

tattle

M A G A Z I N E

KEEPING IT COZY

**INTERVIEWS
WITH**

**RACHEL
STUBINGTON**
FROM SHRINKING
ON APPLE TV+

MICHAEL JAMIN
AUTHOR OF
A PAPER ORCHESTRA

JESSICA SHERR
STAR OF BETTE DAVIS
AIN'T FOR SISSIES

JESSICA LYNN
COUNTRY MUSIC
CROSSOVER ARTIST

MEGAN ROGERS
AUTHOR OF
ROSIE FINDS HER SHINE

**PLUS
TATTLE TALKS
WITH**

**WRITER
ESTHER
SCHULTZ**



**PHOTOGRAPHER
CHAD
COCHRAN**

**ON MENTAL
HEALTH**

**WINTER
ISSUE**



VOLUME 4 ISSUE 15







To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stay out in the cold. -- Aristotle

THE WINTER ISSUE

BY THE FIRESIDE

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Author of
*Rosie Finds
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**SAVORING
THE
SPIRIT
OF
SMALL
TOWN
CHARM**

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Mohican State Park
Loudonville, Ohio

PHOTO CREDIT: CHAD COCHRAN, COWTOWNCHAD



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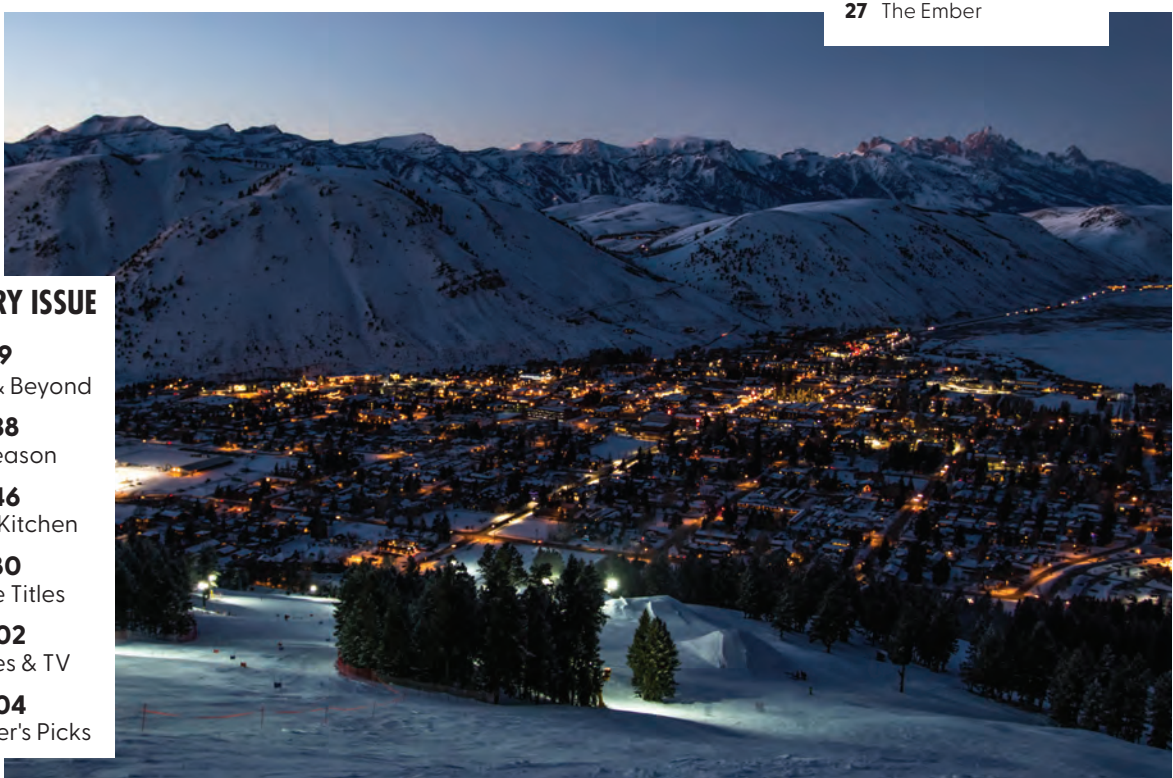
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Most mental wellness resources are only designed to help people living with severe symptoms.

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*a note
for you*

WELCOME TO OUR WINTER ISSUE!

There's a kind of magic that happens when we lean into the season of cozy—the crackle of a fire, the comfort of a favorite blanket, the warmth of a steaming cup of cocoa shared with someone special. This issue is an invitation to revel in those moments that bring us closer to ourselves and to one another. Whether it's through the art of letter writing, a snowy adventure, or a hygge-inspired evening at home, we're celebrating the beauty of slowing down and embracing what truly matters.

Inside, you'll find stories that speak to the soul—from small-town charm and timeless game nights to interviews with extraordinary creatives. We're diving deep into the themes of connection, creativity, and courage. There's inspiration to be found in the words of artists, authors, and musicians who remind us to live boldly and cherish the quiet moments. And, of course, we've included ideas to spark joy—from hot cocoa recipes to ways to find happiness without waiting for the perfect moment.

As the days grow shorter and the nights a little longer, let this issue be your guide to finding comfort in the little things and courage in your own story. Cozy isn't just about blankets and fireplaces; it's about creating spaces—both physical and emotional—where we can be unapologetically ourselves. So grab a mug, settle in, and let's savor this season together.

inspiration for
this issue



*Jennifer
Dufek*



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the simple things
are also the things
most extraordinary
things,
and only
the wise can
see them

paule coelho



ORANGE ROSEMARY VODKA

Bright, citrusy, and kissed with herbal warmth, this cocktail is a festive delight—perfect for cozy nights or holiday celebrations.

INGREDIENTS

2 oz vodka
3 oz fresh orange juice
½ oz rosemary simple syrup*
club soda or sparkling water
ice cubes
fresh cranberries and a rosemary sprig (optional for garnish)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Fill a highball or rocks glass with ice.
- 2 In the glass, combine vodka, orange juice, and rosemary simple syrup. Stir gently.
- 3 Add club soda or sparkling water to fill the glass, giving it a light and refreshing fizz.
- 4 Garnish with a few fresh cranberries on top and add a rosemary sprig for a festive look.

ROSEMARY SIMPLE SYRUP

Combine ½ cup water, ½ cup sugar, and 2 rosemary sprigs in a saucepan. Heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar dissolves, then let it steep for 10 minutes. Strain, cool, and store in the fridge for up to two weeks.

PANTRY MUST-GO INSPO

Do you have items in your cupboard with looming expiration dates? Check out our featured pantry item and how we get creative with it!

IN THIS ISSUE:
OLD-FASHIONED ROLLED OATS

PEANUT BUTTER OVERNIGHT OATS

INGREDIENTS

½ cup old-fashioned rolled oats
½ cup milk of choice
2 T peanut butter
1 t chia seeds (optional)
1 t honey or maple syrup (adjust for sweetness preference)
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a small jar or bowl, combine oats, almond milk, peanut butter, chia seeds, honey, vanilla extract, and salt. Stir until well-mixed, making sure the peanut butter is evenly distributed.
- 2 Cover the jar or bowl with a lid or plastic wrap. Refrigerate overnight (or for at least 6 hours).
- 3 In the morning, give the oats a good stir. If they're too thick, add a splash of milk to reach your desired consistency. Add your favorite toppings, like sliced banana, crushed peanuts, or a drizzle of extra peanut butter. Grab a spoon and savor your creamy, nutty breakfast!

FRESH STARTS: SMALL STEPS FOR A BIG YEAR

The New Year brings a sense of possibility, but resolutions can sometimes feel like pressure-packed promises. What if, instead, we embraced smaller, intentional shifts? Here are three ideas to help you start 2025 with clarity, joy, and purpose.

ONE WORD, BIG CHANGE

Instead of resolutions, pick one word for the year—something that inspires and centers you. Think *brave*, *calm*, or *create*. Let it guide your decisions and remind you of the energy you want to carry into 2025.

A TOAST TO SMALL WINS

Big goals are great, but this year, let's celebrate the little victories: waking up on time, finishing a book, or finally trying that recipe. Life's sweetest moments are often the tiniest ones.

DECLUTTER YOUR SOUL

January is for fresh starts—but not just for your closet. Start 2025 with a fresh perspective. Let go of grudges, outdated goals, and anything that weighs you down. Clear your mental clutter, and make space for something beautiful.



FOLLOW US FOR MORE IDEAS!

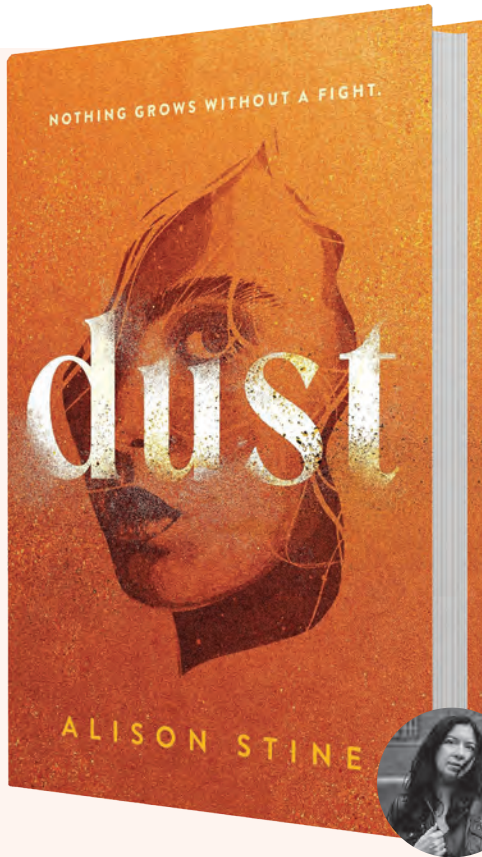


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BEST NEW BOOKS

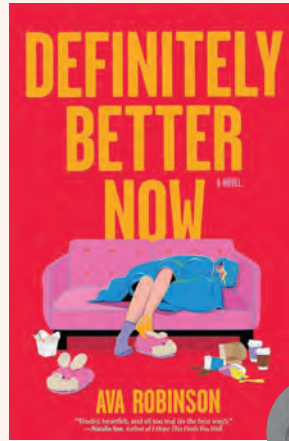
A deaf teen finding belonging in a barren land, a sober young woman navigating life's chaos, and a grieving husband chasing a haunting mystery—three unforgettable stories of resilience, love, and the unexpected paths to self-discovery.



DUST

by Alison Stine

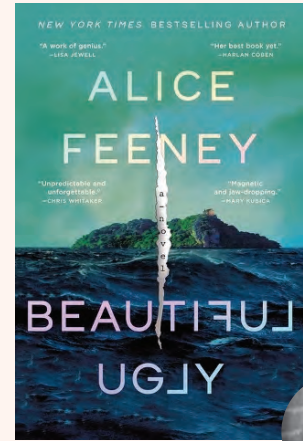
In drought-stricken Colorado, Thea, a partially deaf teen, defies her parents' restrictive rules by forming a bond with Ray, who teaches her sign language and introduces her to a new sense of belonging. This haunting speculative tale blends family conflict, self-discovery, and the resilience of finding one's voice in a barren world.



DEFINITELY BETTER NOW

by Ava Robinson

Emma, a year into sobriety, is learning that life's messes don't vanish overnight. Between a complicated family, work stress, and a new romantic interest, she discovers that taking it one day at a time might be the key to healing. This witty and heartfelt debut explores recovery, love, and embracing imperfections.



BEAUTIFUL UGLY

by Alice Feeney

A year after his wife Abby's mysterious disappearance, Grady retreats to a remote Scottish island to heal. There, he encounters a woman eerily resembling Abby, unraveling a chilling mystery about love, loss, and the truth behind her vanishing. A gripping tale of grief and suspense.

LISTEN & ESCAPE

Dive into these must-hear podcasts, from literary escapes to imaginative animal tales. Perfect for book lovers, kids, and curious minds alike, each episode offers a journey worth tuning into.



LEVAR BURTON READS

Averages 40 minutes per episode with over 190 episodes

Let the legendary LeVar Burton transport you with beautifully narrated short fiction, paired with immersive soundscapes, creating an unforgettable literary journey for every listener.



ANIMAL TALES: THE KIDS' STORY PODCAST

Averages 15 minutes per episode with over 380 episodes

From jungle creatures to mythical beasts, Animal Tales enchants kids with original animal-themed stories.

Perfect for bedtime or road trips, discover a world of wonder with three new stories weekly.



BOOKS & BOBA

Averages 45 minutes per episode with over 300 episodes

Dive into a literary adventure celebrating Asian and Asian American authors across genres. This book club podcast explores diverse voices, uncovering stories that resonate, inspire, and bridge cultures.



DEBUTIFUL

Averages 20 minutes per episode with over 100 episodes

Celebrate the magic of debut novels as host Adam Vitcavage chats with new authors about their creative processes, inspirations, and first works in this podcast for book lovers.



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their mental health.

