



## The Time is Nigh...It's Release Month!

*"Some people wear their scars on the outside.  
Some hide them deep, and never let anyone in to see them."*

February 2023

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Dear ones,

It is going to be a month.

A month of joy. A month of good things. A month of celebrating with friends, a month of releases, a month of fear and vulnerability and excitement, all rolled up into a wild three-week book tour and release schedule, with two brand new stories and a reprint heading your way.

I, for one, am very, very, excited. It's been a long time coming, this month.

You've heard me talk about the story behind [It's One of Us](#), my own infertility journey, and the splashy, ripped-from-the-headlines plot of an unethical company using a donor's sperm indiscriminately, and how I've explored the concentric circles—the ripples from the stone thrown into the pond—those actions created.

But one of the aspects of [IT'S ONE OF US](#) that I haven't talked much about was my inspiration for Olivia Bender's occupation. She is an architectural designer with a hugely successful career; a popular, sought-after fixture in the Nashville architectural renaissance. She's even been approached to do a television show—and this is where life and art collide.

As a creator, watching others create is totally my jam. One of my favorite past times is watching people build and restore homes, and then make them pretty. Good design is an art form, and there are some amazing artists out there who I love.

[Kelly Wearstler](#) was my inspiration for Olivia—I watched her Masterclass and took page upon page of notes. Kelly is an industrial designer, doing high-end

hotels, and her work is remarkable. When I finished, I had such a strong basis for Olivia's character: her style, her talents, her aesthetic.

I love, love, love [The Established Home](#) with Jean Stouffer and her daughter, Grace Start. I feel my blood pressure drops as they talk, and their British countryside aesthetic is totally me. (Says the girl who loves modern art and clean lines... I *want* to be classic, English countryside, but I'm more French country transitional modern contemporary with a touch of dorm room thrown in for good measure...) (yes, I am in a design identity crisis. Someone help.)

Another fave is Inspired Interiors with [Sarah Sherman Samuel](#). Sarah designs furniture and makes art to go into the spaces she's doing, and that's both remarkable to me and inspirational.

Jennifer Todryk—the [Rambling Redhead](#)—has a fun show called No Demo Reno. Her enthusiasm is contagious and I find myself grinning through the whole thing.

And Joanna and Chip Gaines, the heart of [Magnolia](#), just make me laugh. Chip's goofy antics, Joanna's savvy business sense, their journey, their family—it's sweet and inspiring at the same time.

There are so many more, and this has gotten a bit long, but I think you get the idea.

There's something all of these people have in common. Yes, they're talented, and I love their finished work. Yes, they're tops in their field. But what really attracts me is a more subtle, and more important, commonality.

They openly, freely, and joyously, celebrate their art.

Just watch Jean and Grace walk through a finished home. Their conversation is charming. They are thrilled with how well they've accomplished their goals for the space. They don't shy away from saying: wow, we did a great job here. The clients are going to love this, we love this, the viewers are going to want to imitate this...

It is rare—\*rare\*—to see women happily celebrating their successes. We're taught—no, conditioned—by society to see pride as a sin. Being proud of our work is bad, somehow. We're encouraged to deflect, self-denigrate, to turn the compliments back on the giver. Modesty is to be rewarded. Be humble. Don't draw attention to yourself.

Well, I think that's nonsense. I think we should be proud of our hard work, and say that, openly. Move over to our industry, and look at Shonda Rhimes. She gets this. (Read [Year of Yes](#). You'll see. And talk about a Masterclass worth watching. Incredible!)

I'm excited that there seem to be more and more examples of this happening. It's a [Good Thing](#). (Said another kick-ass lady who owns her brilliance.)

This month, three items will appear in bookstores, libraries, and on your devices. A short story I am incredibly excited about, the mass-market paperback of the book that almost derailed my creative life, and the new novel, [IT'S ONE OF US](#). Which is my 25<sup>th</sup> published novel, by the way.

I busted butt for all three of these stories. For IOOU, I sifted through some of the most heartbreaking moments of any life, not just my own. I found a deep wellspring of emotion and vulnerability, tapped into it, bled onto the page, and

created something that is my best work yet. And yes, I am so freaking thrilled it's almost here! I hope you love all of these stories as much as I do!

The quote at the beginning of this missive is from IT'S ONE OF US. I've mentioned before that certain lines present themselves to me when I'm thinking about a story—that was one. It's very much me, in so many ways. But honestly, I think it's many of us.

I see you. I'm giving you my scars this month. And I'm proud of that.

What are you proud of this month?

## □ So. Much. Book News



### **THESE COLD STRANGERS—out now!**

Let's start with the new short story, shall we?

I could not be more excited to share that [THESE COLD STRANGERS](#) is now available from [Amazon Originals](#)! Part of a themed collection called [We Could Be Heroes](#), all the story center around a core question: What does it mean to be a hero? Do you need a cape and the ability to fly? Or is it something deeper, smaller, but no less extraordinary?

