

SHE'S GOT

issues



no. 4

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LETTER FROM THE

editor



Hi, friends, and welcome to our first holiday issue!

The pages here are filled with a variety of ideas for all of the deserving women in your life. The prices range from bargain to yes, excessive, (hey, those are aspirational ok?) and I hope you'll have as much fun clicking around as we did putting it together - you can shop right from the issue.

I want to thank you for your support over the last year; it's been fun and challenging to build a brand from scratch and your support has meant the world to me. Stay tuned for new podcast episodes in January - we've got some exciting ones coming up. And, as always, I so appreciate any sharing you do!

I hope your holidays are peaceful and joy filled.
Happy shopping! xo,

jill



10 Tips For Surviving The Holidays In One Piece

Ahhh, the holidays: A time of joy, celebration, serenity and peace... hahahahah. In reality, it's all about survival. Here's how you can make it through the season (relatively) unscathed.

1. Have a sense of humor about the disasters all season long because there WILL be disasters and you can either laugh over them or cry. Laughing is much more fun. Wine also helps.
2. Shopping for teens? Go for the gift cards. It's what they really want and can be purchased in bulk during one quick trip to the grocery store. Save yourself the angsting and make everyone happy at once.
3. Lower your expectations. About everything.
4. Accept help if it's offered! Remember: You can't do it all and you shouldn't try.
5. Don't be offended when your home from college kids act like complete assholes. Home is where they are most comfortable so get used to it - holiday break is coming!
6. Does your out-of-town family staying with you stress the hell out of you? Hotels and Airbnbs exist for a reason!
7. Make sure you have a valid excuse to get your space, even if it means getting a dog who can walk just for the occasion.
8. Treat *yourself* to a gift for a change. Or multiple gifts.
9. Find a charity to focus on - perspective is especially helpful this time of year.
10. Try to actually enjoy the season; it really is a special time.
Again, wine helps.

SHOP OUR STORE!



A large, dark green Christmas tree stands as the central focus, illuminated by warm white string lights. The tree is decorated with several gold star ornaments. At its base, several wrapped gifts in various patterns and colors are visible. The background is a dark, paneled wall with a shelf on the left holding a brass trophy and a star.

A Christmas

FOR THEM

COLLEEN DILTNEY THOMAS

Christmas is a few weeks away, and I already have surprises stuffed in closets and alerts set on my phone to check websites for discount codes and restocks. But it's more than just the stuff; all the time commitments add up as quickly as my Target receipts this time of year. There are parties, school music programs, scout meetings, happy hours, cookie exchanges, and a million other things that I wouldn't think of missing because, in my children's eyes, that would make me the most neglectful elf in all the North Pole and Lord knows we can't have that. So, what do I do? All of it. I do every damn bit of it every year.

And who do I have to blame for this propensity to overachieve? My mother. She was the queen of Christmas when I was a child. This woman won a holiday lighting award in 1990, long before the days of computer-programmed displays. She positioned white deer on our postage stamp-sized front lawn on a St. Louis City block that made kids stop like it was a department store window downtown. Maureen Dilthey not only baked the most delicious cookies, she puff-painted a sweatshirt depicting a picture of her four children gazing out the front window of our home onto the snow-covered to wear while baking these magical holiday desserts.

That sucker had hand-sewn bells, one of which my brother put up his nose that she surgically removed with an embroidery needle as her gingerbread cooled. Urgent care/smurgent care.

My mother was pregnant and exhausted in the throngs of savages amid the 1980s Cabbage Patch craze, but still managed to walk away victorious. Sherry Amelda was there on Christmas morning and still sits in my daughter's bedroom today. She stayed up for the midnight release of the New Kids on the Block Step-By-Step album and waited in line for two hours so that I could listen to all five steps on the way to school the next day. He-Man, G.I. Joe, Ghostbusters action figures, Tops Baseball Cards, and a Barbie Dream House all made their way into the family room on Christmas mornings in the eighties and nineties to the delight of some shocked kids. You bet your life that my mother ensured her kids' dreams always came true.

And while it may seem like we were spoiled, that wasn't the case. We weren't the kids who got a toy every time we went to Target, and we were always ordering off the kids' menu no matter how old we were. We split sodas and popcorn at the movies and always snuck in the candy. Holidays and birthdays were big deals, and I want them to be big deals for my four children. I unabashedly emulate my mother's style and have stolen a few of her tricks.

Even though I am in my mid-forties, she still does her best to make my dreams come true. When I got married, she gave me a beautiful crystal cake slicer that my husband and I used at the ceremony. I dropped it a few weeks ago, and it shattered into a million pieces. It's a thing, just a thing, but it was a special one, nonetheless, and my mother knew it. She is the pie maker for Thanksgiving and makes at least five varieties for her children, their spouses, and grandchildren to enjoy. I host the day's festivities, and true to form this year, she showed up with a pie per every request. She also had a box for me with a brand-new Waterford cake slicer to help serve the delicious desserts. Why? Because that's what she does. That is who she is. My mother always thinks about other people and makes their dreams come true. She deserves some of that magic herself. All our parents do.

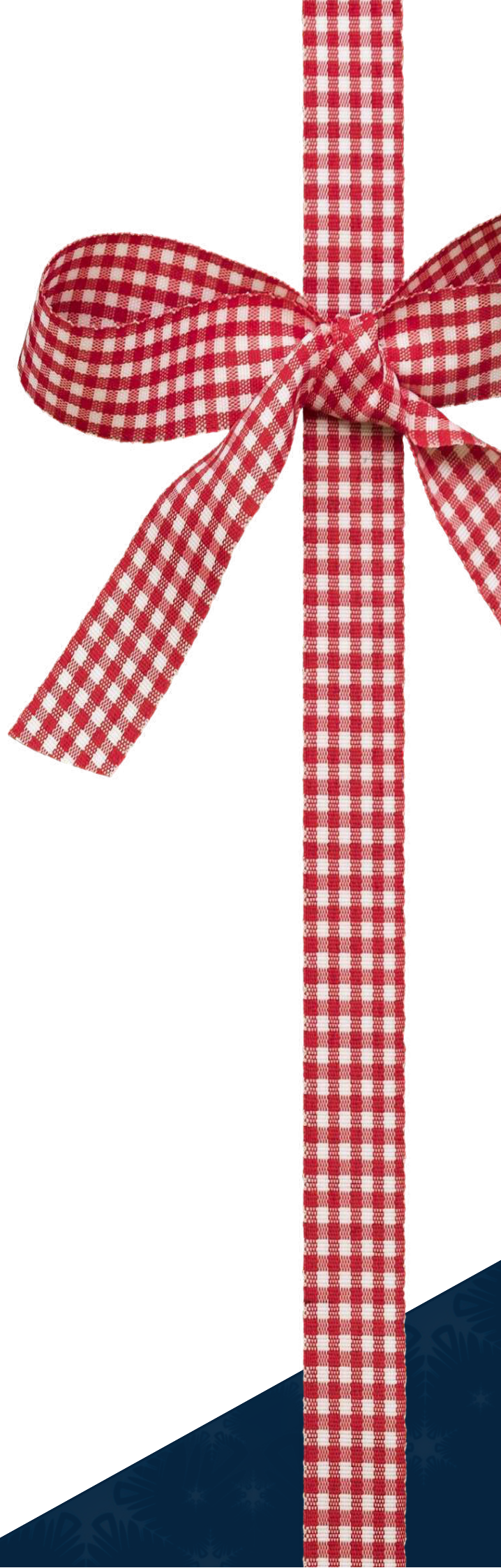
I once had a friend tell me that she doesn't buy gifts for her parents because they don't need anything, and even if they did, they could go out and get it for themselves, so what's the point? Reading that back, it bothers me even more than it did when she said it. Not one part of me needed Tretorn tennis shoes or a Liz Claiborne crossbody bag; my mother sacrificed because I wanted them. No, she will never tell me she wants anything, but there are definitely things she desires, and you better believe I will go out of my way to ensure she gets it all.

