not stream your keystrokes anywhere. The notebook of patterns lives inside your project file, on your machine, beside your manuscript. The only moment anything leaves your computer is when someone scans the finished QR code — and even then, only a single encrypted summary plus a few randomly chosen sentences travels, decrypts on the server to display the readout, and vanishes immediately after. You can prove the privacy claim yourself by generating a certificate fully offline.

The certificate looks only at the active version of each scene — the one you chose to publish — and ignores anything with the Publish box unticked, so earlier AI-assisted drafts neither help nor hurt; what is measured is the book you are actually publishing. The seal is encrypted and bound to the specific file: edit the project in a text editor, copy the seal between projects, or delete the record entirely, and the certificate feature locks permanently for that file (you can still finish and publish the book — you simply cannot produce a certificate from a tampered file). Because the certificate displays a few sentences chosen at random from the manuscript, you cannot use one human-written book’s certificate to vouch for a different one.

Quilva is honest about the limits: no system can perfectly distinguish a novel written from imagination from one painstakingly retyped from a printout while faking human rhythm, and a determined expert could eventually break any system that runs on a normal computer. What the certificate proves is concrete and meaningful all the same — that the book came together through real

keystrokes, real time, and real editing inside Quilva, rather than being dropped in from somewhere else. It is, in the team's own framing, a proof of effort. In a flooded market, that is a real thing worth being able to say out loud.

A Tool for Education

The same mechanism has an obvious second life in schools and universities, where the question “did this student actually write this?” has become genuinely hard. Rather than guessing at the text the way fallible AI-detectors do, Quilva records how the work came into existence — the thousands of keystrokes, pauses, and revisions a genuine essay accumulates, against the flat signature of a last-minute paste. It supports academic integrity without intrusive monitoring, protects honest students who can now prove their effort, and works entirely offline. Institutional licenses and bulk pricing are available; contact the team.

5. Collaboration, Maintenance, and Ownership

Collaboration, Maintenance, and Ownership

Because everything is one portable file, sharing is simple — send it to a beta reader, editor, or co-writer; they can open it (in Demo mode if they have no licence) and see the full project. For long-haul projects: keep image resolution reasonable in Settings, use incremental backups religiously, and archive finished work by exporting final PDFs and zipping the .qlv file. There are no subscriptions and no way to lose access. Updates within a major version are free and permanent.

WHY WE BUILT QUILVA

Quilva is made by a small team who say, plainly, that they built it because they love writing and believe writers deserve better tools. They read every message at support@quilva.com; a real share of the program's features began as user suggestions. They are dreaming aloud about a second major version. If you love the software, the most useful thing you can do is tell other writers — and if you have an idea that would make it better, send it. That is not a closing flourish. It is genuinely how this thing has been built.

“We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.”

— Ernest Hemingway

Empowering You Like Nothing Before

Quilva is not really software — not in the way that word usually lands. It is a place to practice that craft: across a first novel and a tenth, across quiet literary work and sprawling illustrated epics, growing its workflows around you as you grow. The friction that kills momentum quietly disappears here, and what remains is the part that always mattered — the story only you can tell.

We built it on a simple conviction: that human stories matter, and that work made with care and deeply felt makes the world a little larger. Quilva exists to help you make yours — with joy, with confidence, and with results you will be proud to put your name to.

Some stories are only possible to write here. Short of a fiercely organised system of your own to rival it, we know of no other way to hold plots, subplots, character arcs, and layered storytelling together with this much control and this little resistance. And that changes more than how the book feels to write — it changes the book itself. The tools you reach for shape what you make with them; that has never been merely a matter of taste.

Quilva is made for storytellers, but it does not stop there. Use it for simple eBooks like this one, for manuals, for design work that the Designer, Outliner, and Dynamic Text can drive at scale — a run of business cards, say, where the names and details change while the design stays editable in a single place. We have only begun to imagine what Quilva can do. We cannot wait to see the rest from you.

So close this guide. Open Quilva. Go and write something wonderful.

The page is waiting.

Welcome to the Quilva community.