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SEIZE THE AWKWARD



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for Suicide
Prevention





CITY SPOTLIGHT
**JACKSON
HOLE,
WYOMING**
CITY SPOTLIGHT



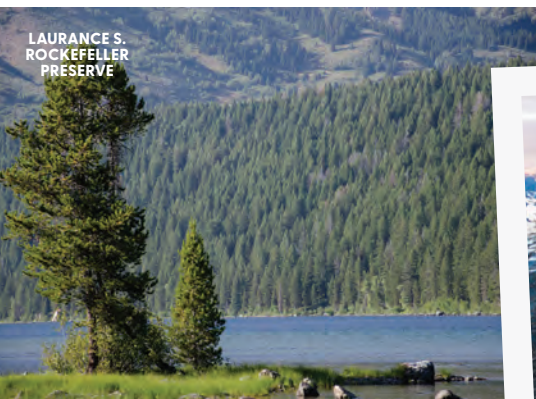
A WEEKEND IN Jackson Hole, WY

Tucked away in the shadow of the majestic Tetons, Jackson Hole is a perfect mix of rugged adventure, Western charm, and jaw-dropping natural beauty. Whether you're a thrill-seeker, wildlife enthusiast, or someone who just wants to soak in the mountain vibes, this Wyoming gem offers something unforgettable for everyone.



JACKSON HOLE MOUNTAIN RESORT

This world-class resort is your ticket to an unforgettable mountain escape. Winter is all about carving through powdery slopes, while summer offers everything from scenic gondola rides to epic mountain biking. *Après-ski* here is practically a sport itself, with cozy fireplaces and cocktails to warm you up.



LAURANCE S. ROCKEFELLER PRESERVE



TETON VILLAGE

For a mix of rugged adventure and upscale vibes, Teton Village has it all. Ride the aerial tram to the summit of Rendezvous Mountain for unparalleled views, indulge in fine dining, or relax with a spa treatment. This is where adventure meets luxury, all wrapped up in Jackson Hole's signature charm.



JENNY LAKE

Nestled at the base of the Tetons, Jenny Lake is pure magic. Hike around its sparkling waters, hop on a boat shuttle to Hidden Falls, or just relax by the shore and take in the mountain reflections. It's the perfect mix of adventure and tranquility, offering postcard-worthy views at every turn.



SNOW KING MOUNTAIN

Known as Jackson's "town hill," Snow King is where locals and visitors go for year-round fun. Skiers and snowboarders love its steep terrain, while summer adventurers can zip down the alpine coaster or hike trails with killer views.





⬆️ **TOWN SQUARE AND ANTLER ARCHES**

You can't visit Jackson without snapping a pic under these iconic arches, made entirely of elk antlers. Surrounding the square, you'll find unique shops, art galleries, and cafes buzzing with local charm. It's the perfect mix of small-town warmth and Western flair.



⬆️ **NATIONAL ELK REFUGE**

This sprawling refuge is home to thousands of elk that migrate here each winter. Hop on a horse-drawn sleigh for an unforgettable ride through the snowy expanse, where you'll get up close with these majestic creatures. It's a winter wonderland with a wild twist that's sure to wow.

**WHERE TO
APRÈS-SKI**



MANGY MOOSE

Located in Teton Village, this iconic spot is where rustic charm meets lively nightlife. Warm up with a spiked cider, groove to live music, or sample a craft beer while you soak up the quirky atmosphere. It's cozy, fun, and a quintessential Jackson Hole experience.



THE HANDLE BAR

For a dash of sophistication with a side of mountain charm, head to The Handle Bar at the Four Seasons. Their boozy hot chocolates are legendary, and the beer selection is top-notch, featuring both local brews and global favorites. It's the perfect spot to toast your mountain adventures.



**THE BISTRO
AT THE ALPENHOF**

Steps from the tram tower, this charming Swiss-inspired bistro is your après-ski dream. Indulge in savory fondue, hearty burgers, or crisp salads while soaking up the alpine vibe. Whether you're refueling after the slopes or just enjoying the cozy setting, it's a deliciously delightful stop.



**MILLION DOLLAR
COWBOY BAR**

Grab a saddle seat (literally) at this legendary watering hole. Known for its Western vibes and live music, it's a place to kick back with a whiskey or dance the night away. Part bar, part piece of history, the Cowboy Bar is pure Jackson Hole spirit.



GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Picture a postcard and step right into it—Grand Teton National Park is nature's masterpiece.

From its jagged peaks to reflective lakes, this spot offers unparalleled beauty, diverse wildlife, and endless outdoor escapades. Keep an eye out for moose, bears, and bald eagles as you hike, kayak on Jenny Lake, or simply soak up the breathtaking scenery.



Grand Teton
National Park,
Wyoming

dust of snow

*The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree*

*Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.*

ROBERT FROST
1923



*telluride,
colorado*

The air in Telluride, Colorado, is infused with the **crispness of high-altitude pine, sun-warmed wildflowers, and a whisper of woodsmoke from a nearby fire pit.** It's the kind of **scent** that promises adventure while wrapping you in the serenity of mountain life. The **taste** of this place? **Wild huckleberry jam spread on warm sourdough, paired with a shot of mountain-roasted espresso**—a combination that reflects the town's balance of earthy flavors and refined taste. It's a harmonious mix of rugged trails and artisanal charm that lingers long after you've left.



SAVORING THE SPIRIT OF SMALL TOWN CHARM

Some towns are more than just places—they're experiences, each with its own flavor, aroma, and charm. This winter, we're taking you on a sensory journey through six small towns that feel like stepping into a storybook. From the festive magic of North Pole, Alaska, to the rugged beauty of Jackson, Wyoming, these destinations are perfect for savoring the season.



HERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN GEMS TO UNCOVER IN TELLURIDE:

ALTA LAKES GHOST TOWN

Just a short drive from town, Alta Lakes offers a hauntingly beautiful abandoned mining town surrounded by pristine lakes. It's perfect for photographers or anyone seeking a secluded adventure with a touch of history.

THE BUTCHER & BAKER CAFÉ

For a cozy local meal, this café serves up everything from hearty breakfasts to delicious pastries, with a focus on locally sourced ingredients. The laid-back atmosphere and mouthwatering flavors make it a hidden gem among Telluride's more upscale dining spots.

TELLURIDE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Housed in a former hospital, this small museum offers a deep dive into Telluride's past, from its mining days to the ski mecca it is today. It's a great spot to get a sense of the local culture and history without the crowds.

THE ALPINO VINO

At nearly 12,000 feet, this high-altitude European-style bistro is a cozy, secluded spot for a memorable dining experience. It's the highest-elevation restaurant in North America and offers views as stunning as the food.

BRIDAL VEIL FALLS HIKE

Colorado's tallest free-falling waterfall, Bridal Veil Falls is an absolute must-see, especially if you're up for the hike. The views of the town from the top are breathtaking, and it's an experience that feels a world away from the main streets below.



San Juan Mountains, Mountain Village and Telluride, Colorado

bar harbor, maine

Imagine Bar Harbor, Maine: a coastal hideaway where the air is thick with salt and pine, and hints of beach rose drift in like a quiet hello. The **scent of Bar Harbor would be a blend of that salty sea air and fresh evergreen**—a fragrance that's wild and calming, just like the rocky shores that surround it. And the **taste?** Picture a **warm slice of wild blueberry pie with a dollop of cream**, the kind that tastes like summer no matter the season, paired with **steamed lobster dripping in butter**. It's a place that's bold and simple all at once, where the flavors come as naturally as the tides, grounding you in the timeless beauty of the Maine coast.



HERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN GEMS TO DISCOVER IN BAR HARBOR:

COMPASS HARBOR TRAIL

Just outside of the busy parts of Acadia National Park, this serene trail winds down to the rocky shoreline, offering stunning views without the crowds. It's a short hike but perfect for a quiet moment to soak in the coastal scenery.

BAR ISLAND

At low tide, you can walk across a sandbar from downtown Bar Harbor to explore Bar Island. It's a unique, fleeting experience where you can enjoy a little hike with views of the town and harbor. Just be mindful of the tide so you don't get stranded!

THE WILD GARDENS OF ACADIA

Tucked away in Acadia National Park, these gardens showcase native plants in a natural, woodland setting. Each section represents a different local habitat, offering a quiet retreat and a chance to explore Maine's native flora up close.

CAFÉ THIS WAY

A local favorite with a quirky vibe, Café This Way is nestled in a cozy, unassuming spot and offers an eclectic menu with everything from seafood to vegan options. It's the kind of hidden gem that feels like home for locals and travelers alike.

ASTICOU AZALEA GARDEN

About 20 minutes from Bar Harbor, this peaceful Japanese-style garden was established in the 1950s and is a beautiful place to relax and wander. It's especially lovely in the spring, but its tranquil vibe is perfect any time of year.

evergreen + blueberry pie

fresh snow + dark chocolate



Picture Park City, Utah: a place where winter's magic meets a mountain town that's as welcoming as your coziest sweater. If we had to bottle its **scent**, it would smell like **fresh snow, mountain pine, and a hint of cedar and cocoa** drifting in like a **warm fireside hug**.

And the **taste**? Pure decadence in the form of **dark chocolate** infused with local Utah **honey and a pinch of sea salt**—a little sweet, a little bold, like the town itself. It's a place that lives in the balance of rugged landscapes and refined luxury, where après-ski means more than just skiing—it's a whole way of life.

*park city,
utah*



Park City,
Utah



HERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN GEMS TO EXPLORE IN PARK CITY:

GUARDSMAN PASS SCENIC BACKWAY

A stunning drive that takes you over the mountains, Guardsman Pass is especially beautiful in fall when the aspens turn golden. It's a quiet alternative to the main roads, offering breathtaking views of Park City and nearby Heber Valley.

McPOLIN FARM

Just outside of town, this historic white barn with its iconic red roof is one of Park City's most photographed spots. You can explore the area around the barn and enjoy the scenic views, especially lovely in winter or during wildflower season.

NO NAME SALOON

A local favorite with an eclectic, rustic vibe, No Name Saloon offers classic pub fare and a lively atmosphere. It's a great spot to kick back with a bison burger, surrounded by vintage Western memorabilia.

HIGH WEST DISTILLERY & SALOON

As Utah's first legal distillery since Prohibition, High West is a cozy spot with locally crafted spirits and creative cocktails. Their whiskey is celebrated across the state, and the atmosphere captures Park City's mix of elegance and Western heritage.

SWANER PRESERVE AND ECOCENTER

This hidden gem offers trails, educational exhibits, and a look into Utah's unique ecosystems. It's a serene escape into nature, where you can see local wildlife, learn about conservation, or enjoy birdwatching.

*stowe,
vermont*

Welcome to Stowe, Vermont: a storybook village tucked into the folds of the Green Mountains, where the **air smells like crisp maple leaves, woodsmoke, and warm apple cider.**

It's the **scent of autumn afternoons and cozy evenings by the fire, a sensory postcard from New England's heart.** And the **taste? Think maple syrup drizzled over freshly baked apple cider doughnuts, paired with a sharp bite of local cheddar.** It's a flavor that wraps you in tradition while surprising you with its bold simplicity. Stowe is a place where every corner feels like a hidden gem, and every bite or breath reminds you why Vermont is forever worth slowing down for.

a u t u m n n + m a p l e s y r u p



Emilys covered bridge.
Stowe, Vermont



HERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN GEMS TO EXPLORE IN STOWE:

MOSS GLEN FALLS

Just a short hike from the main road, Moss Glen Falls is a beautiful, lesser-known waterfall that's especially scenic in fall when surrounded by bright foliage. It's an easy but rewarding spot for nature lovers and photographers.

THE TRAPP FAMILY LODGE

Built by the family that inspired *The Sound of Music*, this Austrian-style lodge offers stunning views, cross-country ski trails, and delicious farm-to-table dining. It's a must-visit for its unique history and unforgettable mountain vistas.

COLD HOLLOW CIDER MILL

Located just outside Stowe, this charming cider mill is the place to watch cider being pressed, sample fresh apple cider doughnuts, and pick up local maple products. It's a cozy stop that captures the heart of Vermont's flavors.

GOLD BROOK COVERED BRIDGE ('EMILY'S BRIDGE')

This historic covered bridge is beautiful by day and has a mysterious vibe by night. Local legend says it's haunted by the spirit of a girl named Emily, making it a popular (and slightly spooky) spot to visit.

VERMONT SKI AND SNOWBOARD MUSEUM

Tucked away in Stowe's downtown, this small museum celebrates Vermont's ski culture and history. It's a fun and educational stop for winter sports enthusiasts, with unique memorabilia and stories from the slopes.



Stowe Mountain resort Spruce peak village,
Stowe, Vermont



Gondola on
Mt. Mansfield,
Stowe, Vermont



north pole, alaska



Step into North Pole, Alaska, where the Christmas spirit never calls it a season and the air **smells like frosty winter mornings, fresh evergreen, and just a whisper of peppermint.**

It's a scent that feels like stepping into a snow globe—magical, crisp, and impossibly cheerful. The **taste?** Imagine **rich, velvety hot chocolate with a swirl of peppermint and a pinch of cinnamon, paired with gingerbread cookies fresh from the oven.** It's warm and nostalgic, like a hug from your favorite holiday memory. In North Pole, every day is a reason to believe, and every flavor or breeze carries a bit of the Arctic wonderland's festive charm.



HERE ARE A FEW HIDDEN GEMS TO DISCOVER IN NORTH POLE, ALASKA:

SANTA CLAUS HOUSE

A must-see landmark, the Santa Claus House is filled with holiday decorations, gifts, and letters to Santa from around the world.

Outside, there's a giant Santa statue, making it a quirky photo spot and a place that truly embodies North Pole's spirit.

NORTH POLE MURALS

Scattered throughout town, these murals depict local wildlife, Alaskan scenery, and of course, holiday scenes. Exploring these artistic treasures adds a deeper, unexpected charm to North Pole's festive atmosphere.

KNOTTY SHOP

About 15 minutes from North Pole, this unique roadside shop and gallery features Alaskan crafts, quirky wood carvings, and local snacks. Their ice cream is a hit in summer, and it's a fun stop for picking up handcrafted souvenirs with an Alaskan twist.

