



## Traditions, Planners, and Grinches, Oh My!

December 2022

Vol. 249

Dear ones,

It is my favorite time of year. Business slows, the days are short, there is more space for writing, for focus. When everyone else is feeling the stress of the holidays, I am snuggled by the fire with a warm cup of spiced cider and my laptop, dreaming. My word counts in December are often some of my highest of the year, and of course, I am doing my end-of-year roundup and planning for 2023. Maybe it's the creative energy of looking back at what I've done and the excitement of what's to come? Maybe it's the traditions: ordering and sending holiday cards, decorating, the holiday cartoons (yes, I am an unapologetic devotee of the Grinch and Rudolph.) I long ago jettisoned anything holiday related that stressed me out and embraced the rest with open arms, so this month is a lot of fun.

There is something magical about end-of-year dreaming. Allowing fallow moments to stare into the fire, imagining what I'd like to be thinking about this time *next* year. It is the blessing and the curse of being a novelist; we are forever living in the future, considering how every word will land. There are, of course, the annual recriminations: I didn't read enough books, I didn't write enough words, I should have... if only I'd... but as I get older, those are fewer. I've spent the past decade realigning my work/life balance to make sure I have space and margin to do what I love most—writing—and the rest is gravy.

And wow, did I do a lot of writing this year. The word count isn't off the charts like some years, but I also realigned what constituted success—and that is finishing. I finished a LOT this year. Nine separate projects. Nine. And as of this writing, only two are published (a third is coming Dec 16 from the Joss pen name). I finished two novels that I started in 2021, finished two co-written novels, and finished five short stories. (That's why the word count is lower than normal, the shorts run 10–20k). Still. Nine projects in a single year. I filled the pipeline, which was my goal for 2022. No appearances. No conferences. Outside of A Word on Words, it was just me and my laptop, banging it out.

But I did do one interview this year that was a bellwether for me. I've worn you out with my references to Cal Newport, his excellent work/ life management systems, and how much I love his podcast. It's the only one I schedule time to listen to—it is a weekly priority for me. So I was thrilled to pieces when Cal invited me to be on the show to discuss the specifics of being an author and having a successful career. You can listen [here](#), or watch [here](#). I hope any of you who want to be writers will get a lot out of it, and those of you who are interested in how I do what I do will enjoy the insights, too.

So with that, I wish you good planning for 2023, and the most blessed holiday season. When I see you next, we'll be in the crazy run-up to the release of [IT'S ONE OF US](#), and of course, my annual review will be posted the first week of January, as always. Team JT is taking off the holidays this year, we are closed from December 16-January 3, which I hope means I will come back to you at least 25k richer on the new novel I'm writing. That's always my primary goal, moving the goalpost to accommodate the art of completion.

## □ Poll

Last month, I asked how long you've been a part of my newsletter, and I was so happy to see how many of you have been with me since the beginning. You are incredible! But the vast majority of you are in the 3-7 year category, which means you came on board AFTER I made the switch to standalone. This is incredibly useful data - thank you! I promise great things going forward!

Now I'm curious about how you decide to buy new books...

### Which are you more likely to buy:

A new book the week it comes out

An older title that's gone on sale

The new book, but a few weeks/months later

I wait for the new book to go on sale

SUBMIT

## 📖 Book News

You've been waiting so patiently for [IT'S ONE OF US](#), I thought it high time to share the first two chapters to whet your appetite even more! And in lovely news, I was absolutely thrilled to receive a starred Library Journal review. This book is striking a chord, and I am so incredibly grateful! Just [check out these incredible quotes](#) from the luminaries in the field!

[READ THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS!](#)

I've been teasing you for months about all the stories coming out in 2023, [and this is the first](#)—an Amazon Original that's part of a collection called "We Could Be Heroes." I'm absolutely MAD in love with this cover, and can't wait for you to see the whole collection...



### **THE COLD STRANGERS (1.31.23)**

*From New York Times bestselling author J.T. Ellison comes 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.*

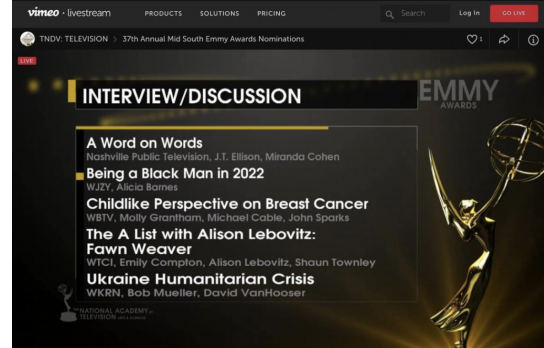
When she recognizes the heroic stranger in a sensationalized news video, Addison Blake plans to use the information to her career's advantage. That means returning to the hometown she left behind ten years ago, but her ambitions are more important than the ghosts of her past. She's focused on breaking this story—as long as it doesn't break her first...

[I NEED THIS!](#)

### **An EMMY Nod for AWOW!**

And in ancillary book news, the latest season of A WORD ON WORDS was nominated for an EMMY! What a ridiculously awesome honor!

WATCH THE SHOW



## 📖 What I'm Reading



I fell hard for [Naomi Novik's dark and twisted fantasy trilogy](#) set in a magical school that... well... eats the students. Imagine a brutal magical Harvard meets the Hunger Games with a deep and meaningful love story and a truly spectacular morality tale to cap it all off. I can't recommend these books enough.

And for my thriller lovers... three incredible books from three of our most talented writers, all of which will entrance, enthrall, and entertain...

[Liv Constantine - THE SENATOR'S WIFE](#)

[Kaira Rouda - THE WIDOW](#)

[Kimberly Belle - THE PERSONAL ASSISTANT](#)

## 📖📖 December Recipe: Lonely Roasted Chicken





Okay, the real title should be lovely roasted chicken, but Mr. E misheard me when I was casting about for what I'd made this month that was new and yummy. "I made that lovely roasted chicken," to which he replied, "Lonely Roasted Chicken?" So lonely it is. Lonely, and quick! This takes 5 minutes to put together and 45 to bake. You can scale it up or down—this is for two.

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 winner: spaceylacey76!

And don't forget to enter this month's drawing below, because it's a double offer...

In addition to the gift card giveaway, my amazingly talented friend Kerry Lonsdale is about to release the final book in her trilogy, and to celebrate, I'm giving away all three books! Signed by the author, no less...



And of course, you need something to put all your books in. So five runners-up will win a special IT'S ONE OF US book tote. That's 7 winners, people, just for being here, and being awesome. Happy Holidays!

[I WANT ALL THE THINGS](#)

And with that, I'll leave you. What a glorious year it's been! Write hard, dream big, indulge yourself with the new planner you've been eyeing, and have a fabulous holiday! Merry everything!!!!!!



### 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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