



## The Space Between the Heartbeats

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Dear ones,

Settle in, this is a long one, with an exciting surprise below!

There's a moment that lives between projects that can only be described as the space between the heartbeats. A lot happens in that moment, short as it is. Time to think, which, as any writer on deadline will tell you, is a luxury. Time to clean the office, archive notebooks and printouts, store the box, shelve books, pay invoices. Time to catch up on reading—or start reward books. Time to dream a bit, about what might happen with the project one has just finished, and the one about to start.

Sometimes I linger in this time, giving myself an extra week or two. I happened to finish two projects at once, a novel (Hey hey Taylor girl ☺) and a bulky short story, so the chaos was real, and the break was well-earned. I even snuck in a quick shoulder scope to rid myself of some pesky bursitis and bone chips that have been hampering my daily life. I settled in with my reward book—[the latest Outlander installment from Diana Gabaldon, which took most of the month to read](#)—and watched the second season of Bridgerton.

And then, as always happens, the next project starts to beckon. It begins to nibble at my thoughts and I must push it away. *I am not ready. I am not there yet. It's not time.*

Until, suddenly, it is.

When I'm in this nascent moment with a new book on the horizon, I have a ritual. I start a fresh notebook, specifically a Clairefontaine (A5, spiral-bound, ruled) that gets the top edges cut off, which is then placed reverently inside my vintage Coach day runner that has been repurposed as my daily book diary. I print out my synopsis, fold it in half, and attach it to the first page. I label the first page with the working title. And from this moment until the next pause, it is my boon companion. It goes everywhere with me. Research notes, ideas, musings, complaints—anything and everything that has to do with the book goes into the notebook. When the book is finished, this notebook goes into the

“box” with all the rest of the book’s details—manuscripts, articles, scraps of paper, anything and everything that has lived with me for the duration of the book’s lifecycle. (This is the Twyla Tharp method—every book gets a box. Though now the boxes are file folders, since we don’t have fifty drafts moving back and forth through production.)

The pause ended for me last week, when I sat down with a notebook and research material to start my 29th (!) novel. Is it fair to say I’m starting when in fact I’m gathering ideas? I think so. I’ve cheated a bit, as I’ve been thinking about this book for a long time, and the synopsis was written back in April, so I’m not starting completely from scratch, [but it’s time for 40 Scenes](#). By having a synopsis I have several scenes already built in my head, and within that scaffolding, I wrote two possible entry points and sketched 7 scenes in an afternoon. I suppose that does count as being underway.

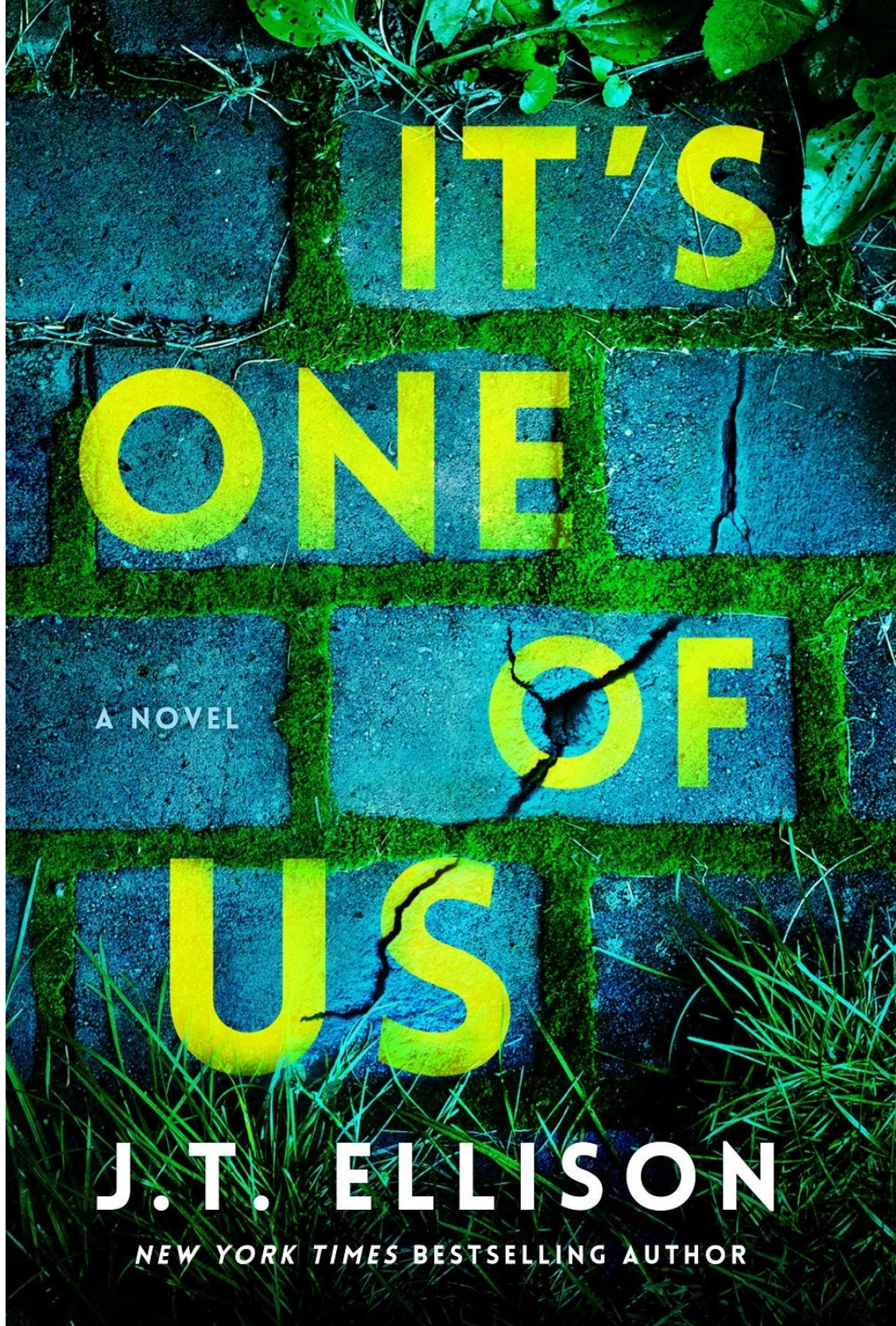
I have several research books for this one, including a book that I am using to get into the mind of one of my characters that will also provide what I think will be the structure for the manuscript. That is the one I started reading first, and from its seeds grew the current scenes.