AURORA BOREALIS VIEWING AT BIRCH HILL

For one of the best spots to see the northern lights, Birch Hill offers a secluded, elevated location away from city lights. It's magical in the winter months, especially for travelers hoping to witness the aurora's colorful dance.

w i n t e r m o r n i n g s + h o t c o c o a

kindness
is like snow.
it beautifies
everything it covers

kahlil gibran



The Secret Perk of Letter Writing: Good for the Soul

In a world of instant messages and endless notifications, letter writing offers something refreshingly rare—a chance to slow down and connect in a way that feels real.

There's something different about putting pen to paper. It's an old-school, no-wifi-required way of pressing pause on the rush of things. When you write a letter, you take your time—slow it down, let thoughts meander, maybe even figure out what you want to say before saying it. Turns out, that's pretty powerful for the ol' mental health. Writing letters—whether to your grandma or a friend in another state—can help you connect, reflect, and see the good stuff you might otherwise scroll right past.

And it's more than nostalgia. Studies show that reflecting on positive relationships boosts mood and helps with stress, so maybe sending a “Hey, thanks for being you” letter could work wonders for both sides of the mailbox. Who knew a pen, some paper, and a few kind words could be so good for the soul? Try it out. Find a quiet spot, skip the autocorrect, and feel the difference.

THE ART OF A GREAT LOVE NOTE

Keep it Simple

No need to get Shakespearean unless you want to. A line or two can be just as powerful.

Be Specific

Instead of vague compliments, mention something they did recently that touched you.

Don't Overthink It

Your words don't have to be perfect—they just have to be honest.

Seal It with Love

Even a sticker or doodle can add that extra charm.



CREATE YOUR OWN CARD

Start with a blank card or sturdy paper. Think of a cute theme—animals, food, or everyday objects—and let the puns roll. A rhino with the line, “*All rhino is that I love you*”? Adorable. A peach saying, “*I apeachiate you*”? Guaranteed smile.

No Picasso skills? No problem. Stick figures, quirky doodles, or even magazine cutouts work just as well. Add pop of color with markers, stamps, or stickers.

FOLLOW US!

For craft & decor inspiration and how-tos inspired by this issue follow us on Pinterest!



CARDS WITH A PURPOSE

Here's something you might not think of: nonprofits and charities often collect handmade cards and letters to pass along to people in need. Whether it's a shelter, a hospital, or a care home, many organizations love receiving bundles of holiday or Valentine's cards to distribute. A small, handwritten message could brighten someone's day in ways you might never realize.



HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

Operation Gratitude

collects letters for deployed troops and first responders.

Cards for Hospitalized Kids


spreads love to children in hospitals around the world.

The Angel Card Project

connects volunteers with individuals who could use a little holiday cheer.

Love for Our Elders

fighters isolation in senior communities through handwritten letters collect letters for people who could use an extra smile.

A photograph of a snowy winter scene. In the foreground, a dark blue mailbox with a red flag is mounted on a wooden post. The mailbox is covered in a layer of snow. The background shows a snow-covered path leading through a snowy landscape with trees and a house in the distance. Overlaid on the left side of the image is a handwritten quote in white cursive script.

to send a letter is
a good way
to go
somewhere
without moving
anything
but your heart

phyllis theroux



living in the flow

Here's the thing about living in flow: it's not some magic potion or an elusive life hack you stumble upon during your third yoga retreat.

It's a decision—a conscious, imperfect, often messy choice to step into your own rhythm and let go of what weighs you down. Flow isn't about having it all together; it's about finding what keeps your soul buoyant when the world feels heavy.

Start here: **Make Time for You.** That's not selfish—it's survival. You can't pour from an empty cup, right? Whether it's a few stolen moments in the morning sun with coffee that tastes like actual heaven or a midweek dance-off in your living room, carving out time to recharge is non-negotiable. No one else will do it for you.

And while we're at it, let's talk about **avoiding burnout.** It's easy to think doing everything means being everything. Spoiler: it doesn't. Rest is productive. The world won't implode if you pause to breathe. Your best ideas often show up when you let yourself *not* be busy every second. Give that a whirl.

Oh, and the art of **saying no.** It's a tough one. But here's the deal: every time you say yes to something that doesn't light you up, you're saying no to

yourself. And saying no to yourself? That's a one-way ticket to Resentmentville. It's okay to let people down so you don't let yourself down. Repeat that as needed.

Here's a revelation: life isn't perfect, and it shouldn't be. **Perfectionism** is a treadmill you don't need to run. Progress beats perfection every time. Done is beautiful.

Besides, the little quirks and mistakes? That's where the good stuff hides.

So, find your flow. Leap before you're ready. Let go of the chaos and embrace the unknown.

Flow is trusting that when you stop paddling against the current, you just might discover a gentler way forward. ■



KNOW WHAT SPARKS THE LIGHT IN YOU.

THEN USE THAT LIGHT

TO ILLUMINATE THE WORLD.
OPRAH WINFREY

stoking your inner flame

There's a moment when the fire dims. Not out—never out—but low enough to make you wonder if it's still there. We've all been there: a project stalled, a path unclear, or that foggy feeling of wondering what's next. The good news? That ember inside doesn't go cold. It just needs a little tending.

Start with the basics. What lights you up? Not what *should* light you up or what garners applause at family dinners—what actually makes you lose track of time, what pulls you out of your head and into the moment. These aren't always the big things. Sometimes it's the rhythm of chopping vegetables, the feel of sun on your face during a midday walk, or the way a song can transport you. These little sparks? They matter. They're the foundation of your fire. Collect them. Protect them. And don't underestimate the power of leaning into the things that make your chest feel a little lighter and your heart beat a little louder.

But fires don't just burn on the good stuff. They need oxygen—space to breathe. Too often, we pack our days so tightly with expectations, obligations, and noise that there's no room for the flame to grow.

Give yourself permission to step back. To ask yourself the tough questions that only you can answer. What am I chasing? Am I chasing it for me, or because someone else thinks I should?

These moments of reflection aren't just pauses; they're the breaths your fire needs to thrive. The honesty in those answers? That's your kindling. It's what gives your fire the strength to roar when the time comes.



FIREPROOF REMINDER

If your fire feels faint, remember this: even embers carry heat. You're not starting over; you're building on what's already there. Life has a way of fanning the flames just when you're ready. And sometimes, the smallest spark can ignite something extraordinary.

So, tend your inner fire. Feed it with what makes you feel alive. Protect it from winds that don't belong to you. And when it's blazing? Let it light the way forward—not just for yourself, but for everyone lucky enough to feel its warmth.



QUICK FIRE STARTERS

MUSIC MATCH

Curate a playlist that matches your mood—songs that make you move, soothe your soul, or lyrics that speak the words you didn't know you needed to hear. Music isn't just background noise; it's fuel that can set the tone for your entire day.

MOVE DIFFERENTLY

Shake up your routine. Take the long way home and notice the details you've never seen, try a yoga flow that challenges your balance, or dance barefoot in the kitchen like nobody's watching. Change, no matter how small, creates sparks that can ignite something bigger.

REACH OUT

Share your spark with someone else—a story, a laugh, a handwritten note, or even a meal. Connection isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a powerful ignition for both you and the person on the receiving end.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOUR HAPPINESS ISN'T WAITING FOR PERMISSION. IT'S WAITING FOR YOU.

Don't Put Happiness on Hold

Imagine not waiting for everything to be 'perfect' before you start choosing happiness. Forget that mythical timeline where all your boxes are checked, your ducks are in a row, and life feels like a perfectly curated Instagram feed. Because, newsflash: that timeline doesn't exist. Happiness isn't something you chase—it's something you invite into the chaos.

We've all been there—pinning our joy to some distant milestone. "Once I get the promotion, I'll take that pottery class." "After I lose the weight, I'll buy the cute dress." Sound familiar? But here's the thing: life doesn't slow down. It's messy, unpredictable, and often one big pile of unanswered emails and laundry that's somehow still wet. Waiting for happiness is like holding out for perfect beach weather in November—it might happen, but why not just grab a sweater and enjoy the view now?

Self-care isn't just spa days and yoga retreats (though, hey, we're all for those). Sometimes, it's giving yourself permission to pause, breathe, and figure out what really lights your soul on fire. That could be five minutes of doodling before bed or turning up your favorite guilty pleasure song and dancing like a lunatic in your kitchen. These little moments are the secret sauce to feeling whole.

Maya Angelou once said, "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it." Wise words worth taking to heart. So, let's flip the script: forget the guilt. Embrace the hobbies, the dreams, the quirky passions that bring a smile to your face. Don't overthink it—just start. ■

hygge

[hyoo-guh] *noun*

an atmosphere of warmth, wellbeing and coziness, a feeling of contentment evoked by simple pleasures and being in the moment

SEASON OF HYGGE: COZY IS THE NEW COOL

WHAT THE HECK IS HYGGE ANYWAY?

Let's start with the basics: Hygge (pronounced "hoo-gah") is a Danish word that loosely translates to a mood of coziness and comfortable conviviality. Think fuzzy socks, candlelight, and a good book. It's not just a vibe; it's a lifestyle. And while you might be tempted to equate it with Instagram-perfect blanket forts, Hygge goes deeper than aesthetics.

It's about slowing down, appreciating the small joys, and finding contentment in the here and now.

Danish folks swear by it, and with their long, dark winters, they'd know a thing or two about making the most of a gloomy season. But Hygge isn't exclusive to Scandinavia—it's an export we should all be unwrapping this winter.



THE ANATOMY OF A HYGGE MOMENT

Picture this: A snowstorm outside, a fireplace crackling inside, and you're curled up with a steaming cup of tea that smells like cinnamon and nostalgia. That's Hygge in a nutshell. But it's not all about the physical setup; it's the feeling that counts.

Hygge moments can be loud and shared—like game night with friends—or quiet and personal, like journaling by candlelight. It's all about tuning out the noise and tuning into what warms your soul.





HOW TO GET YOUR HYGGE ON

You don't need to live in a Nordic wonderland or drop major cash to Hygge. Start small. Light a candle that smells like a forest. Invest in a blanket so soft it makes you sigh. Brew tea. Bake something. But most importantly, create space for connection—with yourself or others. Hygge isn't about chasing perfection; it's about creating warmth in the everyday.

Need inspiration? Have a Hygge-themed potluck. Everyone brings something comforting—mac and cheese, mulled wine, you name it—and no one leaves until the candles burn out.



PRO TIP
Put your phone in another room. Hygge does not vibe with doomscrolling.

WHY WE NEED HYGGE NOW MORE THAN EVER

The modern world moves fast—too fast, really. Between emails, deadlines, and the never-ending parade of bad news, it's easy to forget how to just be. Hygge is the antidote to hustle culture, a gentle reminder that life is not a productivity contest. It tells us that it's okay, even necessary, to pause and embrace stillness.

And here's the kicker: studies suggest that cultivating moments of coziness and connection can reduce stress and increase happiness. So yes, Hygge might just be your new self-care MVP.



THE SEASON OF HYGGE

Winter doesn't have to feel like the cold, dark villain in your seasonal storyline. With Hygge as your guide, it can be the coziest, most magical chapter yet. So, grab your fluffiest socks, dim the lights, and embrace the art of slowing down.

Because if the Danes are right (and they usually are), contentment might just be as simple as savoring a warm mug on a cold day. ■

lasagna soup

INGREDIENTS

½ lb lean ground beef
½ lb ground Italian sausage
1 yellow onion, chopped
2 c frozen or canned corn, drained
1 T olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 T tomato paste
1 jar (24 oz) marinara sauce
¼ t crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
2 t dried parsley (or 2 T fresh, chopped)
1 t dried oregano
1 t dried basil
6 c low-sodium chicken broth
1 c water
9 lasagna noodles, broken into pieces
2 c fresh spinach leaves (optional)
10 oz ricotta cheese (or cottage cheese)
1 c shredded mozzarella cheese
½ c freshly grated Parmesan cheese
fresh basil, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1 In a large pot over medium-high heat, cook the ground beef and sausage until browned. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Drain the grease and set the meat aside.

2 In the same pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.

3 Add tomato paste, marinara sauce, corn, red pepper flakes, parsley, oregano, and basil. Stir well to combine. Pour in the chicken broth and water. Return the cooked meat to the pot and bring to a gentle boil.

4 Add broken lasagna noodles to the pot and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 12–15 minutes, or until the noodles are tender. Stir in the spinach, if using, during the last 2 minutes of cooking.

5 In a small bowl, mix ricotta, mozzarella, and Parmesan cheeses.

6 Ladle hot soup into bowls and add a dollop of the cheese mixture on top. Garnish with fresh basil for a pop of color and flavor.



creamy vegan cauliflower soup

INGREDIENTS

1 medium head of cauliflower, chopped into florets
2 T olive oil
1 onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
3 c vegetable broth
1 c unsweetened plant-based milk (like almond or oat milk)
1 t ground cumin
½ tsp smoked paprika (optional)
salt and pepper to taste
juice of ½ a lemon
fresh parsley or chives for garnish



CRUNCHY UPGRADE

Swap out traditional croutons for roasted chickpeas to add a crispy, protein-packed twist

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, sautéing until softened and fragrant, about 3-4 minutes.
- 2 Add the cauliflower florets, cumin, smoked paprika, and a pinch of salt. Stir to coat the cauliflower in the spices.
- 3 Pour in the vegetable broth, bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook until the cauliflower is fork-tender, about 15-20 minutes.
- 4 Use an immersion blender to puree the soup until smooth, or carefully transfer it in batches to a blender. Return the soup to the pot.
- 5 Stir in the plant-based milk and lemon juice. Adjust the seasoning with more salt and pepper, if needed. Warm over low heat for 2-3 minutes.
- 6 Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with chopped parsley or chives. Serve with crusty bread or crackers for a complete meal.