The collection features five original short stories written by a couple of folks you might know... Lisa Scottoline, Lisa Unger, Janelle Brown, Victor Methos, and me! They're all available today—the full collection or as individual stories—and in both digital and audio!

**GET YOUR COPY!**

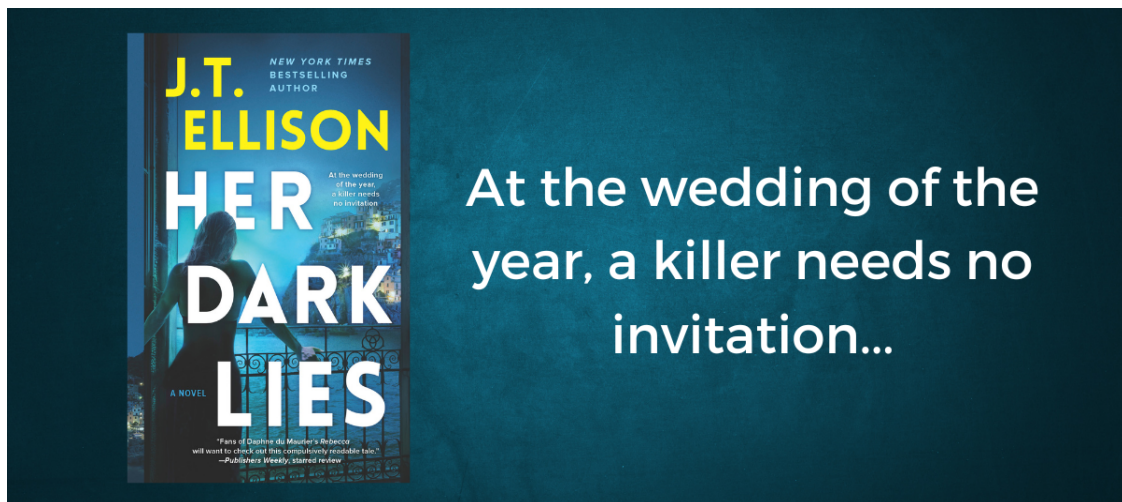
**A Special Pre-Order Campaign for IOOU!**



[IT'S ONE OF US](#) has an exclusive pre-order treat—get your signed books from [Parnassus](#), and we'll throw in a tote bag with your order!

And mark your calendars for February 20, 2023 at 6:30pm - we're gonna rock the house with the launch party! Registration required... you can call them or sign up online.

### **HER DARK LIES in mass market paperback!**



And the gorgeous [HER DARK LIES](#) paperback is coming out on February 21 as well! Get ready to be transported to an idyllic Italian island with a dark past.

### **Plus... IT'S ONE OF US Tour!**

I can't wait to see everyone on the road! Be sure to check out [my events page](#) to see what's coming up... but I'm going to be in Seattle, Scottsdale, Houston, Greenville, Pawleys Island, and Winter Park!



## □ Poll

Most of you have big reading goals for 2023! 23% of you said your goal is to read more than 150 books this year! And half will be reading between 75 and 100! I am in awe. Go forth and read, friends...

This month's poll...

### What kind of contest are you most likely to enter?

Signed Books

Gift Cards

Book Swag

Any of them, but I never win!

## □ What I'm Reading



### [The House Guest](#) - Hank Phillipi Ryan

Is there anything Hank Phillipi Ryan can't do? No. No there is not.

### [Murderbot Diaries](#) - Martha Wells

I tore through this series of 6 stories, the latest installment for Bookclub with Dad, where we read sci-fi and talk through the thorny philosophical questions posed... if you're at all interested in AI - these are well worth your time.

### [Loyalty](#) - Lisa Scottoline

Lisa Scottoline is one of my favorite people on earth, and her work is so significant, so meaningful, that this might be her best yet. Do not miss it. Also - ITALY!

I am such a fan, and can't wait to dive into this brilliant new release. Enough said.

## ☐☐ February Recipe: Roasted Sweet Potatoes



How about something wicked easy, delicious, hearty, and good for you this month? This is my new favorite recipe, adapted from the New York Time cooking app. Do not skip the tricks in the recipe, including the last step of popping the potatoes face down in a skillet for that extra crunchy caramelization.

**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: Pam G!

Since I'll be back in a couple of weeks to share the excitement of release day, to make up for showing up in your inbox twice this month, and to celebrate my 25<sup>th</sup> published novel, I'm giving away **5 \$25 gift cards to Parnassus Books!**

I'll announce the winners in the release day newsletter...

I WANT THOSE PRIZES!

That was some serious newslettering, friends! Read some good books, take a walk outside, but not before buying a box of tissues in anticipation of allergy season coming, and I'll see you the 21st!

xo,



**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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