



Finding joy in the little things, my favorites of 2021, and a special holiday treat

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Dearestreader,

Merry Christmas to all of you who celebrate, and Happy Saturday to those who don't!

It is a special day for me. As the youngest child in the household, I am charged with lighting the bayberry candles at sunset, a tradition we've followed my whole life. The flame is meant to remember those who we can't be with, in this world and the next. It's a calming, meditative moment, and one I look forward to every year. Especially in this time of chaos—for yes, the past two years have felt like pure chaos—traditions are important to honor.

We went to a magnificent concert this week (responsibly, of course: tested, boosted, and masked in N95). It's not something we've been able to do for a long time, and the performer was one of my favorites, the spectacular tenor Andrea Bocelli. There was a girl in the row ahead of us who was clearly an expert in operatic arias, and knew intimately the personalities who shared the stage with Bocelli during the show. When she got excited, I paid more attention. I eavesdropped on her conversation with her wife, alerted when she squealed in delight, giggled with her when she laughed at her own enthusiasm, and noticed her loving and sympathetic gaze when I was moved to tears by one of the songs (Bocelli sang Cohen's "Hallelujah" with his daughter; it slayed me.) The concert made me happy; this stranger's pure joy thrilled me to my core.

Such a small thing, allowing ourselves to feel strong emotions as we experience them. In the face of the vulnerability of an external force that has stripped us of autonomy, taken away our normalcy, pulled us apart, and stymied our annual traditions, I encourage everyone to search for the small joys in the things that bring us pleasure. A good meal. A brilliant aria. A treasured book. A call with a dear friend. (That might make *their* world better, too.)

With all the chaos surrounding us, with the ways we're off-kilter, instead of waiting, holding ourselves back from the joy that we can experience, it is time to seek it out, embrace it, revel in the pleasure it brings. Even if it is fleeting, that bit of normalcy will make all the difference.

That is my challenge for you this holiday season. Do one thing that makes you happy. No matter how big or small, it will be a gift to your soul.

And when I light the candles tonight, I will think of you.

☐ My Favorites of 2021

So many books (and movies and tv shows and podcasts), so little time. Right now I'm at 90 books read, and there have been some real standouts. I included a number of other favorites from 2021 as well. I'd love to hear some of yours, too!

[READ IT ON MY BLOG!](#)

☐ Bookish News



Here's a holiday gift for you and yours: [Her Dark Lies](#) eBook is on sale for a limited time! Want to read my reimagining of Rebecca? Get yours [here!](#)

☐ Holiday Recipe: A Holly, Jolly Holiday Cocktail



What could be better than a warm, spicy cranberry wine punch? I made this delight for our annual writers holiday party and it was a huge hit. It can very easily be made non-alcoholic, too, by increasing the amount of apple juice. It's a delicious treat and will become another tradition for us.

SOUNDS DELISH!

Many blessings on you and yours this holiday season. Hang in there, find your joy, and I'll talk to you next year.

Peace and hugs,



Are you still here?

Here's a kitten for your troubles!



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