



December 2021

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Dearestreader,

Wow, December is here. I'm not sure I'm emotionally ready for the holidays, but happily, the house is decorated inside and out, and that leaves me space to spend the month in a more contemplative state. It's time for me to break out my notebooks and do some real thinking. How did this year go? Did I meet my goals? Where did I miss, where did I succeed? What do I want to accomplish in 2022? You know, all the things that go into my annual review.

I will say, it has been a *year*, for all of us. A year of chaos, a year of tears for far too many. But at the same time, in between the headlines, so many life-affirming stories, so many opportunities for us to be together again. I hope all of you have gotten a chance to connect with your family and friends (and bookstores!) in person, and have had a chance to reclaim some normalcy. We've been lucky here in Tennessee to have the opportunity to be vaccinated early (and often—UGH! that booster was *not* fun) so have been back to regularly scheduled programming for quite a while. Of course, we both work at home anyway, so that makes life in a pandemic simpler. But moving, renovating, adding a screened porch, plus releasing books, writing books, publishing books, and managing ourselves and family duties has worn us down. I am looking forward to quiet holidays, and an even quieter 2022.

I've already taken a huge step toward that goal by leaving social media except for Fridays. I've started up my [Smatterings blog](#) again, and on Business Fridays, I'm posting said blog, sharing links and book recommendations, answering comments, and otherwise communicating with the outside world. The rest of the week is reserved for me, and my creative work. I'm three weeks into this new prioritization of my time, and I am LOVING it. I get to stay connected with everyone while still having the space and quiet I need to create. [You can find out more of my rationale here](#) and I look forward to you joining the conversation on Fridays!

We also received a fantastic honor for [A WORD ON WORDS](#): an EMMY nomination for season 6! We could not be more thrilled. It was hard to pivot a television show to an online endeavor, but we managed to find a way, and it ended up being a pretty amazing season. Congrats to all!

□ Read All About It...



SCORPICA by G. R. Macallister

Sophisticated, complicated, elevated epic fantasy. Brutal magic, warrior queens, political drama, a matriarchal society suffering from the "Drought of Girls"... this story stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the major titles in the genre and as a "feminist Game of Thrones." Still, it succeeds in not being interpretive or derivative, a true triumph. The world-building is top-notch, the characters are fierce, vicious, and compelling, and the build to the explosive ending is incredibly satisfying. It's going to be a fantastic TV show. It's going to win all the awards. A total win from start to finish. I can't wait to experience the next book in the series.

BLUEBIRD by Sharon Cameron

An incredible novel based on the true and shocking Project Bluebird, Nashville's own Sharon Cameron has created a stellar YA thriller that blew me away. The research is impeccable, the juxtaposition of the horrors of the Nazis and Bluebird against the joy and compassion of Powell House makes this a must-read. Grab it, peeps!

SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU by Cal Newport

Yes, here I am with *another* Newport recommendation. I'm more than a Newport fangirl, though, I swear. I genuinely think much of what he has to say can be life-changing, and while I don't agree with everything, naturally, this book talks about a cool concept, career capital, that can help you find happiness in your work/life balance.

THE PRACTICE OF GROUNDEDNESS by Brad Stulberg

I loved this book so much it launched a thousand ships for me—at least, it was the final nail in my proverbial social media habit coffin. I wrote all over the back pages, all the ways I could be more grounded, and found that I was simply

trying to do too much. The result is the Social Media Business Friday conversation (see link above.) For a quick and dirty primer on Brad's book, you should listen to this podcast ([Episode 102](#)) that he did with Cal Newport, which really set me on fire.

☐☐ December Recipe: Blackened Halibut



What could be better than something simple and delicious for the holidays? We're all short on time, our nerves are frazzled, and there are so many delicious annual traditions out there to make that I find myself on those in-between days looking for utter simplicity. Blackened Halibut (or any mild white fish) is my go-to. Simply heat EVOO in a pan, wash and dry a halibut filet, sprinkle it with [Spiceology Black Magic](#), cook for five minutes, flip, sprinkle the other side, and go for another five or until your desired level of doneness is reached. While the fish is cooking, I fork two baked potatoes, rub them in olive oil and sprinkle them with salt and pepper, and microwave for five minutes on each side. Boom. Ten minutes to a delicious, fresh, hot, and relatively healthy dinner. (Spiceology makes a great holiday gift, BTW...)

As always, to celebrate the holidays, here is the link to our [family cookie recipes!](#)

You can find all of my recipes [here](#). And if you want some wine to go with the meals, [The Wine Vixen](#) has you covered.

☐ Bookish News

Books 1-3 on sale!



The first three [Taylor Jackson novels](#) are on sale all month in preparation for the re-release of THE COLD ROOM on January 24! Check it out [here!](#)



KILLER YEAR, Stories to Die For, an amazing anthology we created during my (our) debut year, is available again! This collection of short stories from the brightest voices in crime fiction is sure to delight any fan of the genre. Edited by Lee Child, with essays and stories from luminaries in the field such as Laura Lippman, Allison Brennan, Gregg Olsen, M.J. Rose, Jason Pinter, and more, KILLER YEAR is the perfect stocking stuffer for your crime fiction lover. Isn't this new cover amazing??? The ebook is available now and the print versions will be out next week.

[I want to be thrilled...](#)

□ Contest

Every month, I draw a name from those of you who open the newsletter and send that lovely person a \$30 gift card to the bookstore of their choice. It's my way of saying thanks for being here. Congrats to last month's winner: Janine!

And don't forget to enter this month's drawing below!

I WANT THAT GIFT CARD!

I will be back with you on Christmas eve with a special sale email... In the meantime, merry everything to you, dear friend. Thank you for your continued support and for staying connected. It means the world to me. Have a fabulous holiday season, however you celebrate, and a special, safe, and fun New Year!

Peace and hugs,



Are you still here?

Here's a kitten for your troubles!



Did you like this newsletter? Share it with a friend!



J.T. Ellison

P.O. Box 218453
Nashville, TN 37221
United States



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jtellison@jtellison.com
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