POINSETTIA CRANBERRY CHAMPAGNE

2 oz cranberry juice
 ½ oz orange liqueur
 4 oz chilled champagne
 or prosecco
 sugared cranberries
 and an orange twist,
 to garnish

Pour cranberry juice and orange liqueur into a champagne flute. Top with chilled champagne or prosecco. Garnish with sugared cranberries and an orange twist for a festive finish.



2 oz vodka
 2 oz cranberry juice
 5 oz ginger beer
 Lime wedge and
 sugared cranberries,
 to garnish

Fill a copper mug with ice. Add vodka and cranberry juice, then top with ginger beer. Stir gently and garnish with lime and cranberries.



CRANBERRY GINGER MULE

cocktail season

Warm up your winter with these easy-to-make cocktails that bring seasonal flavors, festive vibes, and a touch of cozy indulgence to your glass.

2 oz dark rum
 1 oz lime juice
 ¾ oz spiced simple
 syrup (cinnamon or
 nutmeg infused)
 dried citrus wheel, to
 garnish

Add rum, lime juice, and spiced simple syrup to a shaker filled with ice. Shake well and strain into a chilled coupe glass. Top with a dried citrus wheel for a wintery touch.



POMEGRANATE ROSEMARY MOCKTAIL

2 oz pomegranate juice
 ½ oz rosemary
 simple syrup
 1 oz sparkling water
 (or ginger ale for extra
 sweetness)
 pomegranate seeds
 and a rosemary sprig,
 to garnish

Combine pomegranate juice and rosemary simple syrup in a glass filled with ice. Top with sparkling water or ginger ale. Stir gently, then garnish with pomegranate seeds and a rosemary sprig.



BLOOD ORANGE MARGARITA

2 oz tequila
 1 oz blood orange juice
 1 oz lime juice
 ½ oz agave syrup
 salt rim and blood orange wedge, to garnish

Run a lime wedge around the rim of a glass, then dip in salt. Fill the glass with ice. Add tequila, blood orange juice, lime juice, and agave syrup. Stir well and garnish with a blood orange wedge.



WINTER RUM DAIQUIRI

in season



BERRY GOOD FOR YOU

Cranberries: the tart little gems that show up during the holidays but deserve a year-round spotlight. These bright red berries are more than just pretty—they're a health powerhouse. Here's why they should be on your plate (or in your glass) beyond November.



GETTING THE MOST OUT OF CRANBERRIES

Cranberries are super versatile, so you've got options! Fresh cranberries can be a bit too tart for some, so try roasting them with a little honey for a natural sweetness, or blend them into smoothies for a tangy kick. You can also toss dried cranberries on salads, oatmeal, or yogurt for an easy nutrient boost. Just watch out for added sugars in dried varieties—stick with unsweetened if you're aiming for the healthiest option.

A NATURAL DEFENDER

First off, cranberries are brimming with antioxidants—those little warriors that help fight off damage in your cells from free radicals. What does that mean? Well, it's like having a built-in shield against everyday stressors that can speed up aging and disease. Antioxidants have a unique way of making us feel and look a little fresher, and cranberries are chock-full of them.

URINARY TRACT SUPPORT

Possibly one of the most famous cranberry benefits is its support for urinary tract health. Studies suggest cranberries contain compounds that prevent harmful bacteria from sticking to the walls of the urinary tract, which may reduce infections. Think of them as your urinary tract's bodyguard, offering a layer of protection with every handful.

GUT HEALTH AND BEYOND

Cranberries bring fiber to the table, feeding the good bacteria in your gut and keeping digestion on track. And the polyphenols they contain may improve heart health by promoting flexible blood vessels and reducing inflammation.

PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS

With a punch of vitamin C, vitamin E, and essential minerals, cranberries offer an easy way to up your nutrient game. A handful goes a long way.

zesty cranberry sauce

INGREDIENTS

1 c fresh or frozen cranberries
½ c orange juice
(freshly squeezed is best)
⅓ c granulated sugar
(adjust to taste)
½ t cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
zest of 1 orange

DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a medium saucepan, combine cranberries, orange juice, and sugar.
- 2 Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally.
- 3 Reduce heat to low and simmer for 10–15 minutes, until the cranberries burst and the sauce thickens.
- 4 Stir in cinnamon, nutmeg, and orange zest. Cook for another 1–2 minutes.
- 5 Remove from heat and let cool. The sauce will thicken as it sets.



A KISS OF CRANBERRY FOR EVERY DISH

Serve warm or chilled—perfect for desserts, pastries, or holiday meals!



cranberry bliss bars

INGREDIENTS

For the Bars

1 c (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
1¼ c brown sugar, packed
½ c granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 t vanilla extract
½ t almond extract
2 c all-purpose flour
1 t baking powder
½ t ground cinnamon
¼ t salt
½ c white chocolate chips
¾ c dried cranberries

For the Frosting

8 oz cream cheese, softened
2 c powdered sugar
1 t vanilla extract
¼ t orange zest
(optional for a bright flavor)

For the Topping

½ cup dried cranberries, chopped
⅓ cup white chocolate chips, melted
(for drizzling)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a 9x13-inch baking pan with parchment paper or lightly grease it.
- 2 In a large bowl, whisk together the melted butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar until smooth. Add the eggs, vanilla extract, and almond extract (if using), and mix well.
- 3 In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients, mixing until just combined. Stir in the white chocolate chips and dried cranberries.
- 4 Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool completely in the pan.
- 5 In a medium bowl, beat the cream cheese and powdered sugar together until smooth and creamy. Mix in the vanilla extract and orange zest (if using). Spread the frosting evenly over the cooled bars.
- 6 Sprinkle the chopped dried cranberries evenly over the frosting. Drizzle the melted white chocolate over the top using a spoon or a piping bag.
- 7 Let the bars set for about 20 minutes before slicing into triangles or squares. Serve and enjoy!



cranberry puff pastry squares

INGREDIENTS

1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
1 c cranberry sauce (homemade or store-bought)
1 egg, beaten
powdered sugar (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 375°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2 Roll out puff pastry slightly and cut into 4 even squares
- 3 Spoon 2 tablespoons of cranberry sauce onto the center of each square.
- 4 Fold the edges of the pastry up slightly to create a border around the filling.
- 5 Brush the edges with beaten egg for a golden finish.
- 6 Bake for 15–20 minutes or until the pastry is puffed and golden brown.
- 7 Let cool slightly, then dust with powdered sugar if desired.



cranberry citrus glaze for pork

INGREDIENTS

1 c fresh or frozen cranberries
¼ c orange juice
(freshly squeezed for best flavor)
2 T honey
1 T balsamic vinegar
1 t Dijon mustard
½ t garlic powder
½ t ground cinnamon
¼ t freshly ground black pepper
pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine the cranberries, orange juice, and honey.
- 2 Stir occasionally until the cranberries begin to burst and soften, about 5-7 minutes.
- 3 Reduce heat to low and mash the cranberries with the back of a spoon for a smoother texture.
- 4 Stir in balsamic vinegar, Dijon mustard, garlic powder, cinnamon, black pepper, and salt.
- 5 Cook for another 2-3 minutes until the glaze thickens slightly. Remove from heat and let it cool for a few minutes.
- 6 Brush or spoon over your pork before or during roasting for a sweet, tangy, and aromatic finish.



pull-apart christmas tree bread with camembert

INGREDIENTS

1 lb pizza dough
1 wheel Camembert cheese
2 T cranberry sauce
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tbsp olive oil
pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

1 Preheat oven to 375°.

2 Divide pizza dough into 20 small balls.

3 Arrange the dough balls in a tree shape on a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving space in the center for the Camembert.

4 Place the Camembert wheel snugly in the middle of the tree.

5 Brush dough with olive oil, sprinkle with garlic and salt.

6 Bake for 20 minutes or until dough is golden and cheese is melty.

7 Top the Camembert with cranberry sauce and garnish the tree with rosemary sprigs and serve warm.



gingerbread cranberry holiday parfait

This festive parfait is as simple as it is stunning. Start with a layer of crushed gingerbread cookies at the bottom of a glass, followed by a dollop of lightly sweetened whipped cream. Next, add a spoonful of tart cranberry sauce or fresh cranberries to bring a bright, tangy kick. Repeat the layers—crumbs, cream, and cranberries—until the glass is full. For the crowning glory, nestle a gingerbread cookie on top, along with a sprig of rosemary for an earthy, aromatic touch, and a few extra cranberries for color. Serve immediately for a show-stopping holiday treat that's equal parts creamy, crunchy, and festive!



in the kitchen

**Extra Large Acacia Wood
Paddle Cutting Board**
World Market, \$60



**Stainless-Steel
Mesh Colander,
Set of 3**
Williams Sonoma,
\$50



**Stoneware Soup
Bowl with Handle**
Sheffield Home, \$18



Cranberry Dish Set
Mud Pie, \$35

LET'S GET COOKIN'

Looking for kitchenware to help you create the recipes in this issue or products that are just inspired by what's in season? We've got you!



Stainless Steel Fork
OXO, \$11



**Stemless Wine
Glasses Set**
JoyJolt Spirits, \$37



Serving More Than Meals

When disaster strikes, the immediate response usually involves clean water, shelter, and safety. But leave it to chef José Andrés and his team at World Central Kitchen (WCK) to remind us that food—hot, nourishing, soul-warming food—is just as critical.

Since 2010, WCK has been showing up when the world feels its most broken. Whether it's wildfires, hurricanes, or humanitarian crises, they bring more than meals. They bring hope, served up one plate at a time. And we're not talking survival rations; we're talking dishes crafted with care, designed to restore more than just energy—designed to restore humanity.

From feeding communities in Ukraine during the war to setting up kitchens in the wake of Hurricane Ian, WCK moves fast, partnering with local chefs, farmers, and food trucks to get hot meals where they're needed most. It's not charity; it's solidarity, shared over bowls of soup and fresh bread.

World Central Kitchen doesn't just feed stomachs—they feed resilience. Because when you nourish people, you're not just giving them strength for the day. You're reminding them that even in chaos, they're not forgotten. ■



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN/WCK.ORG

World Central Kitchen reached Asheville almost immediately and simultaneously began problem solving and providing meals after Hurricane Helene.



WCK is powered by our community of supporters including thousands of volunteers, around the world. Learn how to get involved at wck.org





10 Ways to Change the World Without Changing Everything

Changing the world sounds massive—like you’d need a superhero cape and a Nobel Prize to even get started. But here’s the secret: it’s not about grand gestures or Herculean feats. Changing the world happens in the small, everyday choices that ripple out farther than we ever expect. Let’s dive into ten ways you can make a difference without flipping your life upside down.

1

BRING A FRIEND ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Sure, volunteering is great. But volunteering with a friend? That’s where the magic happens. Sharing the experience doubles the impact and, let’s be honest, makes it way more fun. Whether it’s sorting food at a local pantry or walking dogs at a shelter, you’re not just helping others—you’re strengthening your connection with someone you care about.

2

BE LOUD FOR THE GOOD STUFF

We all know social media can be a pit of doomscrolling, but it’s also a megaphone for the causes you care about. Use your platforms to spotlight nonprofits, share fundraisers, or just post a story about that incredible community project you stumbled upon. Hit that “share” button with purpose.



3

FIND YOUR NICHE

Not **everyone** is cut out for public speeches or marathon runs for charity—and that's okay. Maybe you bake the world's best cookies and could host a bake sale for a cause. Maybe you're a spreadsheet whiz who could help a nonprofit organize their finances. Find what you're good at and let that be your superhero cape.

4

LEAD BY EXAMPLE, NO CAPE REQUIRED

Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is simply be. Be kind when no one's looking, pick up trash on a walk, hold doors open, tip generously. People notice. Your quiet example could inspire someone else to pay it forward—and suddenly, a ripple turns into a wave.

5

THINK SMALL, THINK LOCAL

Big change often starts small. Look around your neighborhood: What needs fixing? Is it a community park that's a little sad? A neighbor who could use some help with groceries? Sometimes, changing the world means starting right outside your front door.

6

STOP UNDERVALUING YOUR TIME

"I'd love to help, but I don't have time" is the modern mantra. But guess what? You do. Even an hour spent tutoring, planting a community garden, or mentoring a kid can have an outsized impact. Remember, it's not about how much time you have—it's about how you use it.

7

TELL YOUR STORY

Never underestimate the power of your voice. Maybe you overcame something big, or maybe you've just been quietly making a difference in your corner of the world. Share your journey—it might be the nudge someone else needs to step up and do the same.

8

CONSUME CONSCIOUSLY

Your wallet is a tool for change. Support local farmers, shop from brands that give back, and think twice about fast fashion. You don't have to overhaul your entire life—just start small. Each purchase is a vote for the kind of world you want to live in.

9

PRACTICE GRATITUDE, OUT LOUD

Saying "thank you" might seem tiny, but gratitude has a sneaky way of spreading. Thank the barista, the delivery driver, the teacher who goes above and beyond. Kindness begets kindness, and the world gets a little brighter each time it's passed on.

10

DREAM BIG—AND ACT ON IT

Here's the thing: you don't have to know how you'll change the world when you start. Maybe you have an idea for a community project or want to tackle a social issue that makes your heart ache. Start small, stay persistent, and don't let the fear of imperfection stop you.



