



The Joy of Ritual

January 2023

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Dear ones,

Happy New Year!

I've been so excited for 2023, for the clean slate of a fresh calendar and the mental reset that comes every January. And we are finally here! It's silly to many, I know, the idea that there's a specific date when we will suddenly change, and become better versions of ourselves—stronger, faster, sleeker, smarter. That bad habits will be shed and positive ones will take their place. (Anyone who's been in the gym the first few weeks of the year will see this in action. The attrition by week 4 is both remarkable and sad.)

And yet, I, like many of you, am driven to try.

I am glad to see 2022 in the rearview. It was a weird year, with too many unscheduled interruptions and personal health issues for my liking. COVID (twice), a shoulder surgery, months of rehab, a sick cat, the continued adverse effects of the booster mRNA vaccine and COVID on my poor heart (improving now with medication and a strict no salt, no alcohol diet) and a very sick kitten all kept me busy. I was shocked to find out how many of my friends have suffered from the same health issues this year. I pray that it's all temporary, for all of us.

This new reality affects my planning for 2023 and beyond. I can't do as much as I'd like while I continue to heal. And that's okay. This enforced rest gives me time to reset.

My [Annual Review](#) goes into all of this in greater detail, but my word for 2023 is **Ritual**. It's something I feel we lost during the pandemic, those small but important, memorable activities that defined our lives. I know I did, at least. So this year, I am working hard to reestablish my rituals, from when I write fiction to how I schedule my days to how I approach my annual planning to how and when I read, exercise, eat, play, rest—everything. I'm bringing back the tried-and-true methods that I leaned upon for so long. There are Pomodoros and

specific writing hours and a more normal sequence to my days, and that makes me happy. These keystone habits build upon themselves. And they make the celebration of their achievement all the richer and sweeter.

The annual review also has an entire section of upcoming 2023 releases, both novels, and short stories. There's a lot to come this year, the result of my enforced sabbatical from events. It worked so well that I'm planning to repeat this in the second half of the year, so I can become a hermit again and fill the pipeline even more. But the first half is chock full of events.

The [IT'S ONE OF US tour](#) is shaping up nicely. I am thrilled that I will be out on the road doing a few in-person events at bookstores across the country, including [the launch party at Parnassus on February 20](#), where I will be in conversation with Rea Frey (Nashville, represent, please!). In addition, there will be some of the tried and true online forums we've all grown to love. I'm looking at my calendar with a bit of side-eye because it's now so filled I'm feeling my inner introvert scream a little. I'm excited to see you out there, though. I hope you'll come out and visit with me for a while.

Here's to a beautiful CALM 2023 for us all!

□ Book News

IT'S ONE OF US is coming...

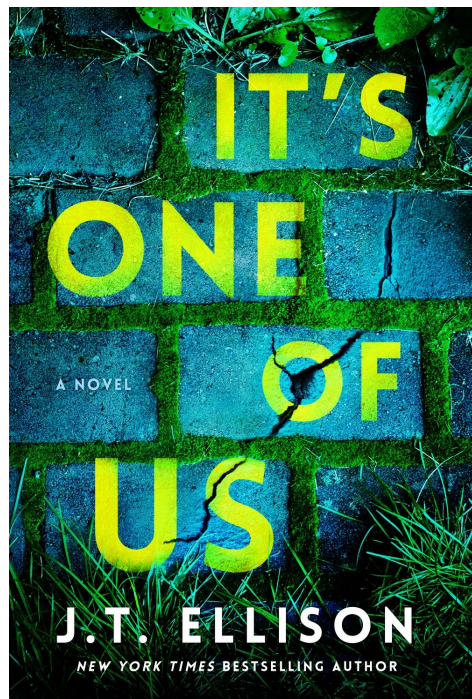
And I can't believe it's almost here. I am so proud of this book, and I can't wait to get it into your hands. I want you to meet Olivia, and Park, and Darby, and Scarlett, and Perry, and Lindsey, and Will and Josie... oh, I'm all a-twitter just thinking about it! And I am so honored [that Library Journal gave it a starred review!](#)

Everybody lies. Even the ones you think you know best of all...

Ellison (Her Dark Lies) spotlights the issue of infertility, based on her own experiences, then adds betrayal, obsession, and familial ties that bind to create a tension-filled story with an intriguing theme. Readers will race through the pages to an end they didn't see coming."