This has nothing to do with money. It has everything to do with sentiment and love. I am 44 years old, and my brothers are 42, 41, and 38. Since my first Christmas in 1979, we have never missed a picture with a mall Santa Claus. Ever. Not when we were in high school, not two days after I had my tonsils taken out, not when I was pregnant, not even during Covid. Nope, we stood six feet from Santa Claus with masks on to ensure my mother's dream of having her annual picture of her four children and the man in the red suit wouldn't be crushed. Our reservation for 2023 is already on the books. Why? Because she deserves it. That's why.

Do you know what else she deserves? Every other damn thing she wants. So does my dad. He worked 70 hours a week so that we could have the life we wanted. He wore a suit to work every day for 50 years. Today, he likes to wear sweatpants and Birkenstocks with socks. He's straightforward and simple, and they make him happy, so we keep him stocked. And he wants our mom to be happy, so if the four of us get that picture taken, it's enough for him.

Now that I am hitting my mid-life stride, I realize that life is really so short. And now more than ever, I want my parents to realize how grateful I am. Friends, think about your mom and dad as you begrudgingly hop out of bed at 3 a.m. to move that godforsaken elf throughout the next few weeks. There may not have been elves way back when, but they spent hours waiting in line, got paper cuts from glitter wrapping paper, and there were days when you had a Happy Meal and didn't even notice they settled for a Coke and a smile so that they could afford those Guess Jeans everyone was wearing.

During the rush of the holiday season, I implore you to listen to your parents as intently as you listen to your kids. Book a photographer when you notice your mom gazing at her friends' big family pictures. When your dad compliments your meatloaf, remember it and invite him over the next time it's on the menu. Buy them those sweatshirts with all the grandkids' names on them, and let your dad wear it every damn day if he wants to. Those names are their legacy and their life's accomplishments, and they are so proud. You're making the magic anyway, spread a little dust on the OG miracle workers. They made all our dreams come true our entire lives, they've more than earned it.





the gift





she's got issues

guide

2023



*We only share products that we believe in and think you'll love, too.
As an Amazon affiliate, we may receive compensation from your purchase and appreciate your support.*



Female owned Vosges Haut-Chocolat are to die for. The bars, caramels and toffees all come in stunning packaging ready for giving - if you can resist them yourself. Shout out to the exotic truffles!



This handmade zebrawood and wedge cutting board from Wood and Stoane is perfect for displaying charcuterie as well as her everyday use.



HydroFlask keeps your water cold, why not your wine! The Wine Bottle holds an entire 750 ml bottle of wine, keeps its temperature for hours and has a ceramic interior providing a smooth flavor profile so she doesn't have to worry about any leftover flavor transfer.



One of the best looking bar accessories we have seen, The Porthole is a simple, beautiful infusion vessel designed by Crucial Detail. It can be used to create striking cocktails, oils, teas, dressings, lemonade, coffee, or any other type of cold infusion she's sure to love.

the home body



This Honey Body Scrub from Bee Inspired is made purely of raw, crystallized honey. Her skin will feel fabulous and she'll be asking for the whole line of products!

Part boot, part slouchy sock and mostly slipper, these will keep her feet warm and toasty all winter long.



velociTEA tea maker heats water and prepares tea at the push of a button. Its design pumps water from the base into the infuser basket, steeping tea leaves as it circulates for the perfect cup every time.





Silky pjs are one of life's great necessities and these are tested and approved by us!



Pair with some pancake mix, a mug, coffee, syrup and jam for a breakfast in bed treat she'll use for years to come.



CODE: ISSUESIO FOR 10\$ OFF

What could more comforting than fresh bread straight from the oven? How about fresh and delicious pasta, pastry and bread right from the freezer to table in 25 minutes? Yum.

A homebody can never have too many throw blankets! Avocado bedding is just dreamy and these throws are the coziest.



THE WANDERER

Keep her safe when she's away from home. The Birdie makes an attention grabbing sound when the pin is pulled. It's small, cute and made by women for women.

CODE: ISSUES15 FOR 15% OFF

She'll want to snuggle up with this extra wide and extra long scarf made from the softest cotton yarn. It comes in a bunch of fun color combinations and guaranteed to keep her warm all winter long!



Make sure she gets her water wherever she may be. Microdrink by Waterdrop sugar-free cube to add to water in a variety of yummy flavors. Gift her with the stainless steel water bottle that keeps drinks ice cold for up to 24 hours or hot for 12 hours. We're obsessed with ours!



If she loves to jet off for a weekend, she'll REALLY love shorty LOVES friday weekender travel bag! It's absolutely huge, stylish and has enough zippered pockets to keep her super organized. It comes in the best color combos and you'll definitely want one for yourself too!



Remind her of her travels every time she uses this canvas tote. Pick her favorite spot from more than 50 locations around the world!



This soft and twistable pillow contours to almost any shape and position she'll need making it the best travel pillow we tested.

the chef



Is she a seltzer lover? This at home state-of-the-art water carbonator from Carbon8 is the first water carbonator that self-sanitizes, makes and dispenses sparkling water by pressing one little button. She'll thank you every time she fills up!



The Instagram crowd goes crazy for the Revolution InstaGLO R180 Toaster, and so will she! It makes the perfect toast, grilled cheese or panini every time and looks like it's straight out of The Jetsons.





An air fryer that looks amazing, self cleans and does its job better than any twice its size? Enter the Fritaire Air Fryer. It even comes with a rotisserie accessory for the easiest dinner ever!

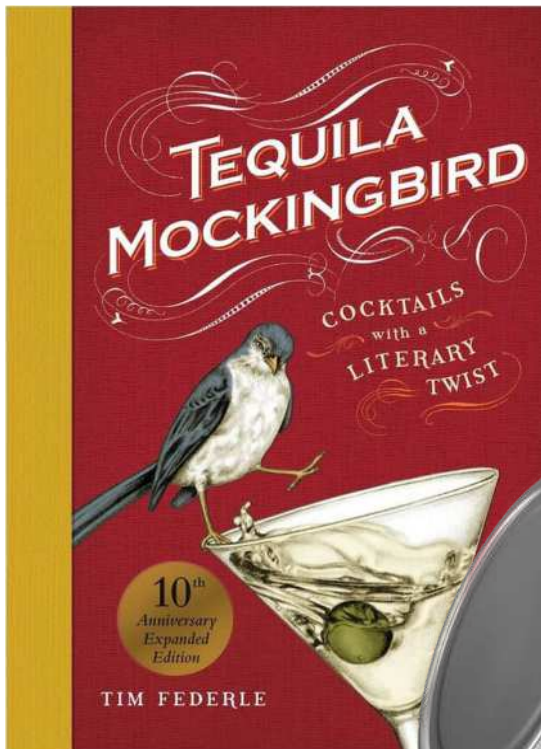


FinaMill's battery-operated Spice Grinder grinds fresh spices with the quick press of a button. The pods easily swap out and she'll love the ease of instant flavor!