At the end of the day, changing the world isn't about perfection or recognition. It's about showing up. It's about trying. The beauty of these small actions is that they build, stacking up like bricks until—bam!—you've built something incredible. And hey, the world is better because you cared enough to try.

Let's get out there and start rippling. ■



Post-It Positivity: Spreading Joy, One Note at a Time

Who knew something as simple as a sticky note could brighten someone's day?

With a pen, a little imagination, and a pack of Post-Its, you've got all the tools to spread kindness in the most unexpected places.

Write a short message—"You've got this," "Smile, you're amazing," or even just a cheerful doodle—and stick it somewhere someone will find it. Mirrors in public restrooms, library books, and community bulletin boards are perfect spots.

These tiny notes might feel like a small effort, but for someone having a tough day, they can be a game changer. Plus, they're easy, affordable, and completely anonymous, leaving the recipient with a little mystery and a lot of joy.

So grab a pack of sticky notes, let your creativity flow, and start a kindness revolution. Because sometimes, it's the smallest gestures that make the biggest difference.

WHERE TO STICK IT

NEED IDEAS FOR YOUR POST-IT POSITIVITY CAMPAIGN? TRY THESE:

Coffee Shop Chaos

Mirrors, napkin dispensers, or right on the to-go cup rack.

Library Treasure Hunt

Inside books, especially ones about self-help or adventure.

Locker Love

On a gym locker or school hallway.

Restroom Reassurance

Because everyone needs a pep talk at the mirror.

Dining Delights

Leave one on the table or tucked with the check at a restaurant.

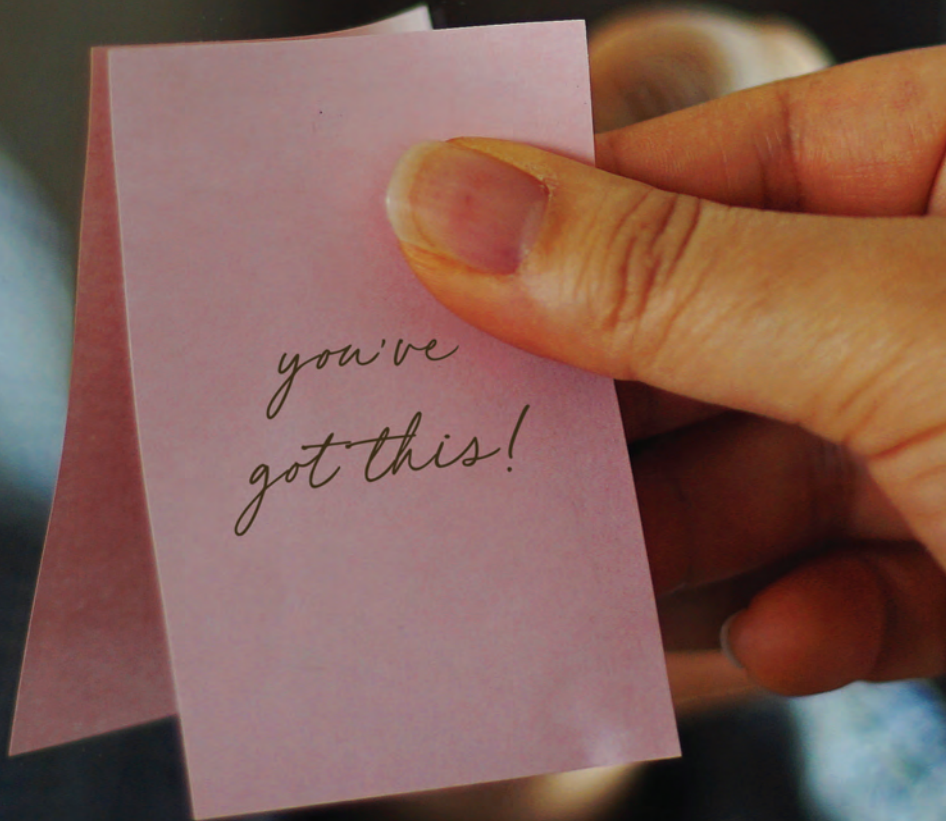
Neighborhood Nooks

Community bulletin boards or local walking trails.



PRO TIP

Always ask yourself, *Where would I need a little encouragement?* Then stick it there.



By THE FIRE RESIDE



From heartfelt journeys to artistic breakthroughs, these interviews offer stories that inspire, uplift, and stay with you long after the last page.

IN THE GLOW OF THE FIRE, WE REMEMBER THAT LIFE IS NOT JUST ABOUT SURVIVAL BUT CONNECTION.



Actress Rachel Stubington opens up about her evolving role as Summer in *Shrinking* and the personal growth she's experienced along the way. From her journey into acting to working with iconic figures like Harrison Ford, Rachel shares the behind-the-scenes moments and invaluable lessons that have shaped her career—and her life.



RACHEL STUBINGTON

Tattle Magazine: Your character Summer on *Shrinking* has become more prominent this season. How has her storyline evolved and what excites you most about the growth of your character?

Rachel Stubington: I think you get to learn a lot more about Summer's home life and about Summer's relationship with her parents on top of her relationship with Alice in this season... which is really fun as an actor to get to have this jumping off point to kind of understand why she is the way she is. I think overall, I just get so excited every time I know Summer's gonna be in an episode because I know the lines are going to be funny. I just know that I'm in for something good. But it's also been cool to get to explore her relationship with Alice more. I just, I love Lukita so much, and getting to work with her is the best thing ever. I get excited that we get to see more of what their friendship is and what it means to each of them.

TM: How did you approach bringing Summer to life? And did you face any challenges stepping into her role?

RS: Yeah, it's hard being on a TV show because there's so many things you don't know until they happen in an episode. So even if there's a line that is like, 'Oh, Summer has a dog.' I'm like... I didn't know that in my prep before... I did kind of struggle with that at first. Every episode I would say something that would be a big plot point in Summer's home life or something about her relationship with her parents.

TM: In addition to acting, you recently wrote and produced a film. What inspired you to step behind the scenes and how did you experience writing and producing differ from acting for you?

RS: I think *Shrinking* spoiled me in that you're working with these talented

writers who also kind of give you the green light sometimes to improv and add your own lines. And it's really fun. It's such an exciting thing to be part of the collaborative process.

So, my friend and I from college have always done comedy together. We were on this sketch team in college. [I was really cool in college.] I just have so much fun working with him. We thought we should try and create something of our own that we could film.

TM: I could see how that could be so different from the perspective of acting to taking a step behind the camera...

RS: Oh, it's so hard. I've never produced before and I was so like, "How hard could it be?" It's really hard. I've always loved writing. And so that one felt like once the writing's done, everything's gonna fall into place. And no... no... there's a lot of... I had to order people food... I'm really good at catering now, though.

TM: Always a bonus... So, you also appeared in *Dr. Odyssey*... it's on my watch list... how do you approach transitioning between such different roles and projects? And what drew you to the role in *Dr. Odyssey*?

RS: I've always been a huge fan of the Ryan Murphy verse. I was a huge *Glee* fan. And so when I saw this audition, I was so excited. I think *Dr. Odyssey* is a fun new take on the *911*, *Grey's Anatomy*... medical emergency universe in that it's all on a boat.

What's cool is it does look like a ship. I think just allowing myself to feel like I was on a vacation really helped.

In the episode, my boyfriend falls off a boat... I have to watch and scream. And that was hard because you're staring at

someone and they kind of jump and they edit it later.

TM: What would you say are the most significant differences and similarities between yourself and Summer? Do you relate to her character on a personal level?

RS: Yeah, I think so. I graduated college recently-ish, not even that recent anymore. I think I relate so much to my high school self in that I remember being so self-assured and just feeling like I knew everything about the world. I just felt so confident in life. Now being an adult... paying taxes and living in an apartment... I have no clue what I'm doing anymore. I think getting to tap back into that self-assuredness has been healing in a lot of ways.

I think she represents a lot of the things I love about myself, in the way that she's fun and she's a good friend and she can kind of say what's on her mind and she doesn't care what other people think about her. I think she has a really big heart, which we see in this season a lot. So, I think those are things I relate to her more.

TM: How did your passion for acting begin? Was there a specific moment or experience that made you realize that this was a path you wanted to pursue?

RS: In second grade, I did this showcase at my school. I had so much fun. I kept doing versions of community theater with friends. Then eventually those friends would find something they liked more, they were better at... I just kind of realized as I got to high school, I was still interested in theater. Getting to study it in college made me realize I can maybe one day make this a career, but I've just always loved it so much.

YOU COULD DO ANYTHING
IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT





PHOTO CREDIT: TOMMY FLANAGAN

TM: As someone who's worked alongside actors like Harrison Ford and Jason Segel, have you learned any valuable lessons or had memorable moments with them that influenced your own craft?

RS: Yeah... I think their level of kindness and just hospitality every time I've come on set, is something really commendable. They're just so welcoming. And I think it's so important, especially in a comedy where people are riffing off of each other and trying to add their own spin on things. It's important to create an environment where everyone feels supported and creating that atmosphere starts at the top level. I think they do such a great job of leading that.

TM: Looking ahead, what kind of roles or projects are you most excited to explore, whether in front of the camera or behind the scenes?

RS: I really love writing and I'm hoping next year I get to continue on that path. It's a really good question... I love characters with heart. I love playing people who really care about other people and you know getting to work with people like Lukita who's so talented... I love working with great people and being on sets that you're excited to go to.

I think at this age it's a weird thing... some people know how to write for my age group and there are some people who really don't. I love getting to be on

Shrinking where I feel like I'm talking like a real person would talk... things like that I love because it makes your job so easy.

TM: Your journey as an actress has taken you to some incredible places, but what do you feel has been a defining moment? Not on screen, but personally.

RS: So, I did a Lifetime movie two years ago, and it was in West Virginia. I never traveled to act, and I was in West Virginia for a month. I went to school at UCLA, I'm from Los Angeles... I never had flown by myself. It was a huge jump outside of my comfort zone to go to this place where there were no Ubers anywhere, and I didn't know anyone. I just kind of felt like it was a big shift in who I was as a person, and it was cool to also be acting during that... to get to feel like this is my work, and now I can put this new version of myself into a character.

Being with a crew for a whole month I realized that this is something that I would love to do for the rest of my life. It was just very affirming.

TM: If you could offer advice to your younger self, what would you say now, knowing everything you've learned along the way?

RS: So, when I was younger, I really was like, "I'm going to be the next Disney Channel star," as many people do think. And I didn't audition that often. I wasn't that great. I didn't work at it. I was so frustrated by all the rejection, even in high school and college... I faced so much rejection... like that is the job. And I feel like in those moments, I was just kind of like, "Why... why is this happening to me? What is this supposed to mean?" And, you know, I still struggle with this day to day, but I do think about all the times I heard 'no' and all the times things didn't work out in my favor. I had to go back to the drawing board... and figure out what about me I want to share and how to bring myself to roles. I think all of that made me such a stronger person and performer. You need to have the ability to receive criticism quickly and be like, "Oh, this isn't about me." I think that takes a lot of time and practice. I feel like I wish I knew that rejection makes you a lot stronger and everything is going to happen in its own time and it's going to make you the person that you need to be for what opportunities do arise.

TM: Lastly, do you have a favorite quote?

RS: I've been trying to live by the idea of what if it all works out. I was watching *Back to the Future* the musical the other day and they kept saying "You could do anything if you put your mind to it,"... I like thinking that way. ■

**REJECTION
MAKES YOU A
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OWN TIME.**

RACHEL STUBINGTON



PHOTO CREDIT: TEAGAN FRANZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Tattle Magazine: Let's start with your book... so your most recent book is that the end of the series?

Esther Schultz: Actually, I decided to do one more, it'll be my fourth one but it'll be the final one in the series. That one is going to be out next year. Originally when I wrote it, it was just going to be three books and I just feel like... it does a really great job of connecting the characters in *Roots of the Bay* to the previous characters... I feel like there's just one more book that'll kind of wrap it all together and complete the story of this family.

I'm really excited about my most recent book... it was actually the first book that I started writing in my series. And then I was really loving these characters... she basically is reading journals from her ancestors. So she's as she's learning about them, I'm falling in love with these characters, so I decided to go back and start with *Great Water Big Sea*. I paused writing that story. I went back and wrote *Great Water Big Sea*, and then *Song of the Lake*, and now *Roots of the Bay* which just came out.

TM: What's your inspiration for the series?

ES: So my inspiration for the series is just Lake Superior as a whole. There's just something about that place. It's just the most beautiful landscape... I'm a bit of a spiritual person, not really religious, but spiritual. And so there's just this feeling of



Esther Schultz shares the inspiration behind her beloved book series, the personal journeys woven through her writing, and her dedication to using her words to inspire others. From the calming beauty of Lake Superior to the raw vulnerability in her upcoming nonfiction work on mental health, Esther's passion for storytelling is matched only by her mission to help others heal.

ESTHER SCHULTZ

connection that you get to nature. I really feel that at Lake Superior. So just my love for the beauty and the landscape and the towns. The towns are just beautiful little towns. You know, they look like little ocean towns, but they're around the lake. And so there's that and then my love for history. I've been a huge history buff since I was a child. I think I get that from my parents. We traveled a lot when I was a kid and we would always stop at every historical place that we would come across. I have always loved history and so my love for history learning about Minnesota history and then my love for Lake Superior.

TM: Have you always wanted to be a writer?

ES: I don't know that I did as much as a kid. I've always been writing, but I never really saw being a writer as a profession or as a career that was meant for me. In my 20's I started writing stories on and off and I just kind of kept that going and I just kept returning to it and I'd write another one and another one. I have a lot of material that I have just sitting on my laptop that I've written over the years and I've done nothing with.

