

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
J.T. ELLISON



My February Faves, Delicious Curry, a Guide to Throwing a Quick Shindig, and more!

February 2018 Newsletter
Vol. 194

Hi, Gentle Reader!



So much has happened since we last talked.

1. I got the flu. Yes, that flu – the one that's ransacked cubicles and classrooms across America. I have no idea where it came from, but both DH and I came down with it hard. I couldn't even get out of bed for five days. There I lay, with only kittens and a drooping DH to nurse me. I even had to cancel three events (you know it's bad if I'm cancelling one, let alone three, events – be still, my guilty heart).

Ironically, the flu may have been the best thing to happen to TEAR ME APART. I was in the final throes of editing when I came down with this bug. But you know what? Being a bit woozy forced me to slow down, to take my time to ensure all the threads were coming together, so it made sense to even a fever-addled brain. Maybe my body knew what my creativity needed? ☐

2. I turned in a book. See above: TEAR ME APART should be in your hot little hands September 18 – flu edits and all!

3. Catherine and I started writing the sixth Brit in the FBI. I know, I know – we just sent the fifth book to the printer, and it doesn't even come out until April. But that's how the cookie crumbles in publishing – we finish a book, and we start another.

A couple of days after my fever broke, when I knew my flu wasn't contagious anymore, I hopped a plane to California and sat down with my partner in crime. Do you know how much easier it is to plot a book when there are two brains involved? It's nuts. When we started, we had one central event in mind (a nuclear EMP), and by the end of the third day, we had a complete outline for the whole book. Now we just have to commit those ideas

to the page in 100,000 words....

4. I went on my annual Lenten Social Media Sabbatical. More on that below...

5. I realized we have four secret projects in the works. Four secret projects! *Four!* Don't worry, you should know what they are soon enough. I am bursting to tell you about every single one – and trust me when I say, I think you'll be pleased.

It's amazing what can happen in a few weeks, huh?

Lots to cover ahead. Many of you responded that you enjoyed the longer newsletter format (hooray!), so here come a bunch of goodies – including a post just for you.



A Newsletter Subscriber Exclusive: How to Create Community and Throw a Quick Shindig (without setting your hair on fire)



Writing can be isolating. Some days the only people I see are my husband and the mailman. Most of the time, neither of them want to wax rhapsodic with me about the internal motivations of humanity. The nerve.

Thank goodness for our brilliant writing community. There's something magical that happens when you gather with people who have the same interests as you, the same brain wiring. Doesn't matter whether you're a writer, painter, accountant, or TV binge-watcher – the way you talk, the way you click, it's life-giving just the same.

Our core group of writers is about fifteen strong. Most live in Nashville, some further away, but we try to meet for lunch once a month. The women who make up our circle come from all ages, walks of life, and write in all genres. Some have kids, some have fur babies. Over sandwiches and endless cups of tea, we talk about business and our families, what's new and what's hard. Our wisdom and empathy enlightens and inspires. I always leave our little Dutch Lunch gatherings with head and heart full.

Once a quarter, we meet at my house for a day of writing and business talk and lazy munching. It's the perfect

gathering for introverts. But *this* introvert doesn't stress about hosting – over the years, I have learned how to open up my home and serve my guests without setting my hair on fire:

- **Keep snacks on hand.** I always have salami, cheese, crackers, and some sort of fruit and dark chocolate in my house. This makes cheese board assembly lightning fast! (Or even a cheese plate lunch for one. Yum!)
- **Make peace with paper goods.** Really, no one cares if they're eating off Chinet. If they do, make them do the dishes.
- **Ask your friends to pick up ready-to-eat goodies.** That way no one has to come over and bustle around in your kitchen, crank up the oven for thirty minutes and leave the other guests restless and hangry.
- **Call that one friend who makes delicious soup.** A pot of soup can feed the masses. Pair it with bread or crackers and *boom!* Lots of food for your crowd. Chili, chicken noodle, tomato – whatever. People love a good, homemade soup.
- **Be okay with an un-perfectly tidy house.** I bet you dollars to donuts your guests' houses aren't immaculate, either. And they're probably envying your living room rug, not thinking about the stray toy mice and puffs littering the room.

Cultivating community is so important for my sanity – and so is having a gathering that's as low-key as possible.

February Favorites



[This magical glasses cleaner.](#) This little device is amazing. As someone who spends her waking hours in glasses, believe me when I say it's worth every penny. I love this cleaner so much, I sent it to my publisher – now she loves it, too!

[Halt and Catch Fire.](#) DH and I have been binge-watching this tech drama on Netflix set circa 1980s. It starts in the Silicon Prairie, aka Dallas, and chronicles a programmer, an engineer, and a Steve Jobs-like visionary during the personal computing boom. It's fascinating. (Bonus show: The Kerr's latest favorite is **[The Great British Baking Show](#)**. She won't stop talking about how lovely the cinematography is or how nice the people are.)

[Simple Mills Gluten-Free Crackers.](#) Perfect for any cheese board, your guests won't know these are made of almond flour. They're easy to find online, but you can also find them in your local health food store.

[Harney & Sons' Paris Tea.](#) Y'all know I love a good cuppa. This blend is a wonderful afternoon pick-me-up, a slightly strong but aromatic black tea. I like the loose leaf, but it also comes in **[sachets](#)**.

[The Winter Olympics](#). I'm always into FIS skiing, but my new standalone novel, [TEAR ME APART](#), is about a World Cup/pre-Olympics phenom. So you could say I'm a little more invested this year.

Heads Up: I'm on My Annual Social Media Sabbatical



Every year, as my Lenten sacrifice, I take a social media sabbatical. It gives me a chance to get my feet back under me, get loads of work done, and allows me time to reflect, read, and write.