This cast stainless steel Dutch oven by Hesslebach will make her feel like the chef she is! It's perfect for slow-cooking meats and vegetables to tender perfection and for simmering hearty stews and soups. Set her up for the coziest winter ever!

The bookworm



We love these literary cocktails. Pair with her favorite liquor and voila!



There's nothing like the smell of an old book. If she's into that sort of thing.



It's how she really feels and now she won't have to say it.

It's a portable book nook! She'll love cozying up with a drink and new read. Bonus: Her glasses will never be far from reach.



An adorable addition to any of our book favorites.



This bookend/vase is perfect for the reader and the gardener. We love ours filled with flowers in the office.



Books and mugs go together like... like, chocolate and peanut butter - or whatever she loves. Combine them with this adorable one!

For your Texas and Florida friends especially.





THE GODDESS



She longs for a night in the tub and we're in love with Herbivore's Coconut Bath Soak. Not only does it smell ahhh-mazing, but it'll leave her skin silky soft.



She won't believe The Reyes Necklace isn't the real thing. We're in love with ours and can't wear it often enough.



Intimate oil that's priced over a hundred dollars? Madness. But she is a goddess after all, and every inch of her deserves to be pampered.



We're absolutely in love with The Goddess Figure candle by American feminist artist Judy Chicago. It's too gorgeous to light, and it'll make her feel like the goddess she is!



She'll thank you for these under eye masks from grace and stella on those mornings she can barely get out of bed.

This is the best deep conditioner we tested by far. Hello spa night!



A goddess must protect her jewels and this case is perfect.



We adore Moroccanoil for our hair and the hand cream is to die for too! She'll fall in love with the smell, guaranteed.

the adventurer

The lightweight, packable hammock from Coalatree is perfect for anywhere she may venture, be it backpacking through the deep woods or a glamping trip with her gal pals.



50% of net profits from the sale of all Love Your Melon products is given to support charitable programming - and they are adorable to boot!



Speaking of boots, how cute are these from Sorel? She'll look fabulous and feel like she's walking on air.



The HydroBag from Wanderfull fits her waterbottle and has pockets for her phone, credit cards, airpods and more! We absolutely love ours.



CODE: SGI2023 FOR 10% OFF

Portland Gear's Cascade Backpack is a monster of a backpack. It's rugged and roomy and has oodles of organizing sections. If she's a camper or hiker, this is amazing.

Designed with go-getters in mind, FireBelly's tea thermos and infuser is 100% leak-proof, has perfected flow control, and allows her to start or stop her iced or hot tea infusion wherever she may be.



If she journals, an all weather notebook is almost too good to be true!

Make sure her phone is always charged with Misso's battery pack. It's fast, strong and light weight. What more could you want?



The sentimental



This gold-tone plated and shimmering pave bracelet from Swarovski celebrates her sign in a gorgeous way - we rarely take ours off.



Because she has the best puppy in the whole wide world and that fact should be documented.



Because pictures should live outside of cameras! We especially love the photo choices from Artifact Uprising - the quality is fantastic and customer service rocks!

Who doesn't love a fresh bouquet of flowers? Save \$ by getting a vase from Amazon and filling with stems from Trader Joe's.



Perfume is practically impossible to pick out for someone else, but this variety pack from riddle let's her create her own new signature scent. We loved the combos we came up with!



The super fun Fujifilm Instax Mini EVO helps her capture the fun in real time. It prints up to 100 prints per charge print right from the camera!



Transform her to her favorite travel destination with Terminal B candles. Named after airport codes, they are perfect for her staycation.

ANNE PINKERTON

The Gift of Friendship

If you are lucky, you will have a friend in your life who will listen to you go on and on about your complicated marriage, who will sit patiently and non-judgmentally as you spin in the same circle, like a cat chasing its tail, for ten years. She will discuss it with you over dinner and while sipping cocktails with you at a bar; during long walks with you and your dogs; over the phone when you need to rail about your discontent. She will look at you with love instead of pity, with sympathy instead of attempts to fix. She will offer you more patience than you deserve. When you tell her, everything feels impossible, she will fold you in her arms and say, I know. She will text you more heart emojis than you can count.

If you are very lucky, you will have another friend who will hear you waffling between staying and going, regardless of how maddening you must be, how clear the decision has to be from her perspective. She will remind you how much she likes him, unwilling to vilify, acknowledging that even the right decision is heartbreaking. Even though she lives 1,500 miles away, she will stay in touch all the time.

She will make you feel you aren't crazy, and acknowledge that it is hard, so hard. She will allow you to arrive at your own pace, never pressing. She will lean in close when you are finally able to whisper the words, I think I want a divorce. She will whisper back, I'm supporting your divorce. She will text you later, I love you x a billion.

If you are extraordinarily lucky, you will also have a friend who invites you over every week to the haven of her backyard, replete with a paradisaically refreshing aqua pool. Over beers, she will kindly remind you how unhappy you are when you try to pretend you aren't, and that this doesn't make you a bad person.

She will gently nudge you to call her divorce attorney just for information. She will give you a recommendation for her lovely acupuncturist and excellent insurance agent and will personally refinance your house for you after he goes. She will bring out champagne after your divorce hearing and applaud when you shoot the cork across the pool.

If you are lucky beyond reason, you will have one more friend who is a little older and a lot wiser, who acts as a mentor, big sister, and fairy godmother all in one. During hikes, she will assure you that you are talented, beautiful, and worthy. She will come to your house with fresh pastries, lattes, and books when you are feeling lonely. She will keep the faith that great things will happen to you. She will invite you to join her family for the holidays. She will text you regular check-ins: No need to respond. Just thinking of you and sending hugs. One time, autocorrect will mangle her note so that it reads, Let me know if you are tired of all these chickens, and you will both crack up when you text back, I need a bunch of chickens like I need a hole in the head.