Now, speaking of projects ending and beginning, I have a surprise for you...

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## □ Bookish News

If you didn’t see it yet, here’s a cover reveal for [IT’S ONE OF US](#), coming out February 28, 2023. What do you think??? I was totally blown away when they sent me the concept. It’s just gorgeous!



If you'd like to see the online cover reveal from the wonderful Abby Endler at Crime By The Book, with a mini-review and a bit about the process of writing it and more details on the story, you can [check it out here](#). And of course, preorders make the world go round. As this is my first hardcover release in a while, these will be especially important!

PREORDER IT'S ONE OF US

## Poll

There were several questions that came through in the Ask Me Anything from last month. I'll answer two this time. I'm paraphrasing this first question since it came from so many of you.

### **Will there be more Brit in the FBI books with Catherine Coulter?**

To which I say, never say never, but for the moment, that series is finished. Catherine felt it had run its course, which is understandable—I mean, what do you once you've saved the world?

And the second question is from frylm3750:

### **Do you have the whole novel in mind when you start or does it develop as you go along?**

Both, honestly. Because I've written a synopsis, which is a contractual deliverable, I need to have an idea of what the story is about, who the characters are, what the mystery/focus is going to be. I use the synopsis to flesh out my main characters, think about point of view, and get a basic sense of who does what; where, when, and how.

What I do when I develop the 40 Scenes is to try to offload all the ideas, scenes, conversations, settings, anything and everything that's floating around my head. I'm very visual—my scenes are generally something like the opening of a movie in my mind. If you want a specific example, read the opening pages of GOOD GIRLS LIE. That is adapted from a screenplay that I wrote to make sure I captured the tonal setting as well as setting up the mystery. In that case, the opening scene is actually my third turn of the book, just from another angle.

While I'm writing down these 40 scenes, I'm also thinking about my four turning points, which is how I generally structure the story. I'm digging into POV—first, third, present, past, all of the technical aspects. The more I play, the more of the story reveals itself, but it's not fully fleshed until I'm well into the story. I don't like knowing my ending and don't like knowing who is responsible if I can help it. The book I'm starting has that sort of set up—one murder, multiple suspects, and as I am getting started, I honestly don't know who did it.

So it's a combination of things that gets me from beginning to end. And thanks for making me think about the opening of Good Girls, because it just gave me a GREAT idea for the opening of this new one...

## **Which book cover is your favorite?**

LIE TO ME

GOOD GIRLS LIE

HER DARK LIES

TEAR ME APART

IT'S ONE OF US

Another that's not listed...

## 📖 July Recipe: Grilled Pineapple Chicken



A confluence of events led to this modified recipe from the New York Times. The divine [Anne Bogel sent out her newsletter with a grilled pineapple recipe](#) and I was immediately intrigued. We had some chicken, and, thanks to the pandemic and COSTCO, tons of canned pineapple. How could I marry these two delights? Serendipitously, [the New York Times had a recipe that fit the bill](#). I've adapted it tremendously, but the essence is still there – and OMG, it's incredible!

**SOUNDS DELISH!**

You can find all of my recipes [here](#), on the bright and shiny new Recipes website. 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: Deb C!

And don't forget to enter this month's drawing below!

[I WANT THAT GIFT CARD!](#)

I know many of you aren't into my fantasy books, but for those who are, and [you aren't on the Joss newsletter yet](#), the new Jayne Thorne book drops July 31! There's a big giveaway coming there, too.

With ALL of that news, have yourself a lovely rest of July. It's too hot to do much but read a book in the shade here, so I hope you get some time to do just that. See you next month!

Peace and hugs,



### **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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