TM: Are there upcoming projects or books you're particularly excited about? Any new genres or themes you're eager to explore?

ES: There's there's actually several projects so there's there's a project that I've been working on with my son for a while now and it's something that is a slow project because we are writing a children's chapter book together. He's 11 he and he came to me and said "Hey mom, let's do this!" and I was like all right, "Let's do it!" We sit down and we talk about how the story is gonna go and he has ideas, but it's slow project because trying to find the time in my son's life to really sit down and collaborate is sometimes challenging just because you know he's 11 and he'd rather play Minecraft or whatever. It is something I want to eventually publish. I think it's just a fun thing to do with my son.

Then the other thing that I'm working on is a nonfiction book. That is a story about my life and things that I have gone through, different hardships, my battle with depression, anxiety, and the ways that I have learned to combat that and live a wholehearted life. That is a passion project of mine. I've been kind of slowly picking at it for several years now but it'll probably be a couple more years before I get it out just because I'm opening old wounds and just facing some of that and rehashing some of that that can be challenging. It's a hard, vulnerable, ripping the band-aid off of things you know, but I'm really excited about that because my hope with that book is it's not only a love letter to little Esther and high school Esther, it is my hope to inspire other women and give them hope that even though life can be so hard and difficult that they can still live a beautiful life and with joy and peace and love and kindness.

TM: Writing a book about your life regarding depression, anxiety and hardships, has that become an outlet for you, for what you went through?

ES: Yeah, so in my struggles, with my own mental health, I think it's important that we find those tools that work for us to help us and one of my tools has been writing. It has been a great outlet for me. When I was younger, when I was going through difficult times, I would write poems and sonnets just to get some of those hard feelings out. And then I kind of stepped away from doing it as a tool for my mental health until I was in therapy. When my twins were babies, my therapist was like, "You should journal more." That's something that I really enjoy doing, but I had never thought about using that as a tool. Ever since I've started doing that, a lot of the posts I post on social media around this topic, my blog posts, you know, and then just writing this nonfiction piece. It's very therapeutic. It has helped me heal some of those parts that needed to heal just a little bit more. It's helped me process some things. Sometimes it even helps

me make the decisions that I'm having a hard time making and just kind of feeling my way through it.

TM: Do you plan on ever doing any type of speaking engagements or mentoring tied to mental health?

ES: So I've had some speaking gigs if you call it that around mental health. I've done some mentoring around mental health with WomenLead. And I've done some speaking around the subject of mental health with an organization I'm affiliated with here in Minnesota, the Northern Women's Business Collaborative. It's definitely something that I want to continue to do. If I can help just one more person with telling my story and sharing what I've learned, then that just would make my heart so happy.

And not that all of what I've been through has been worth it, but I really believe that I can turn what has happened to me into something beautiful in sharing my story with others to help inspire them and empower them... and give them hope.

TM: If there's someone who hasn't suffered anxiety or depression, how would you explain it or describe what it's like to go through that?

ES: I guess for me, when I struggle, I've heard some people say it's just an incredible sadness, but it's more than that. It's this feeling of hopelessness. I call it my dark abyss, because you just feel like there's no way out. And it's very overwhelming. It's exhausting. In my darkest days, when I'm struggling the most, it is literally all I can do to just do the basic necessities of taking care of my kids and myself.

Thankfully, I haven't been in that place for a long time, just because of the things that I have learned. But, you know, there for a while, when I was going to therapy on a regular basis, it was really challenging to just get through the day. So just taking one day at a time and it's very lonely, it's really lonely in that place. Because you feel like no one





Lake Superior from the Coast of Isle Royale National Park

understands and it's hard sometimes to even put it into words, the despair and darkness that you just feel, you know?

TM: I think what people don't understand too, is that you could appear happy in a deep darkness.

ES: Yes, which is just so scary that you could just learn to balance... to put that face on. But that darkness still lives with you.

It's definitely a challenge. And, I'm thankful for where I'm at in that journey. My hope now is as I continue to grow in that area, I continue to combat it, because it won't ever fully go away, right?

There's still times it'll creep back in. But it no longer has its grip on me like it used to. And so being able to manage it in a healthier way has been really powerful for me. That's what I really want to help other people with too.

TM: So we talked about how Lake Superior inspired your writing. Does it also play a part in your mental health journey as well?

ES: Yes, it does. Definitely. There is just something about being in nature. It calms me. I can get out there and walk and it just brings me this sense of peace and it brings me joy. Lake Superior, I know it's even this way for my kids, my two boys struggle with anxiety. When we go to there, we call it our happy place. It really truly is the place where we can rejuvenate. And when I'm really struggling, I live close enough that I can just go for the day. And so I'll just go up there and sit by the water and just allow myself to just feel what I'm feeling and process things.

TM: Your motto is "Be kind always and spread joy every day." How does this philosophy shape your personal and professional interactions

ES: So one of the things that I have learned, is establishing my four pillars.

And it was interesting that two of my pillars ended up being joy and kindness. And I think it's something that has just always been something I've clung to over the years. There's been a lot of times when I was afraid to experience that joy that we can have in life. Brené Brown talks about it as foreboding joy, where it's like, "Oh boy, I'm happy, I'm feeling joyful, something bad is going to happen and ruin it." When you finally let go of that and really just embrace the joy that life can bring you, there's just a beauty that unfolds. And so experiencing that for myself, I think it's important that we give other people the opportunity to experience that as well because life is short and joy can be a great tool for helping combat depression and anxiety.

And I'm not saying that if you're just joyful, you're going to be fine. That's not what I mean. It's looking for those ways that you can still find joy in the darkness. So and then being kind always is showing love and compassion to others, but also yourself. I think it's important that not only are we showing kindness to other people, but we have to do it for ourselves too.

TM: If there's one message you want your readers to take from your work, what would it be?

ES: There are little nuggets in all of my books. I write about women who are already strong and become stronger or I write about women who don't realize they're strong and kind of move into that strength and grow into that strength and learn to be grounded in their truth. And so, I guess one of the messages that I hope people take away is that you can live your authentic life grounded in truth and live a joyful life. And then also, sometimes it's nice to have that escape in a book. If I can give someone else joy in that, in reading my work, then that's, you know, success for me.

TM: What's a favorite quote of yours?

ES: Oh gosh, let me think. I'm sorry, there's so many. I've been on this journey this year. I kind of spoke about it a little bit. And it's about fully loving myself and being kind. Louise Haye wrote this incredible book, it's called *You Can Heal Your Life*, and she has all these nuggets of wisdom in there. There's one in particular quote in her book, it says, "Remember, you have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn't worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens." I really love that one... So in my journey, and this is something that I write about in my books, I was abused in multiple ways in my past... Louise Haye was also abused, and so she talks about that in the book. But this really hit home for me, and it's something that I come back to often, "Yes, I had a very difficult childhood with a lot of abuse, but that was many years ago, and it was no excuse for the way I was treating myself now."

I really think it's important that when we think about mental health and our mental illness, a lot of the reasons why we struggle is because there are those parts of us that haven't fully healed, and we beat ourselves up over it, or we blame ourselves for things that have happened to us. We criticize ourselves, and we put ourselves down, because of those things that have happened to us. And so, I think it's important that as we heal, we let go of that shame and blame, and realize that, yes, those things were awful, and they were hard, but it's no excuse for how we treat ourselves now. That really stuck with me because I am really hard on myself. I tend to be my worst critic.

TM: What advice would you give to someone who struggles with mental health?

ES: First of all, it's okay. It's okay that you struggle. The second thing... it's okay that you struggle. It's okay to get the help.

And then do the work of healing. And do the work of searching for why you struggle. And I think therapy is an important tool, medication is an important tool, that sometimes is needed for some people. But don't stay there and continually stay in this place of putting a bandaid on. Work through and dig in the work of healing that part of you that needs to heal and figuring out what is best for your toolbox to help you grow as a person in this area.

When you heal those parts of yourself that need to be healed, your depression and anxiety weaken. And it's not this overwhelming noise anymore. And it may still be with you, but it's not something that controls you, you have power over it. ■

BE KIND ALWAYS AND SPREAD JOY EVERY DAY

-ESTHER SCHULTZ



CHAD COCHRAN



PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE DUNN



Photographer Chad Cochran discusses his journey from the small-town landscapes of Ohio to capturing the raw energy of musicians through his lens. With a deep love for music and a passion for storytelling, Cochran reveals how photography became both an artistic outlet and a way to connect with the music community.

Tattle Magazine: Your photography is amazing. What influenced your journey as a photographer and how has that inspired your art?

Chad Cochran: So, I didn't really have an artistic outlet for a really long time. I was a musician in college, played in bands, kind of did that, that scene. Then I raised a family and put that all to the side. While I had a family and as the kids got a little bit older, I was gifted a camera when I turned 40. I hadn't really done anything artistically until then.

I grew up in a really, really small town... I grew up in Fredericktown, Ohio, which is population, maybe 1,800 people to Knox County. And when I got a camera, it's interesting because I ended up going and photographing those first few years what I saw growing up. I never really thought much about that... so it's incredibly rural... I did a lot of photos of like old farmhouses, old signs, barns,

those types of things. So very rural landscapes is kind of where I got started.

About maybe five years in or something like that, I got a message from a musician and she said, "Hey, you take really pretty pictures of Ohio. Would you ever consider putting a person in there?" And my gut, my instinct was like, no. At the time I was working a job, it was incredibly busy, I did a lot of face-to-face interactions throughout the day. So photography was like for my mental health... it was like... I can go and listen to music, I can drive on back roads, I don't have to talk to any human beings for a couple of hours. It was kind of like almost therapy for me, or at least therapeutic. Right. And she replied back and I think she was like, are you kidding me?

And I was like, okay, I'll try it. So, I did portraits that weren't very good. They were just okay. But then it kind of like just really steamrolled. After her, there were

several other musicians that I ended up working with. Some of those photos got published. And it's almost what I do exclusively now. A lot of the photos that you see me put online now are photos that I take when I walk in the morning with my dog. Those lake photos are just me walking down to the lake on my walk in the morning. So most of the work that I do now is mostly doing portraits and helping with album covers and that kind of stuff with bands.

TM: Post-production can play a significant role in photography today. How do you approach editing your images while maintaining their authenticity?

CC: Yeah, that's a fantastic question. And you mentioned that you follow me on Facebook. So I don't know if you've ever seen some of the people are incredibly passionate about when it comes to that stuff. It's been an interesting journey to kind of watch that.

Here's how I view photography—I'm not a painter. I can't paint. I can't draw a circle. Like I can't really do any of that very well. But I can press the shutter button on a camera and I know how to edit photos to my liking. And so the way that I kind of look at photography is unless you're doing photojournalism—photojournalism is typically straight out of the camera, that's what you get, I'm not a photojournalist. That's not what I do. So I view photography as an opportunity to create art. And so when it comes to a photo, like some people will say, "Hey, that's not what that looks like." You're right. I never argue that. That's not what it looks like. But it's what I want it to look like. So that's kind of the approach that I take with editing. I can't express myself by painting. I don't have that gift. I can't express myself from drawing. I am a mediocre singer. I don't have like any of those gifts, you know, but with photography I can create a photo the way I want to present it to the world.

TM: Music plays a significant role in your photography, from album covers to live music events. How has your love for music shaped your artistic vision?

CC: I just told this story the other day, I'll tell you because I think it really kind of encapsulates what I feel like when it comes to music. I don't know where I would be without music. Like, it has been that important to me my entire life. From sitting in my room when I was a little kid, and literally pressing play on a tape, like stop, rewind, play, stop, rewind... and trying to write down the lyrics... my walls in my bedroom were covered with music photography, like that's what my walls looked like.

When I went to college, I had mentioned this earlier, that I played in bands

through college... and when I got a camera in my hand, and I had the first musician reach out to me, it was really uncomfortable, because I was not a portrait photographer, I had not done that. But once I got it, and once I started doing live music, it was like somebody left the back door cracked and I got back in, is what it felt like. So all those years that I was able to do music, and to truly be part of the music community, and then out of it for so long... photography has been a conduit to get back into the music community.

And it's never what I thought would have happened. I was taking pictures of barns for the first five years, but starting to do music photography, it's defined who I am now as an artist. I think most people, if you asked who I am, a lot of folks know me because of Facebook, so they know a lot of the water photos, but a lot of the other folks who have been following me for years know me because of music. And they know me because I've worked with bands that they like, or musicians that they like, and that's how they found me.

TM: You've partnered with festivals to amplify mental health awareness. What has been the most memorable reaction or story you've received from your audience?

CC: The transition was one of the very first photos that I did... portrait sessions. I spent about six hours with a musician that day. And as we kept talking, I started to hear a lot of stories about mental health, dependency, trauma, and a lot of that stuff I didn't know a whole lot about. But the more musicians that I worked with, the more I found them telling similar stories. And I was like, "Oh, maybe I should do something here."

At the same time, I was dealing with, my father... he was a drug addict. He was dependent on painkillers after a back surgery. I was like okay so maybe I can find a way to tell some stories... maybe there's a way that I can take what some of these folks are telling me when I'm with them one-on-one and try to get it into a series.

Early on like 2017, I started the I Didn't Want to Tell You series and it wasn't until 2019 that it got published for the first time. I had started talking to musicians and had a decent idea of what I wanted to do with it... it just took a little bit of time to get it to where it was. As far as like my like stories that mean the most... instead of talking about a specific story what I will say is I think the thing that I find the most gratifying is that... those who have told their stories... and I feel like this is very personal, so I never push, some people want to do it and some people don't, but I think for me the thing that I hold on to the most are those who have done it, it's like a deep breath for them. They're like, "I wanted to get these stories out... there are things I wanted to say... there were things that I really needed to get out there... I didn't know how to do it." It's almost like they felt a sigh of relief once they were able to kind of take their story and put it into orbit. I would say that has been the most gratifying part of the series.