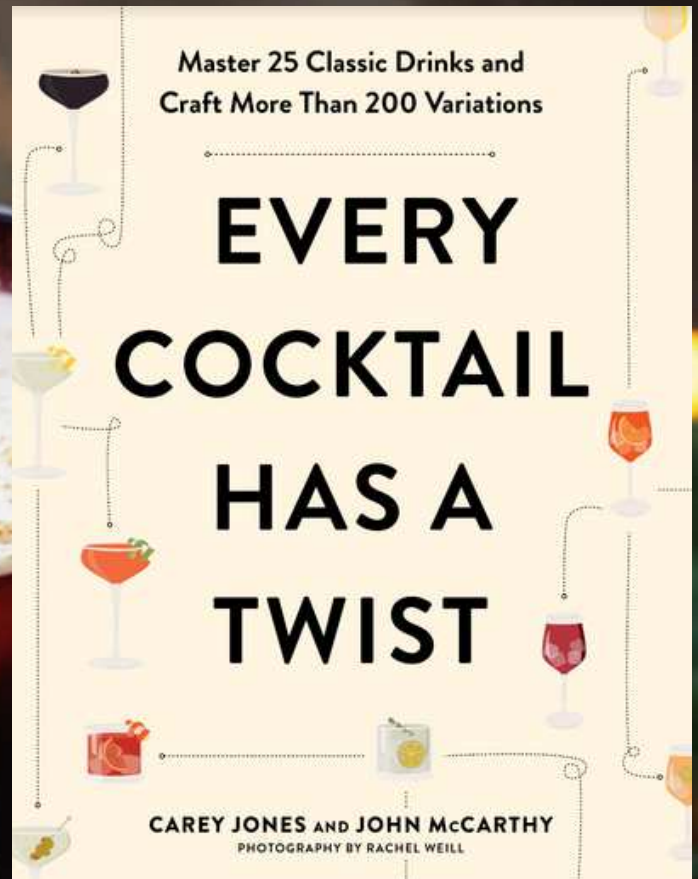
These are the friends who will jump on a Zoom call to bear witness as you take off your engagement and wedding ring for the very last time. They will drop off pussy willows and fresh eggs and a giant bag of oranges you didn't know you needed, but that you devour over the sink like you are starving. These friends will sit with you when your ex comes back for the first time to pick up some things, and will hold you while you sob after he leaves.

They will mail you bath salts and cards with inspiring, but uncorny, messages. They will remind you how awesome it is to have female roommates when they come to stay in the guest room for a week to keep you company. These women friends will text with you as you set up your first date, gladly receive the address where you'll be, wait for your home safe message, and giddily follow up the next day, asking for details, hoping for the best for you. When dates go bust, they are the friends who will say, Well, one more fucking personal growth experience! These friends remind you that with every one, you get better at knowing what you don't want. And also, what you DO.

SPIRITS

of the season





We just love Carey Jones and John McCarthy's super fun take on cocktails. The combos we made were just delicious and we can't wait to try out more!

RUN RUN RUDOLPH

INGREDIENTS:

3 ounces chilled eggnog base, below

1 ounce Irish whiskey

1/2 ounce coffee liqueur

Freshly grated nutmeg for garnish

In a rocks glass, combine the ingredients and stir gently. Garnish with the grated nutmeg.

EGG NOG

A winter staple and indispensable at holiday gatherings, Eggnog serves as a yearly tradition for many. It's easy enough to buy some at the store, but once you make your own and realize how simple the process can be, you won't go back. Thanks to various stabilizers, store-bought Eggnogs can drink thick and gloppy, settling heavily in your stomach. Homemade Eggnog tastes lighter, more drinkable, and just, well, better.

So how do you make Eggnog? If you really want to impress your guests— and you're going to make it right before you serve it— you separate fresh eggs. You then whip the egg whites in a food processor until they form soft, frothy peaks and fold them into the richer, yolky base. The result is a sophisticated Eggnog with an uncommonly light texture.





HOLLY JOLLY

Whereas some cocktails drink frosty and autumnal, this one goes all in on winter. Festive and celebratory, the cranberry, ginger, and orange recall a holiday relish or chutney. Dark rum anchors the cocktail, with bitters, nutmeg, and ginger beer providing seasonal spice. Use whatever orange liqueur you have, but Grand Marnier tastes awfully nice, especially during the holidays.

INGREDIENTS:

1½ ounces dark rum
¾ ounce 100% cranberry juice
½ ounce orange liqueur
½ ounce Raw Sugar Syrup
¼ ounce lime juice
3 dashes Angostura bitters
1½ ounces ginger beer
1 lime wedge for garnish
Nutmeg for garnish

For one drink, combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker, except the ginger beer. Fill the shaker with ice and seal it. Shake vigorously for 15 seconds and double strain into a mule mug or Collins glass filled with ice. Top with the ginger beer and stir gently and briefly.

Squeeze the lime wedge into the glass and drop it in. Also garnish with freshly grated nutmeg.

For 6 drinks, combine 9 ounces dark rum, 4½ ounces cranberry juice, 3 ounces orange liqueur, 3 ounces raw sugar syrup, 1½ ounces lime juice, and 18 dashes (½ ounce) Angostura bitters. Add ice and stir until well-chilled. Add 9 ounces ginger beer and stir again gently and briefly. Don't forget the fresh grated nutmeg to garnish each glass.

WITH BELLS ON

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ounce blood orange juice
- 1/2 ounce 100% pomegranate juice
- 1/2 ounce Simple Syrup
- 1/4 ounce lemon juice
- 1 dash orange bitters
- 2 ounces sparkling wine
- 1 lemon wedge for garnish

In a cocktail shaker, combine all the ingredients except the ginger beer. Fill the shaker with ice and seal it. Shake vigorously for 15 seconds and double strain into a mule mug or Collins glass filled with ice. Top with the ginger beer and stir gently and briefly. Squeeze the lime wedge into the glass and drop it in. Also garnish with freshly grated nutmeg.

For 6 drinks, combine 9 ounces dark rum, 4 1/2 ounces cranberry juice, 3 ounces orange liqueur, 3 ounces raw sugar syrup, 1 1/2 ounces lime juice, and 18 dashes (1/2 ounce) Angostura bitters. Add ice and stir until well-chilled. Add 9 ounces ginger beer and stir again gently and briefly. Don't forget the fresh grated nutmeg to garnish each glass.



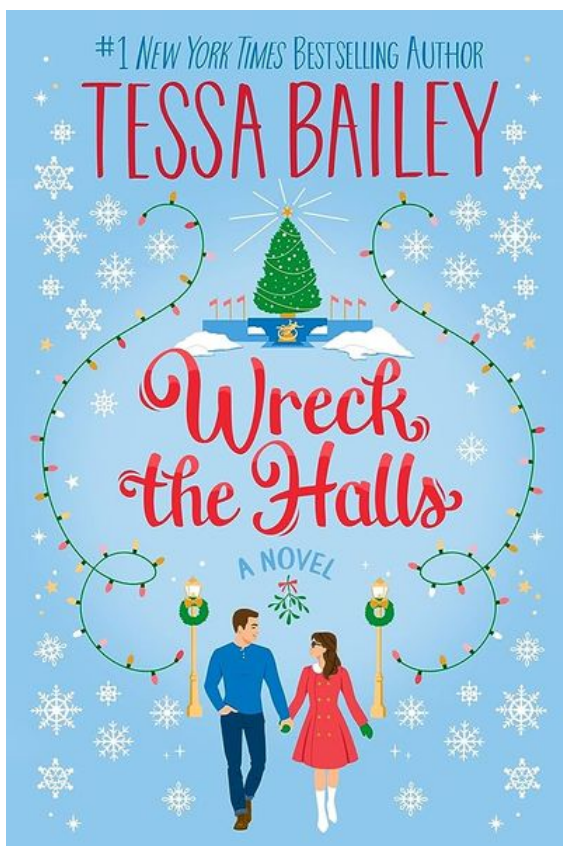
GIVE THE GIFT OF

reading

Our holiday picks are a small sampling of what's on our nightstands keeping us up at night. (Apologies for the insomnia!)

