

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
J.T. ELLISON



Reflecting on what matters and what's next

December 2020

Vol. 224

Hello GentleReader,

Greetings from the land of make-believe! Since we're all living in the saggy middle of a dystopian novel, what better place to work from than one of creativity and imagination? 2020 is finally—finally—drawing to a close, and this is a good thing. I remember back in March when I pledged that my feeds would be pandemic-free zones? Ha! There was simply no escaping COVID, was there? Either we were experiencing it, isolating because of it, or hiding in our protective bubbles to make sure it didn't land on our personal shores. But as the year that changes all of our lives draws to a close, there is still a fight ahead. Vaccines are on the horizon, thank goodness, though I fear we won't be fully back to our normal lives until this time next year. We are patient folk, though. We will make this work for each other and ourselves. Of that I have no doubt.

2020 has given me a lot of time to think about what's important in my life. Like everyone, my priorities have changed. What matters? I ask myself this over and over again, especially as I unpack after the move. Is this important to me? Do I need this? Am I keeping this trinket/shirt/piece of furniture because it sparks joy or because I'd feel so bad if I gave it away, like I'm rejecting a piece of the person from whom it came. My BFF says gifts are meant to be enjoyed in the moment and if they have no real use, it's perfectly fine to allow them to move on. I like that idea, that gifts are meant to amuse, to say I'm thinking about you, but aren't meant to become an albatross of guilt that follows you for years, long after the person who gave them has forgotten.

Being forced to decide what matters has been the most freeing exercise of my adult life. We really need so little—adequate food and shelter—and the rest is negligible. I've always been a fan of charitable giving, and making sure others are clothed, fed, and have a safe place of their own is important to me—especially our furry friends. A great example: Thanks to Instagram's #aturday hashtag, I got caught up in the saga of an adorable kitten with congenital abnormalities names Pinnocchio and struck up a friendship with his foster mom [Mel Lamprey](#), who, as the year progressed, has decided to [open her own cat rescue](#) for kittens with special needs. What a selfless life she's living. What an example of how to serve.

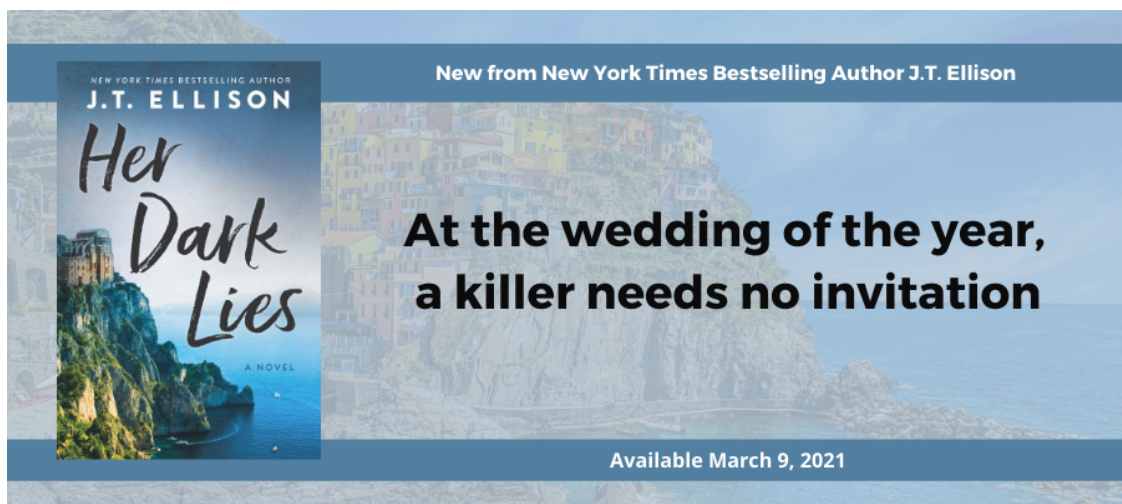
It humbles me, watching people do hands-on work, and if there's anything 2020 has given us, it's an army of selfless humans who will stop at nothing to give care and succor to those afflicted. It is a terrible moment in our history, yes, but also one of stark beauty and great exultation. The season of giving has become a lifestyle. This can do nothing but benefit us all.

And oddly enough, my daily journaling program (Day One) prompted me with this question: What am I looking forward to next?

It was easy to answer. A loving Christmas with family, a quiet winter creating, continued pullback from the things that drain me, being more present in my life and more in service to those in need. And to write great books that will take you away from your problems, if only for a little while.

Many blessings upon you, friends. May your joys be magnified and your sorrows eased, today and every day. Merry everything!

☐ **HER DARK LIES — on sale March 9, 2021**



[Goodreads is giving away 25 Advanced Reviewer Copies!](#) (US only).

PREORDER, BABY!

ADD TO GOODREADS

☐ **What I'm Reading and Watching**



WATCHING: [The Undoing](#)

Goodness, *The Undoing* with Nicole Kidman, Hugh Grant, and the luminous Matilda De Angelis was the talk of the interwebs and with good cause. I'd initially heard it was just a redux of *Big Little Lies*, which I loved, so I tuned in for more family drama—and wow, it was certainly NOT a redux and I couldn't stop watching. We binged it in two nights and I have many thoughts, though I won't ruin it for you if you haven't watched. I'm also deep into the first season of *The Spanish Princess*, which is wonderful.

READING: My pleasure To Be Read list has been piling up while I handle some work reading for both the show and fellow authors. Here are some of the books I have coming up that I can't wait to read over the holidays:

[White Ivy](#) – Susie Yang

[From Scratch](#) – Tembi Locke

[The Dirty South](#) – John Connolly

[Goodnight Beautiful](#) – Aimee Molloy

[The Lady Upstairs](#) – Halley Sutton

[Luster](#) – Raven Leilani

[Ready Player Two](#) – Ernest Cline

📧 Newsletters I Recommend

I'm always thrilled when these author newsletters hit my inbox! You can find more recommendations [here](#).

ARIEL LAWHON

PATTI CALLAHAN HENRY

☐☐☐ December Recipe: A Bubbly Smoke and Flower Cocktail, a Bonus Party Menu, and Cookies!



I always throw a holiday party, but this year, with COVID, that's not happening. I am so sad; it's always the highlight of my year. I thought I'd share what the menu would have been, just for fun. It's not complicated, but it's delicious!

Appetizer: [Goat Cheese with Marinara](#)

Salad: Caesar Salad

Antipasto Board:

Salami coins and Prosciutto

Aged Parmesan, Mozzarella Balls, Fontina, Asiago

Carrots, Sweet Gherkins, Queen Olives, Medjool Dates, Marcona Almonds, Apple Slices, Fresh Grapes, Raspberries

Main: [Lasagna](#)

Dessert: Derby Pie, New York Style Cheesecake, Amaretti Cookies

Holiday Cocktails: Amaretto on the rocks and some [Bubbly Smoke and Flower](#)

And because it's the season, here are the family favorites Christmas Cookies we always enjoy!

XMAS COOKIE TIME!

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.

A reminder: Everyone who opens the newsletter is automatically entered to win a **\$30 gift card** to the bookstore of your choice. It's my way of saying thanks for being here. Congrats to last month's winner: Lisa!

That's all for now! Be safe, be well, and MERRY EVERYTHING to you and yours! I'll see you next month for my 2020 Best Of and Annual Review.

peace and hugs,



PS: Do you get my blog posts in your inbox? Sign up for as it releases (usually once or twice a week), as a weekly digest, or by RSS feed. You should also join my Facebook book group, **the Literati**.

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Are you still here?

Here are some kittens for your troubles.



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