TM: Your series and your work capture the raw and authentic aspects of people, do you find that your subjects feel comfortable right away with being so vulnerable?

CC: No, absolutely and honestly like when I first started I wasn't very good at it. I didn't have any confidence because I was like, I don't know what I'm doing,



Jason Isbell
Cleveland, Ohio



PHOTO CREDIT: CHAD COCHRAN, COWTOWNCHAD

Can't Get No Relief
Bay Village, Ohio

I've haven't done photos of people before. But working with musicians, was probably the best place for me to be, because they would very openly be like just tell me, "What do I do with my hands? How do I stand?" They would ask me a million questions and initially, I was so apprehensive about coaching... like I don't have any idea what I'm talking about. Why would they ask me? But through the years I feel like my day job—I've been in sales my entire life—I feel like that's such a huge gift to be able to have that, where I can have a conversation with people. In almost all of my sessions, I talk to folks for the first several minutes to kind of talk about what they want. I will tell them a little bit about what we do or how we're going to do it and make sure that they get everything that they need. But I'm also a lot more open to coaching people now.

TM: Many of your portraits and series feel like stories in visual form. How do you approach storytelling through a single frame?

CC: I don't know that I have an answer. I really don't. There's a handful of people that have made comments about my portraits and I'm not going to get the quote correct but it's something like you capture the essence of somebody. I don't really know how to do that. I wouldn't be able to coach that. I wouldn't be able to verbalize and tell somebody how you do that, but what I can tell you is it almost holds hands with the question that you asked me before. If somebody can get comfortable and somebody feels good about working with you there's a much better chance you're going to get good photos from them because they're going to be relaxed.

TM: How do you see your I Didn't Want To Tell You series growing? It's such a powerful series...

CC: It's a great question. The challenge I have is I'm a one-person show. There's just me, right? I have one kid out of college, one kid in college, and one that's a junior in high school. So I try not to miss anything that they do. That's like my number one thing. I have a day job. So I continue to work a nine-to-five and travel quite a bit for it. But when it comes to the I Didn't Want to Tell You series, it means a lot to me, like it really does. Partnering with some music festivals... that was really my first approach at how can I take this story to a place... instead of having people come to me or people approach me about it. How can I take what I'm doing to a location? And so, the last two years the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival has brought me out to Oklahoma and I've worked with them for the last couple of years... do backstage portraits, talk about the series, but I've also been a guest speaker. I've spoken as part of their speaker series that they have with the music. I worked at the Nelsonville Music Festival this year. That was my first time backstage with them to do backstage portraits and talk a little bit about my series. And this was the second year at Healing Appalachia, which is down in West Virginia. And I've worked with them and they're a big music festival down there, it's sizable. So, I will continue to do music festivals. I think that's a really good fit. My goal this winter is to look at funding. Like everything I've done, I've pretty much paid for out-of-pocket to this point. So I would like to just get some level of funding or maybe partner even with just the right group to maybe help me cover some of the costs.

I don't know for certain where it will go from here but some level of partnership

or something like that is I think where I would like to see it go next.

TM: I'm excited to see where you take this series. I don't know where I first saw that you did that series, I just happened to see it recently and thought that that's such a powerful series. I love seeing when people want to build more awareness for mental health. There truly is not enough out there, especially when it comes to men building that awareness.

CC: Absolutely... for sure... The entire tagline of the series is, I Didn't Want To Tell You. And then it's normalizing the conversation around mental health. And that was my ultimate goal when I started this, is that the more stories that were out there, the more that people would feel that they weren't alone, right? That continues to be my objective, is that the collective of stories, that people will see those and hear them, and recognize that whatever they think they're going through alone, there's a really high probability that they're not, that there's somebody else who has also gone through exactly what they're going through or something very similar.

TM: I love that. Lastly, do you have a favorite quote?

CC: I do, but it's probably not about mental health.

TM: Oh, it doesn't need to be, it could be anything.

CC: So there's a Mark Twain quote that I love, it was always a favorite of mine... "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." ■

BY SHARING OUR STORIES, WE REALIZE WE'RE NOT ALONE, AND SOMETIMES THAT'S ALL IT TAKES TO BEGIN HEALING. — CHAD COCHRAN



PHOTO CREDIT: CHAD COCHRAN, COWTOWNCHAD

CLOCKWISE STARTING TOP LEFT: KIERSTON WHITE - OKEMAH, OKLAHOMA WOODY GÜTHRIE FOLK FESTIVAL, THE FORCE OF RUIN - OHIO, MISS TESS - CLEVELAND, OHIO, ORLEANS STEEL - NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

MICHAEL JAMIN



Writer and showrunner Michael Jamin opens up about the small, often overlooked moments in life that shape who we are. He reflects on his journey from sitcoms to his new book, *A Paper Orchestra*, and how he found emotional depth in the everyday.

on

MOMENTS

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MATTER



WE ALL SHARE THE SAME EMOTIONS, SO THE DETAILS OF THESE STORIES ARE MINE, RIGHT? THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME, BUT IT'S THE STORIES ARE ALL OF OURS.

Tattle Magazine: Your book is a collection of essays reflecting on the small, overlooked moments in life. What inspired you to focus on these seemingly minor experiences and how did you choose which memories to include?

Michael Jamin: So I've long been a fan of David Sedaris. I loved his writing. He writes beautifully. And so my thought going into this was why does he get to be the only one who gets to do this? Like what's my version of what he does? And so I read all of his books. I studied him and then I began to start writing. My version of that... my stories are very different. I approach everything the way a TV writer would approach a story, so you wouldn't confuse my work with his, but I certainly was inspired by what he does.

And so, I think when we talk about the moments... I think if I were to say, "Hey, what are the moments that shape our lives?" I think many people would go to the big ones... you know, surviving a plane crash, landing a dream job, or winning the lottery. They think yeah, that's what would change your life. Most of us don't experience that and yet our lives change too of course... if they don't change from the big moments, well, how are they changing? It's got to be the little

moments and so I just started keeping I started keeping a list of my memories. I don't have a very good memory, but the ones that I remembered... if I remembered something It's probably because there's an emotional attachment to it—maybe trauma, could be whatever. I would just take this little memory and I'd start writing as much as I could remember from it and try to figure out what the story was. What was the meaning of all of it?

TM: A *Paper Orchestra* explores life's seemingly inconsequential moments that end up shaping us. Is there one small memory or fleeting experience in your life that you believe, looking back, altered the course of who you've become as a person?

MJ: Yeah, I mean every single one that's in the book for sure because if it didn't... well, it wouldn't make the book if it was so insignificant. Like I wouldn't have put it in the book.

TM: How did you strike this balance between comedy and emotional depth?

MJ: Yeah, so I'm a trained comedy writer. I mostly write sitcoms. The thing about comedy is... especially stand-up comedy, which is great. People go see a show and laugh their butts off but comedy

hits you in the head and so you may see a great stand-up show and laugh your butt off but when you leave you might be hard-pressed to remember one joke. You just remember you had a good time, but you don't remember any of it, it's kind of a blur. But drama doesn't hit you in the head, drama hits you in the heart. My intention was to marry the two. Most my stories start off very funny and the goal is to get you to laugh... when you start laughing you let your guard down, you think, "Oh this is going to be fun... this is light," and your guard goes down. And as soon as it goes down I hit you as hard as I can in the heart. At that point, usually, by two-thirds through the story, I'm not trying to get you to laugh anymore. The jokes disappear. The jokes have served their function, which is to get you to relax and now I get you in the heart. When I do that and I perform these stories, I tour with them as a one-man show, that's the part that people remember is the emotional part at the end. That's the part where people say, "I went to the car and I couldn't start the ignition. I had to sit in it for a couple of minutes... I wasn't ready to leave it. I am still in the emotion of it." And that's the intention with the audiobook as well. I end each story with a music cue. And the cue is to make you still feel the emotion so you don't leave. We live in a society where everyone's just moving on to the next thing. The music cue was maybe 30 seconds long and it helps you sit in that emotion.

TM: I noticed the music cues and thought that was a great way to end each story. I like how you approached the stories and how they read... it was very easy to absorb the details, an easy read that had me wanting to hear the rest of the story.

MJ: Yeah, thank you. That's the goal. The sign of a good book is that you couldn't put it down. But when I write, I want you to put it down. I want you to read a story, put it down and just sit in it for a minute.

TM: You've crafted stories for television, which can require working within certain constraints. When writing *A Paper Orchestra*, did you find any part of yourself or your voice that felt "freed" in a way you hadn't expected?

MJ: Yeah, well, I mean, I started writing it... it was very freeing, that's why I did it. I wanted to write what I wanted to write without someone telling me no. I didn't want to get notes from the network... I didn't want to compromise my vision. If someone's paying you, you're going to have to compromise your vision because they're paying you to do it. But when I do my book, I'm doing it for myself, no one's paying me, so this is what I want to do. So it was very freeing.

TM: Was there a particular essay in *A Paper Orchestra* that was the most challenging to write or that required the most vulnerability?

MJ: Well, there were a couple... 'A Plague Upon Your House' and 'The Ghoul' are two stories I performed that are very hard to perform because it's very emotional, it tears me up.

Many of my stories feel like... At least to me, they feel like either confessions or apologies to people I've wronged. And so those two stories are about that... apologies to my family. Those are hard to write, just emotionally, but there was one story, *Swing and a Ms.*, that was hard to write just because I couldn't figure out what the story was. That took probably 50 drafts before I figured out, "Oh, this is what it's about."

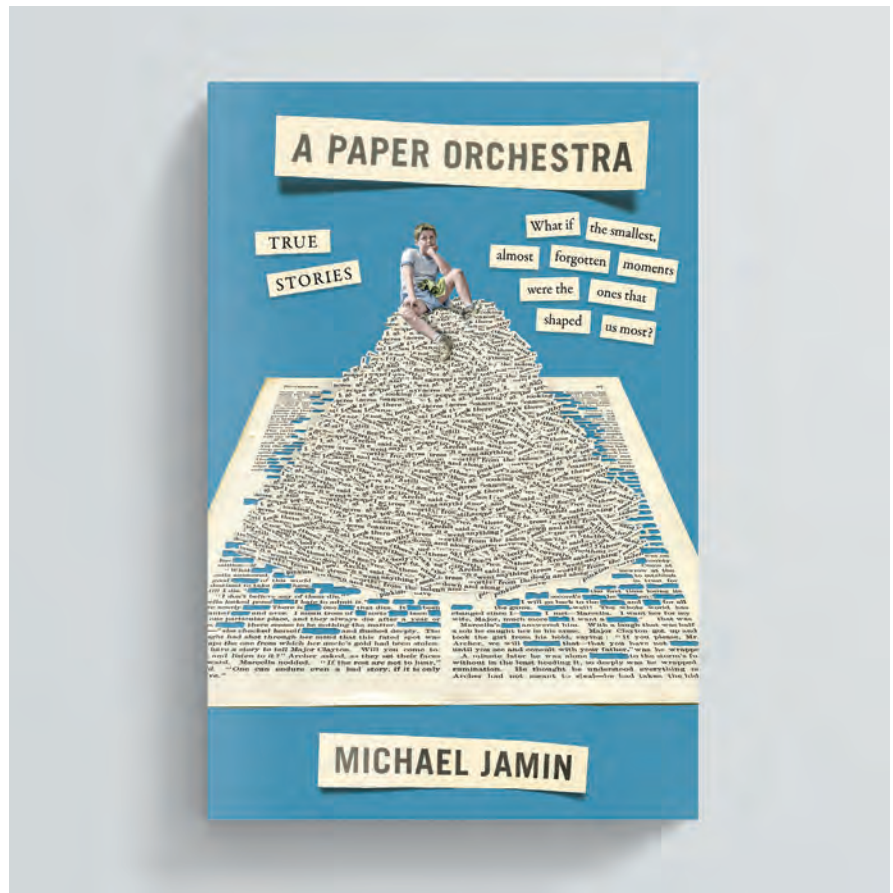
TM: You've created screenwriting courses and offer tips for emerging writers. What's the main piece of advice from these that you applied to your own creative process when writing this book?

MJ: The key to telling any story is knowing how to break the story. And that's a process that we learned as a TV writer. So, in TV writing, the writer isn't just sent off to their office and "go ahead, write whatever you want." We figure out the team of writers, let's say eight or ten writers will work together for about a week, breaking the story, figuring out what the act breaks are, the entrances, the exits, and the story arcs. And then a writer will go off to write the episode and then get notes. I applied that technique to writing, and I teach that in my course, my screenwriting course. But I apply that to these stories.

Often, I would write a story and I would say, you know what, I'm just going to go off, I'm going to just reinvent how stories are told here. I'm just going to be free, I'm going to go crazy. And then I'd write something and then about a week later I'd read it and be so disappointed. I'd be like, this is boring, this is terrible, it's not going anywhere. Just go back to the way you know how to do it because you need those moments to tell a compelling story.

TM: You've said your journey included overcoming self-doubt and unexpected setbacks. How has your perception of success changed from when you started out as a writer?

MJ: Well, in Hollywood success is measured pretty much by how much money you got. Because you're selling your show and you're going to get notes. Your show is not going to be what you want it to be. And that's fair. When someone buys something, it's theirs.