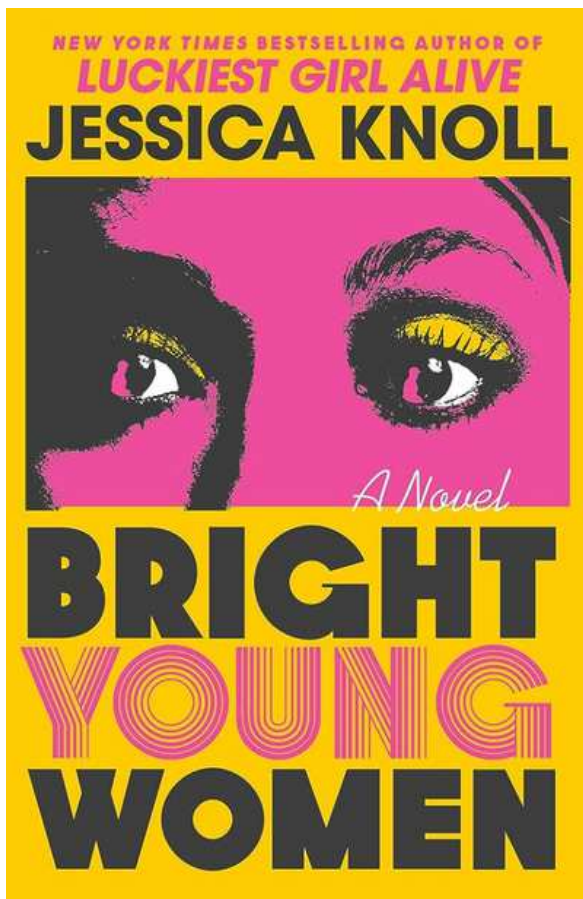
WRECK THE HALLS

Tessa Bailey



Meet Melody Gallard and Beat Dawkins, the adult children of rock and roll royalty. They might have been best friends if not for the legendary feud that broke up the band. When they met as teenagers, Mel felt an instant spark, but it's nothing compared to the wild, intense attraction that builds as they embark on a madcap mission to convince their mothers to perform one last show.

While dealing with rock star shenanigans, a 24-hour film crew, brawling Santas, and mobs of adoring fans, Mel starts to step out of her comfort zone. With Beat by her side, cheering her on, she's never felt so understood. But Christmas Eve is fast approaching, and a decades-old scandal is poised to wreck everything—the Steel Birds reunion, their relationships with their mothers, and their newfound love.



BRIGHT YOUNG WOMEN

Jessica Knoll

Inspired by the real-life crimes of serial killer Ted Bundy in the 1970s, including his brutal attack on the Florida State University Chi Omega sorority house, this thriller opens on a Saturday night in 1978, hours before a soon-to-be-infamous murderer descends upon a sorority house with deadly results. The lives of those who survive, including sorority president and key witness, Pamela Schumacher, are forever changed. Across the country, Tina Cannon is convinced her missing friend was targeted by the man papers refer to as the All-American Sex Killer—and that he's struck again. Determined to find justice, the two join forces as their search for answers leads to a final, shocking confrontation.

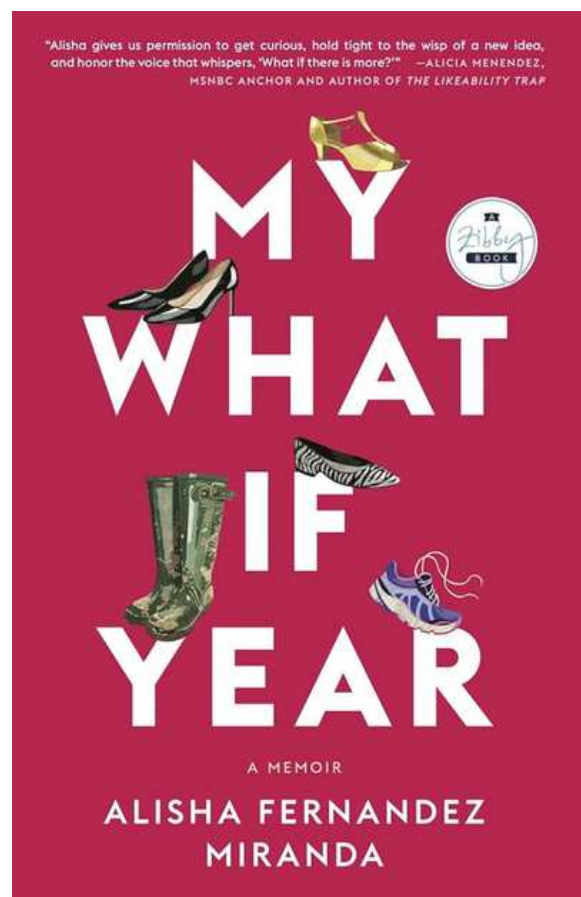
MY WHAT IF YEAR

Alisha Fernandez Miranda

On the cusp of turning forty, Alisha Fernandez Miranda has climbed to the peak of personal and professional success, but at a price; she's overworked and exhausted.

With the blessing of her husband and eight-year-old twins, she leaves her home in London to spend one year exploring the dream jobs of her youth, seeking answers to the question, "What If?"

What follows is a spirited and hilarious journey for Alisha - and the reader. Alisha's "What If" year reveals that she can achieve success on her own terms by embodying the spirit of the intern: never stop learning, be flexible, and understand that failure is a prerequisite for growth.



Surviving The Holidays, Single Style

KATIE BINGHAM-SMITH

The holidays are coming in hot and you are newly single. I know exactly what you are thinking because I've been there: This sucks. How the hell am I going to get through this Hallmark-esque time of year when everyone else is with their families and partners. What is it going to feel like to watch my kids go back and forth between homes while I sit in front of my Christmas tree, alone eating cheap chocolates that could probably double as eyebrow wax?

Oh, and to add a cherry on top of your misery-sundae you are probably trying to navigate a very different financial situation. Divorce is a dick like that, it can affect every single part of your life, even if you know it was for the best.

I experienced my first single-holiday seven years ago. Truth be told, I'm still single and about to face my eighth year of being a single mom of three. It's gotten a lot easier. But, I still have rough days. Time can heal a lot of things, but there's something about the holidays that can make you feel feelings you thought you'd worked out.

I'm here to tell you there are things you can do that not only will help you get through this year and make you look at the holidays in a different light; these are tactics I've depended on for years that have saved me when I've felt low.

1. Plan on having some rough days.

I know this may sound depressing, but my first Christmas after my divorce I had almost a year to prepare myself. I thought I would be fine because my divorce was amicable and I'd worked through some shit and my ex-husband and I knew it was all for the best. I definitely hadn't worked through all my shit, because I experienced emotions I had expected. Some days they took me down, and I beat myself up about it.