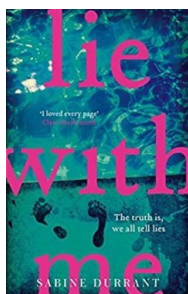
The first year I left social media for Lent, I wrote 60,000 words. It was enough to prove to me [social media DOES affect my writing time and creativity](#), so I decided to repeat the experiment annually. Without Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, I find myself more focused, more present. It's as simple as that. And absence makes the heart grow fonder, right?

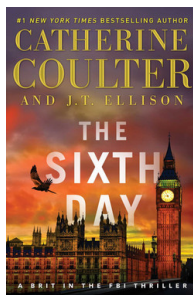
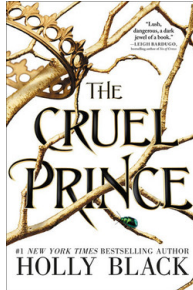
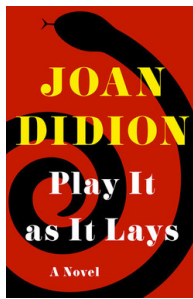
Whether you celebrate Lent or not, may I offer this blessing for your next six weeks? That you have moments of quiet gratitude. That you are showered with kindness from strangers, and in turn have some to spare for others. We have been put through the wringer for a while, and I can only hope that things calm down, that everyone feels less threatened and upset, and we can all work together to keep making our lives, and the lives of others, wonderful.

In my stead, my assistant, the indomitable Kerr will be taking my place, sharing all things food and books and greyhounds. Y'all go say hi to her. She doesn't bite – much.

See you back on the socials April 1.

What I'm Reading





LIE WITH ME is masterful. Think Highsmymeets Du Maurier. This has a *Talented Mr. Ripley* vibe with a lovely, classic voice – highly recommended! We watched the documentary on Joan Didion and I immediately rushed to the store for books. **PLAY IT AS IT LAYS** was heartbreaking to read, and the style was so gorgeous. Holly Black is a fantabulous writer of fantasy that features extraordinary women. **THE CRUEL PRINCE** is the beginning of a new series, and it was awesome. And of course, I read **THE SIXTH DAY** about 6 times getting it ready for its April pub date. I think you're going to like this one – London adventures abound!

Click each cover to learn more!

Southwest Florida, I'm Coming for You!



Y'all have heard me say a few times that I'm hermiting in 2018 – at least this first part. I need to write like mad.

Except... I'm going to be at the Southwest Florida Reading Festival the first weekend of March! I'm so excited – I've always wanted to be part of this event. My friends Patti Callahan Henry and Carla Neggers will be there, too. If you're around the Ft. Myers area, please come say hi!

Need more details? [Here you go!](#)

7 Useful Things I Learned from the Internet This Month



Sometimes the Internet can be a wasteland of notifications and clickbait, but it can also be a tool for good. I enjoy the randomness of the Web, and wanted to pass on these tidbits I found interesting.

1. [These are 10 things you should throw away.](#) We do a cleanout like this several times a year. It really does help destroy the clutter.
2. [Paramount is developing a TV series of Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam books.](#) After *A Handmaid's Tale*, I can't wait to see more Margaret Atwood stories on screen.
3. [This is why we forget most of the books we read.](#) Don't worry – it's not just you.
4. [These are Joanna Gaines' 6 favorite things from her Target collection.](#) That serving platter has my name written all over it. 😊
5. [Garbage collectors have opened a public library with discarded books.](#) Talk about trash into treasure. I just love this.
6. [There are such things as cat cafés, and we're getting one in Nashville.](#) Y'all. Drinking delicious tea and petting adoptable cats, all under one roof? Sign me up!
7. [Here are 11 literary holidays to add to your calendar.](#) Because we need more excuses for holidays, right?

My Favorite Instagram of the Month



thrillerchick

thrillerchick Oh @gemmacorrell. From one introvert to another, I thank you (quietly) for creating this. I can't even pinpoint which part is my favorite. Internet Atoll? Isle of Netflix? For now, I will say Country of Animal Pals. 🐾🐾

View all 26 comments

- balancedlife.colorado Nailed it! ✕
- iate_mybroccoli Love this! Have it tacked up above my writing desk;) ✕
- lynellnicolello This is perfection💖 ✕
- marycastilloauthor What I want to know is where the library is located. Hopefully, next door to the Coffee Cup of Solitude. ✕
- genaigeneral Hulu Island ahead beside Amazonia #handmaidstale #theamazingmrsmaisel ✕

192 likes

JANUARY 10

Add a comment...

This is me all the way. Hooray for introverts!

[Do you follow me on Instagram?](#) I share inspiration, writer's life, funny cartoons – and, of course, cat photos.

February's Recipe: The Kerr's Thai Green Curry with Chicken



Remember when I said you should get a friend who makes delicious soups? I speak from experience. The Kerr brought this delightful curry to our last writer gathering at my house, and we all swooned. I begged her to share the recipe with me, and hallelujah she agreed! So now you're the beneficiary of her kindness...

This is a delicious way to eat your vegetables, and a wonderful way to spice up wintertime!

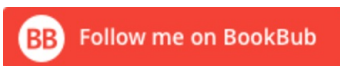
Hey, lady, gimme that curry recipe!

That's it from me. That's it from me. Y'all be good to each other, sweep the snow off someone's porch, buy some tulips at the grocery store, and we'll talk again soon. Oh, and remember, I'm on sabbatical, so if you need me – email!

XO,



Stay up on all of my book bargains and new books!



Let's be friends. I don't bite!



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