—Library Journal, □ Starred Review

My fellow scribes have also joined [in with their praise](#), and I'm telling you, each one of these makes me weep. When you're done with IT'S ONE OS US, you need to buy their books.



PRE-ORDER NOW!



THESE COLD STRANGERS is almost here...

A chilling tale about how a reporter's deep dive into a viral video challenges her preconceived notions of what being a hero really means.

This short story is part of a bigger collection from [Amazon Originals](#) called *We Could Be Heroes* featuring some of the hottest thriller writers out there. I'm amazed to have my story alongside tales from Lisa Scottoline, Lisa Unger, Janelle Brown, and Victor Methos, and can't wait for you to read it, or listen, because the brilliant Brittany Presley narrates...

PRE-ORDER NOW!

▣ What I'm Reading



I didn't do my usual best of 2022 list but there are a few books that have stuck with me, that I haven't been able to stop thinking about and keep telling friends to read.

One was my final read of the year, [THE PLOT](#) by Jean Hanff Korelitz. I really enjoyed this academic-adjacent thriller about a failed writer who borrows a plot. It raises some excellent questions about to whom ideas belong; the differences between plagiarism, piracy, and simple zeitgeist; and how ideas travel from artist to artist when they aren't exploited. Super book.

Another is Julia Whelan's [THANK YOU FOR LISTENING](#), which really should have been atop every Best-Of list this year. It's a rom-com, yes, but a super smart one that not only turns the trope on its ear, with its love story, examines some of the very current conversations about how AI is affecting the creative landscape; in this particular story, audiobook narrators. Pitch perfect in print and on audio.

Another remarkable story was a trilogy from Naomi Novik that starts with [A DEADLY EDUCATION](#). Think Harvard in a magical world, but the school is full of monsters trying to eat the students. Wildly inventive, unique magic, a brilliant love story, and its morality play ending was absolutely stunning.

Adrienne Young's [SPELLS FOR FORGETTING](#) sounds like a fantasy, but it's actually a deeply satisfying small-town cozy mystery. Yes, the island is magical and the women come from a long line of witches, but that aspect is tucked into the backstory. Super book, and also amazing on audio.

I also loved Ruth Ware's [THE IT GIRL](#), Isabel Cañas [THE HACIENDA](#), Peng Shepherd's [THE CARTOGRAPHERS](#), and Emily St. John Mandel's [SEA OF TRANQUILITY](#).

My first reads of 2023 are Jayne Ann Krentz's [SLEEP NO MORE](#) and G.R. Macallister's [ARCA](#). Spectacular, both.

☐ Poll

I was thrilled to see that 44% of you will buy a new book the week it releases. That is an incredible gift to the author, and I thank you on behalf of us all! Fully 27% wait for the new book to go on sale, so that's great to know as well. The remainder of you like backlist titles (14%) or take your time but do buy the new one after a few months (15%). Thanks, as always, for sharing your habits with me!

How many books do you think you'll read in 2023?

1-25

25-50

50-75

75-100

100-150

150+

☐☐ January Recipe: Crimeade



A special Dry January mocktail I've dubbed **Crimeade**, this has become my go-to restaurant drink. It's a lovely cranberry limeade with a bit of sparkle to it. Absolutely delicious, and feels like you're drinking something naughty.

THAT SOUNDS GOOD!

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.

☐ 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 winners (the gift card, the Kerry Lonsdale books, and the 5 IOOU book totes): Misty B, rau8620, Clara S, Pamela M, Andrea M, Denise S, and sistersecret42!

I WANT THAT GIFT CARD

Here's a cool [contest](#) for you - lots of dark mysteries and thrillers abound...

MYSTERY & THRILLER GIVEAWAY!

WIN A PRIZE PACK OF DARK MYSTERY, THRILLER & SUSPENSE NOVELS YOU'LL LOVE!

50+ THRILLERS!
1 EREADER!
\$550 VALUE!

I wish you all the best making your resolutions come true, and would love to hear about your goals and words, if you choose them. And if you're just plugging along like it's 1999 – hey, you do you! See you in a few weeks for the exciting run up to IT'S ONE OF US release...



Are you still here?

Here's a kitten for your troubles!



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



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