Brace yourself. You might have some really gloomy days. It's normal and completely okay. Had I been a little more prepared for this to happen, I wouldn't have tried so hard to fight against what I was feeling (which didn't work at all).

2. Make plans, even if you don't feel like it.

You don't have to fill every second your kids are gone, or every weekend evening with a fun-filled event, but if you know there is going to be a day that might be hard, make some plans. Even meeting a friend for lunch, or visiting your favorite bookstore can completely lift your mood.

3. Buy yourself something special.

I didn't do this my first few years as a single mom. Now I always do it. I love myself and I'm allowed to give myself gifts. I deserve them, and just because I don't have someone get me a gift, doesn't mean I don't get to have one. I can give myself everything I need. So can you.

4. Start new traditions.

Whether you have kids at home, you can get stuck feeling like you have to celebrate the same way every year. If there's something you've done to celebrate for years and you can't stomach it, don't do it. If you want to throw a holiday bash, but you've never done it before, start planning.

Change can be really uncomfortable when you think about it, but when you actually make a change, you will most likely feel refreshed and wonder why you didn't change things up sooner.

5. Be open.

If you aren't able to do as much for your kids this year as far as gifts, lose the guilt. Your kids want a happy mother. Not one who is stressed out because she's trying to go all out when her heart, and bank account, aren't really feeling it. If you are lonely or need some support, tell someone you trust. Don't go through it alone. It's amazing how much better you will feel even after a quick phone conversation when you are feeling low.

If someone invites you to something you'd normally say no to, give it a second thought. Be open to change and new people and new ways of celebrating the season. There's nothing that helps the divorce grieving process (that we all go through), like doing something different.

Yes, the holidays as a single woman can be hard. But they don't have to be miserable. In fact, they can be downright amazing.




your **holiday issues**



I hate making
Thanksgiving dinner and
dread it every year

My sister in law.
That's my holiday
issue.

last thanksgiving I snuck my
MIL a teeny bit of a pot
brownie and it made her so
delightful and bearable. I plan
on doing it again this year.



is an extra 15 pounds
considered a "holiday
issue"? because that's
what I've got

I love my college
kids being home
so much... but I
love it even
more when they
go back.

I faked Covid again to
get out of celebrating
Christmas with my
family

TEXT YOURS!
443-470-3473



win the

great
cookie
swaps!

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE COOKIES WITH SEA SALT

Ingredients

4 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
1/2 cup unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 cup brown sugar, lightly packed
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
kosher or flaked sea salt for sprinkling

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 325°F degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.
- In a microwave safe bowl, combine the chopped chocolate and the butter, and microwave at 50% power for 30 second increments, stirring after every 30 seconds. Continue heating just until the chocolate is melted.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the sugar, brown sugar, eggs, and vanilla until smooth.
- Add the melted chocolate and butter and stir until smooth.
- In another bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt until well combined. Add this to the chocolate mixture, stirring until just combined.
- Stir in the dark chocolate chips.
- Drop the cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, about 1.5 tablespoons per cookie, spacing them 1-2 inches apart.
- Sprinkle the tops with kosher or flaked sea salt.
- Bake for 13-14 minutes until there are some cracks on the surface.
- Let the cookies cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes before moving them to a wire rack to cool completely.







LINZER COOKIES

Ingredients

2 eggs
1 whole lemon zest
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 and one half cups flour
1 cup sugar
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup softened butter at room temperature
Your choice of jam for filling
2 inch cookie cutters
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

Directions:

- In a large bowl, whisk the egg, lemon zest and vanilla very well.
- Add sugar and mix some more.
- Add softened butter, flour and baking powder and mix using a rubber spoon until the dough comes together.
- Knead the dough with your hands. Mix just until the dough feels smooth and no longer sticky.
- Shape the the dough into a ball, cover with plastic wrap and place in the fridge for 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- On a floured surface, roll out the dough to about 1/4 inch thickness and using a cookie cutter, cut rounds. Using a smaller cookie cutter, make holes in the middle of half of your rounds.
- Place cookies on prepared baking tray.
- Bake for 6 to 8 minutes.
- Allow the cookies to cool to room temperature.
- Dust the cut out cookies with confectioners' sugar and spread jam on each solid cookie.
- Sandwich your cookies together and enjoy!

CHOCOLATE CHIP WALNUT OATMEAL COOKIES

Ingredients

1 cup butter, melted
1 1/4 cups tightly packed brown sugar
teaspoon cup white sugar
2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 tsp sea salt
3 cups quick-cooking oats
1 cup chopped walnuts
2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 325°F.
- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, beat together butter, brown sugar, and white sugar.
- Add eggs and vanilla, and beat well.
- With a large spatula, mix in flour, baking soda, and salt until just mixed.
- Mix in oats, walnuts, and chocolate chips.
- Take heaping spoonfuls and place on baking sheet.
- Bake for 15-18 min until they begin to turn golden brown.





PEPPERMINT CHOCOLATE CRISPS

Ingredients

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup Dutch processed cocoa
1 cup unsalted butter at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
1 cup light brown sugar
2 large eggs at room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup peppermint crunch pieces
1/2 cup crushed candies for dipping cookies
1 cup white chocolate chips

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.
- In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, sea salt, and cocoa. Set aside.
- With a mixer, cream butter and sugars together until smooth.
- Add in eggs, one at a time. Next, add in vanilla extract and peppermint extract. Mix until just combined.
- Gradually add flour mixture and beat until just combined. Mix in the chocolate chips and peppermint crunch pieces.
- Place the crushed candy canes in a small bowl. Scoop the dough into rounded tablespoons and lightly dip the tops of the cookies into candy cane pieces.
- Place cookie balls on prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart.
- Bake cookies for 10 minutes, or until cookies are set, but still soft in the center. After a few minutes, move to a cooling rack and cool completely.
- Melt white chocolate chips and drizzle over cookies. Enjoy!







STAINED GLASS ORNAMENTS

Ingredients

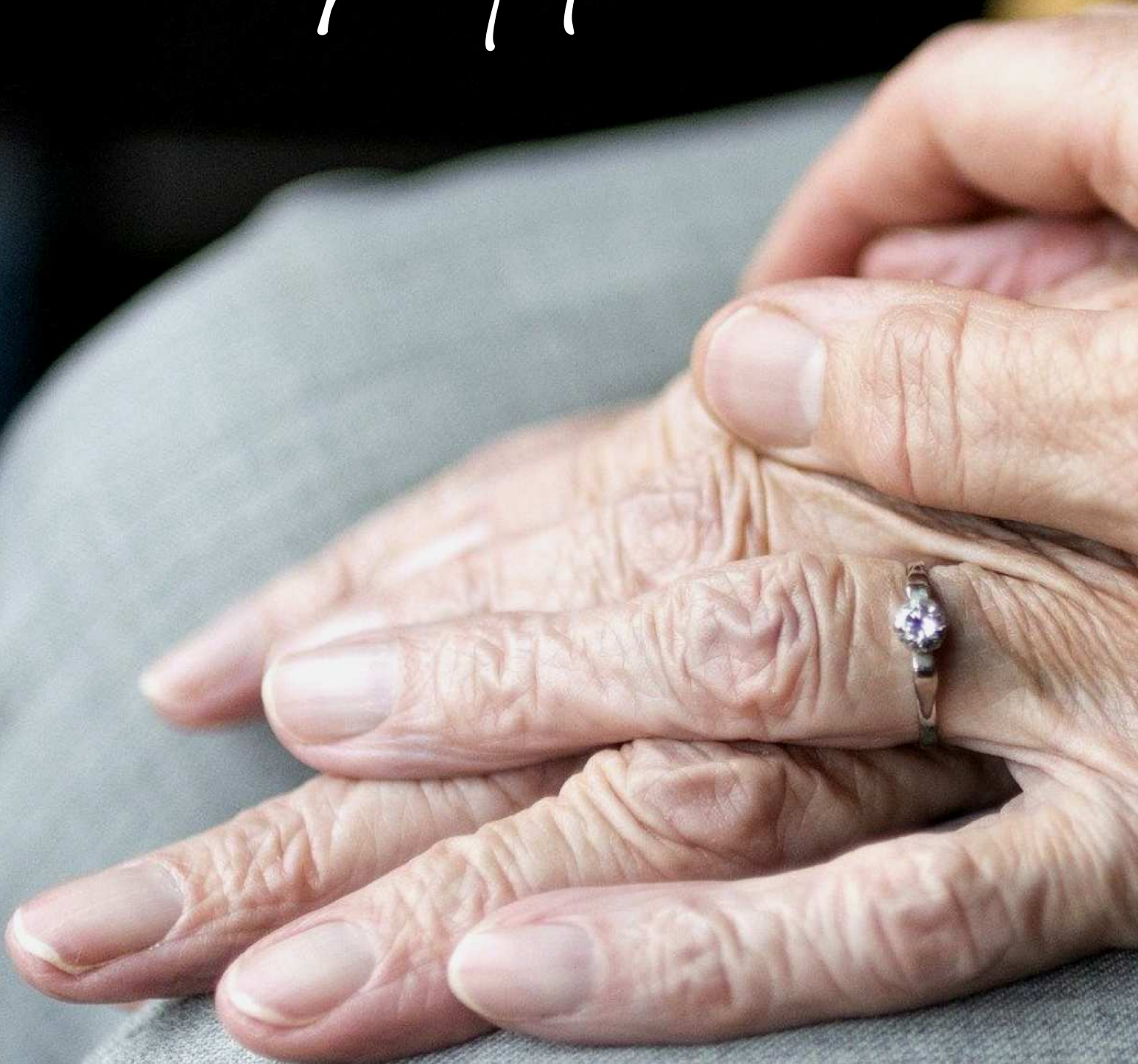
1 cup unsalted butter, room temp
1 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
4 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
1/2 cup cornstarch, sifted
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/3 cup hard candies

Directions.

- Sift the flour, cornstarch and salt into a large bowl and whisk together.
- In a standing mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream butter and sugar together.
- Add eggs one at a time then the vanilla while mixing on low.
- Scrape the bowl down and mix in the dry mixture.
- Separate dough into two disks. Wrap in plastic and chill for about an hour.
- Roll chilled dough to a 1/4 inch thickness.
- Cut out a shape using a medium to large cookie cutter.
- Cut out the window shape on the inside using a smaller shape.
- Poke a small hole at the top of the cookie for the ornament hook, if you would like.
- Place cookies on a silpat or parchment lined baking sheet.
- Add hard candies to a ziplock bag.
- Crush up, then add to the inside of the cookies.
Distribute evenly.
- Bake for 12 minutes at 375°F then allow to cool on baking sheet.

Our Holiday Tradition

HEATHER KING





The death of my mother is too final. Grief hates finality, and finality is grief. I attempt to make my loss less final by keeping every video and photo of her on my phone, for scrolling, remembering, and crying. My sister and I haven't moved any of our mom's belongings from our parent's home. Her clothes hang in the closet, smelling like her, but not for much longer. I don't know why smells and people have to fade. Her shoes are in the entry closet, the snacks she loved most are in the pantry. It's been months, but my dad, sister and I haven't wanted to finalize the finality by letting her things go.

My mom's special fancy dishes are still in the kitchen cupboard, of course. The ones she only took out for special occasions. She created holiday experiences filled with warmth and a ridiculous amount of food. She worked and worked in the kitchen, the day before, and from before the sun rose until everyone was served and seated later in the day. It was still difficult to get her to sit down at that point, but with some cajoling she found a seat at the table filled with family and ate her hard-earned meal.

My mother was a bit of a martyr if I'm being honest. And if I'm being honest I would have to tell you that "a bit" of a martyr is downplaying it. There were layers of stress on top of the good things during these gatherings, which I suppose is true for every family. Things were pretty low-key for us, except for mom's frantic ways at times, and her unwillingness to let go of the reins even a little bit. There was a lot of sighing and muttering as she worked.

"Can I help you with something, Mom?" we would ask, after hearing all the huffing and puffing meant for us while we chatted with extended family. "Nope," she'd say, with more than a touch of passive-aggression to the lilt of her words.

It was a tradition. We didn't have any other traditions besides eating and gathering. This accidental tradition was often frustrating, so we would insert ourselves; butter the buns, cut the pickles, set the table, and we would do it wrong. She never failed to correct something, meeting her need for perfection rather than her desire to be easy-going and grateful. I know easy-going and grateful are what she wanted to be, even what she really was, but it's hard when your lifelong coping mechanism has been to fight for control. Most of us live this fight. It comes out in all different ways.

This year, as we enter the holiday season, I want my mother to stand in the kitchen sighing, deflecting attempts to help and correcting how I butter the bread. "That's too much." The truth is that the perfectionistic mother I once had has been gone a long time, pummeled below the folds of an Alzheimer's mind. Before her death at age seventy-three, it had been many years since she prepared, cooked, and served our holiday meals. Thankfully my sister was an expert, having been raised as the "domestic one" for all her years, taught under our mom over and over again.

We ached for her to be who she once was as she watched, standing sad at the counter. She had been smart and capable, conversational and sometimes silly, despite the moments of overwhelm that triggered the passive-aggressive coping. Suddenly we had the control we thought we wanted but never did. And this was all we had control of now, the doing of things for her that she once did for all of us.

When our mom died on a hot July day, we didn't think about the holidays arriving. Now we've blasted through August, September and October like we're jet fueled by grief. Here we are, looking at Thanksgiving and already prepared for more pain. But we stop, we remember everything she would want and know that she would no longer care how things are done and it frees us to simply enjoy the company of every beloved person we have left. That's all she would want now, as whatever spirit thing she is. She is everything she wanted to be, and nothing she fought to overcome. So we'll cut the pickles and butter the bread and feel her there, only loving us.



20 Reasons Why I'm on the Naughty List This Year

THE BAD MOMZ OF COMEDY

1. I rolled my eyes so much I got vertigo.
2. I drank White Claw. On purpose.
3. I told my friends that the weather in Miami is "menopausal."
4. I got caught stalking my son's girlfriend on Instagram.
5. I asked my teen daughter what 'pegging' was and now she's in therapy.
6. If someone tells me placentas remove wrinkles, I'm becoming a midwife.
7. I only ask my husband about his day to see if he met anyone hotter, younger and/or nicer than me.
8. I found edibles in my teen's backpack and shared them with my friends.
9. I liked too many posts on my son's previous girlfriend's Instagram (I liked her better).



10. You mean to tell me I was supposed to start saving for their college funds before their senior year!?
11. Who knew they called technical fouls on rowdy parents at high school basketball games?!?
12. I pull out bags of candy and mini bottles of alcohol from my purse at the movie theater.
13. I pretend to not know anything about technology so my kids will do it for me.
14. I use the promise of “a good home cooked meal” to get my kids to visit.
15. I make my kids get extra food at the buffet so I can take it home in the ziplock bags I brought.
16. I challenge my kids’ young adult friends to dance offs too often.
17. When my husband is feeling frisky and I’m not in the mood I make him a huge dinner and turn on ESPN so he’ll fall asleep.
18. I wrap free gifts from Sephora and give them to co-workers I don’t like.
19. I missed my office holiday party to go to my great aunt’s funeral. She died in 1997.
20. I'm on the naughty list because I give my kids crap about watching TikTok videos while I'm on Facebook watching TikTok videos.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit sparkler. The sparkler is bright and glowing, with many small sparks radiating outwards. The background is dark and filled with out-of-focus, falling confetti or small particles, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is celebratory and festive.

The Problem With Resolutions

ELIZABETH BROADBENT

The end of the year brings its own accusations. There will be a Spotify Wrapped list, which will tell me I really need to lay off the 90s music. There will be piles of Christmas cards shaming me from my kitchen counter. They will remind me that I'd better get off my ass and send some before the New Year, and I'll pretend I'm going to do it.

Eventually, I'll give up. That surrender will bring both guilt and relief. Don't you want to be a person who sends out Christmas cards? I'll think. Then I'll remember that I'd have to design them, buy the damn things, sign them, address them, and mail them, each step fraught with its own difficulties: picking the right photos, texting everyone for their address, purchasing cutesy stamps. As much as I want to be the person who sends Christmas cards, I value time spent not doing it.

The worst of those end-of-the year accusations, however, is an ambient drone from family and friends and advertisers alike. What's your New Year's resolution? people ask me. Ads blare from every direction: This year, make a resolution to (insert aesthetic goal here, usually weight loss)!

There's a problem with New Year's resolutions: They assume an existing need for improvement. Those ads urging me to join a gym or buy a weight-loss drug reinforce societal expectations for a certain body type; they presume that my current shape (fine with me) isn't good enough. My friends' idle questions about resolutions assume that I want to improve something. At the close of the New Year, we're expected to examine our consciences, express sorrow for our sins, and resolve to sin no more. Here I thought I'd left Catholic school behind me.

I don't make that association lightly. New Year's resolutions have a moral force behind them. You're supposed to embark on a program of self-improvement, and it's good for you. You don't have to like it. In fact, you probably won't. That makes it even better, because you do it anyway. Look how much I hate it, you say. I do it anyway. This makes me even better.

They're a kind of spiritual-but-secular housekeeping. Weight loss won't just make you thinner. The keeping of a resolution – showing resolve – implies a will, a stick-to-it-iveness. By achieving thinness (if that's your goal), you'll become a stronger person. Sorry, but our generation suffered enough from heroin chic and low-rise jeans. Those chipper Gen Zers in gym ads are trying to do what Kate Moss accomplished with a single Calvin Klein ad.

We make two mistakes with those resolutions. Not only do we see a need to fix ourselves, we equate the actual fixing to spiritual improvement. Behind each resolution is a threat: You'll do this if you want to be a better person.

Implicit: You are not good enough. Also implicit: You want to be better. Not this year, thank you. I refuse your New Year's inferiority complex.

So instead of embarking on a journey of moral self-improvement, I'm accepting myself. I am thin enough, tidy enough, kind enough. I don't need to change. If anything, I need to release the idea that I have to change. I am stepping from the ratrace of relentless self-improvement. I resolve nothing. Our generation doesn't need to keep running to fit someone else's idea of better. We need to see that we're already enough.

We always were. Remember those participation trophies everyone laughs at? They meant something. You did it, they said, and the doing was enough. That joy in doing? Adequate reward. We didn't have to be the best, the fastest, the strongest. We were enough as we were. We still are. Don't believe the New Year's resolution hype. Do better if you'd like, but don't tie it to an overarching moral arc.

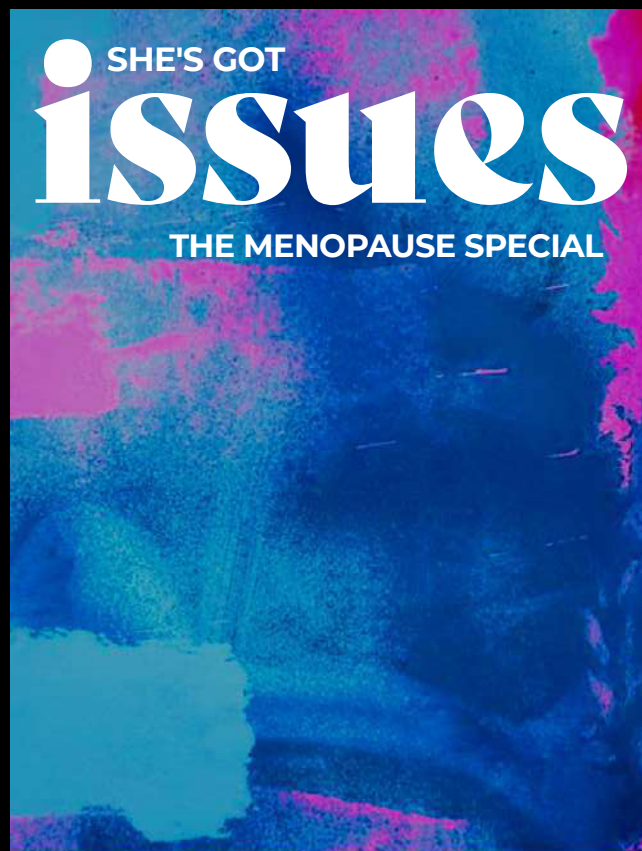
Accept yourself. You're enough.
You always were.

LISTEN TO THE POD



WITH JILL SMOKLER

READ THE MENOPAUSE ISSUE



this issue



Katie Bingham-Smith is a full time freelance writer, living in Maine with her three teens, two ducks, and a Goldendoodle. Her work has appeared in Woman's World, Health, Scary Mommy, AARP, and Grown and Flown. Her first Romance Novel, *Before She Knew*, is out now.

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Heather King is a writer, producer, and indie bookstore owner. Her personal essays can be found on Medium.com under Heather J King. She shared videos, stories, and photos through her mom's Alzheimer's struggle on IG @heather_westberg_king. Heather lives in Minnesota with her husband and three children, next door to her parent's home.

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