But success for this book really was, could I move people emotionally? How much could I get people to love it? How much could I get people to recommend it to their friends? How much the fan interaction, the notes I get from people... I get a lot of that. To me, that's the measure of success for this book. It's not financial. It's how I'm able to move people.

TM: If you could go back and give your younger self one piece of advice about writing or life, especially considering the stories in *A Paper Orchestra*, what would it be?

MJ: You know, I wanted to be a writer when I was in college. This is the book I wanted to write when I was in college. I didn't have the talent, I didn't have the skills and I applied to be a creative writing major twice. I got rejected twice. When I finally wrote this book and I gave it to my agent and he goes, "I love it." And that was 30 years after graduating, right? I was really overcome with emotion, not because I hadn't succeeded yet, but my agent loved it. I felt like, 'wow,' I'm finally the writer I wanted to be in college. I was grateful to myself... 20-year-old Michael for not having given up on that. I kind of forgot how much I wanted it. I went from writing

to TV writing, which is great, but I kind of forgotten that this was my original goal. And so I felt grateful to myself for not having forgotten that... for not giving up on that dream, you know, for reconnecting with it.

TM: In a world that often values big achievements over small moments, what do you hope readers will take away from *A Paper Orchestra*?

MJ: I'm trying to get them to feel the emotion... We all share the same emotions, so the details of these stories are mine, right? This is what happened to me, but it's the stories are all of ours. This is a story about regret... this is one about identity... this is a story about shame... and so that's what we connect with and so that's what I'm hoping that everyone gets out of it. They go, "Oh this guy he doesn't know me, but he knows me."

TM: Lastly, do you have a favorite quote?

MJ: I often say to people when I read their work, that they don't have a story, they just have a lot of shit happening, right? And they string these things together, hoping that people are going to want to read their story. And what I always say is, "Shit happening is not a story." A story is something deeper, it has to be connected, a thread. ■

**SUCCESS ISN'T JUST
ABOUT ACHIEVING
BIG MILESTONES;
IT'S ABOUT HOW
MUCH YOU CAN
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EMOTIONALLY AND
HOW THEY CONNECT
WITH YOUR STORY.**

MICHAEL JAMIN

JESSICA SHERR



Jessica Sherr shares her captivating journey of bringing Bette Davis to life in her one-woman show, *Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies*. From uncovering the untold aspects of Davis' bold character to finding personal empowerment through her portrayal, Jessica reflects on the power of resilience and authenticity. She opens up about the inspiration behind her show, and the lessons she's learned from channeling one of Hollywood's fiercest legends.

Tattle Magazine: You're performing as a one-woman show in *Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies*, and it's gaining quite a following. What initially drew you to Bette Davis, and how did you decide to bring her to life in such an intimate format?

Jessica Sherr: So, interestingly enough, I didn't know a ton about Bette. She and I look a little alike when she's younger. And so there was this time in my life where I'd be walking in New York City and people would stop me on the street like... "You know... you got Bette Davis eyes." And I was like, okay... "Oh, you know, you look a little bit like a young Bette Davis." It was kind of this time of my life where it was like 6-8 months of time... and I finally was like, "All right, I'm going to look into this Bette Davis character." And I was floored by how powerful and wonderful and trailblazer-like Bette is and was. So, I thought, you know what for an exercise I will create something as an artist for Bette and you know, I never expected to be this successful. I really fell in love with her spirit. She's so spirited, she has such an energy... and you know I think it makes her unique as she was this firecracker of a person and she and I are alike, that we're both firecracker.

TM: Had you been acting and in theater before you decided you wanted to go this route with your show?

JS: Yeah... I've been acting since I was a kid and so theater was really my ground roots and then I do film and TV as well. When I came to New York City years ago I was like what's my stamp... what is my artistry of the world, so anytime I've been able to create my own work. I feel I have a lot of control. With Bette, I was able to control the timeline, where I took the show, and how I produced the show. I remember when I was young You and just starting to write my show... I was like, I'm gonna write something for me and for Bette that's epic... it'll be undeniably good. Because I had my training before, it made sense to create something for myself to do when I wasn't filming TV and acting.

With the show... I wrote it. I have a director. I rehearsed it. I've taken it to Scotland three times. I've taken it to Chicago twice. I've done over 450 shows in 30 states and three countries.

TM: You mentioned you wrote your show. Did you have experience in writing or was this something new for you?

JS: It's interesting... I did and I didn't... I'm an English major, I went to UC Santa Barbara, but I didn't get into any of the programs I wanted to get into. I didn't get into the BFA program that I wanted to get into... I've always been good at writing and it just kind of came as a



natural ability to write. I think at some point I said, don't worry about how good it's going to be... just write. I kind of shocked myself that it became this really well written show.

I'd read a bunch of books about Bette, and then I would come up with something interesting. I'd say to myself, "Oh I'm kind of curious about this part of her life," and then I'd write something, or my favorite way to write is to do it physically do the scene, and then tape myself, or watch it, or record it via my phone. I think some of my best lines have come that way.

I remember people kept telling me that Bette Davis would go to dinner parties, and then she'd be offensive, and then she'd leave in a huff. Sure enough, that scene is now in the play. People love it... and they laugh. She has this famous line, "well, I'll send you rotten tomatoes in the morning." Apparently if she'd have rotten behavior. She'd send rotten tomatoes. So, she was a funny lady.

I think what I do is blend my idea with something that's very Bette Davis, but always historical, always based on her history.

TM: In bringing Bette Davis to life, you've likely explored her lesser-known qualities. What are some traits or stories about Bette that most people might be surprised to learn?

JS: I think there are a few things. I think people are surprised to find out that her dad left the family very young. Bette was around 10 years old, the dad leaves the family, and the mother Ruthie took care of the two little girls. And Ruthie, her mother, is really the firecracker of the family. And she takes Bette and she takes her sister Bobby and they travel around. Ruthie knew Bette had something. She knew her daughter had something special. So Ruthie just really did what she could to make sure this little girl, these two little girls had like art

and dance class and acting and she was a photographer. And so she would set up little photography studios in these different little towns. Then Bette and Bobby would stay for a few months and she would work, they would take classes, they would go to school and then they'd move again. So, I think it's interesting to know, I didn't realize that it was like that for Bette.

I didn't realize how much disconnect she had from her father. I think people don't know about that story. I also don't think they know she's not from Los Angeles. She was very much a transplant and she was doing Broadway at a very young age. I do feel that it's good for audiences to know about that about her, that she was on her way to be this high society lady of Broadway and she got scooped up by Hollywood. They came to her and they brought her out there, like they do most actresses.

The reason she is as strong-minded is because she's from Lowell, Massachusetts. She's a Boston-minded woman, living in Hollywood. So, I like to make sure audiences know about her younger self so they can understand who she is.

The dad left her. She's so super strong to fight against Hollywood. You know, she's from a strong upbringing of a Yankee, not someone who's not strong. I think it's interesting and a little bit tragic, but I think it's really important. She was married four times. She had abortions. She and Gary Merrill, that last husband, they kind of like beat each other up. She had sadness at home and her daughter actually historically stopped talking to her at some point. So she wasn't perfect.

Recently, I started to make sure that I added scenes to my play so people see the imperfections. They see that she was married four times. They see that the first husband did not work out. Yeah, she's a superstar, but at a cost.



**SOMETIMES
THE HARDEST
PATHS LEAD
TO THE MOST
REWARDING
DESTINATIONS—
DON'T BE
AFRAID TO
DO IT THE
HARD WAY.**

TM: How has your interpretation of Bette evolved over the years? Are there new facets of her character that you've discovered as you perform as you performed?

JS: Yeah, it gives me chills... absolutely I think as I got more brave myself I was able to kind of tackle Bette's cracks. I feel like I got to know Bette better and even this morning I was saying to myself like it's so interesting that like her dad left her so young and how painful that must have been for Bette and how painful it must have been to have four husbands and have to leave four husbands. She was historically making more money so often sometimes she had to pay for these husbands. She has a famous quote, I think it's from a Dick Cavett interview... she says "You know if I just married a husband like who had his own job," and I think about how hard as a woman that must have been. I think as I let my own guard down about vulnerability in my life it helped me understand Bette's as well. I feel for Bette... I think it was really hard to be her. I think it's hard to be so prolific at a time when women didn't have as much power and agency as we have now they had some but at a cost. So, I think it must have been hard to be that firecracker in a place where like you're surrounded by men just staring at you. I love that she has the strength. I admire and I think playing her I've gotten even stronger in my own life because of her.

TM: She certainly was a trailblazer... Can you share a moment in your career where you felt inspired by her boldness?

JS: Her boldness in my career is, yeah, I guess, you know, so when I went to, okay, I know.

When I took the show to Scotland, there was this thing called the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. It's the biggest Fringe Festival in theatre in the world.

It's been around for like sixty some odd years, super competitive. And in her book, she writes in *The Lonely Life* that the Scots love her. I was like, that's interesting. So, then I showed up there, as the actress doing my play, it was very early on in my writing experience to be performing was such a big deal. I wasn't sure of the reception.

Right before I left to go to Scotland, I sent my script to the estate—The Betty Davis estate—to see if I could use her name. This woman named Catherine Stermack called me and said she was Betty Davis's assistant for ten years and she was so happy to answer any questions before I go to Scotland. She was super helpful and I actually went and visited her in Los Angeles. She gave me a pair of Betty's gloves and a scarf and handkerchief to wear in the show. And I was like, "Wow, this is blessed."

Then I went to Scotland, and I learned the power of Betty Davis. Her audience

still to this day, they show up. I was getting sold-out shows without trying.

So, I guess I learned in my own career, for me, when something is good, the cream rises to the top. I got on the front page of newspapers. I was in magazines. People were curious about me and my story about Betty. I think in my own career, I have to remember that when you do good work it gets recognized. And that's a very Betty Davis thing. I mean, she wouldn't want to do bad work. She would have a problem doing bad work.

TM: What do you hope audiences take away from *Bette Davis Ain't for Sissies*. Is there a particular message you feel is the most relevant for today?

JS: I think it's really about standing up and fighting for what you believe in and that could just be your own personal empowerment. Bette really stands for that for audiences, that it's about standing up and fighting for what you believe in and never allowing other people to bring you down.

TM: If Betty Davis was alive today, what's one question you would ask her and why?

JS: She has it written on her tombstone, "I did it the hard way," I would ask her, "Bette, why? Why did you do it the hard way?"

TM: What's a favorite quote of yours?

JS: I love that the Willy Wonka quote, "We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams." I feel like that quote for me always helped me push myself forward. ■

EMBRACE VULNERABILITY IN YOUR OWN LIFE—IT'S THROUGH THOSE CRACKS THAT YOU FIND YOUR TRUE STRENGTH. — JESSICA SHERR



PHOTO CREDITS (CLOCKWISE STARTING TOP LEFT): TOM ZAPCIC PHOTOGRAPHY, ANDREI JACKAMETS PHOTOGRAPHY, GLAM SMASH PRODUCTIONS, TOM ZAPCIC PHOTOGRAPHY

JESSICA LYNN



Jessica Lynn talks about the magic behind her holiday performances and the lasting impact she's made on both her audiences and the young performers who've become part of her extended family. With her signature mix of talent, passion, and giving back, Jessica shares what it's like to create a community of joy and generosity—one holiday performance at a time.



Tattle Magazine: You're starting to prepare for your Christmas tour now, right?

Jessica Lynn: Yes! We actually started in September. We were practicing very, very early.

TM: I remember last time we talked... You mentioned every city you go to has a performer that you work with...

JL: Yeah, that's what makes the show really unique and interesting. It was the reason why I waited so many years to try to tour the show because I didn't know if I could pull it off. But it is also what makes the show so special because it's a community coming together for their community for Toys for Tots in every single city.

So how it works, we have 102 organizations and over 2,000 kids. We scout schools in each area that we go to by doing research, looking at their websites or social media... which schools are really active in their community, or which schools are award winners or things. We make our hit list of who we'd love to participate and we reach out... once they accept our offer. I get them based on their skills so say one school says they're really strong in tap and then another school says they're really strong in ballet... I'll assign them in the show. They get everything virtually... they send me videos, we go back and forth, and so the day of show is actually the very first time that we rehearse together.

TM: Wow... that's incredible how it all comes together...

JL: I think it's all about the communication, being very clear... over the years I've really fine-tuned everything that goes out to them to make sure that everybody knows what's going on. There's so much talent out there and it's so cool to just meet these people and be inspired by them and work with them and see the excitement on the kids faces to be a part of a real touring pro-level production.

We bring in all special effects like snow and spark machines and geyser machines... my favorite thing is at the tech rehearsal when you see all the kids faces as all the machines start going off... it's just the cutest thing ever!

TM: That has to be so worth it! I can only imagine... This year you've expanded your tour, correct?

JL: We have. We only did seven shows last year and this year we doubled to 14. So it was quite a feat for me organizing-wise. We started locking down schools and putting all the music together back in March.

TM: That's amazing!

JL: So I was on a world tour this year from May to October 8th. We went to Asia. We did Guantanamo Bay with the military, all over the U.S., and Europe. I can't even remember where I was because we were at so many places. But the whole time I was gone on the road, I'm communicating with all these people and all these cities. And then year after year, too, they always come back. We have our family now in each place. That's also my favorite thing about the show. We really built a community with the show and it spiraled into something I never ever thought.

TM: To be able to see the kids that participate like that... grow up right along side you through the years, that's special...

JL: It is crazy. We watch videos. So, our longest-standing show is here in New York at the Paramount Theater in Peekskill. That's our flagship show. And you watch videos from eight years ago and you see a kid that's like a little cat, up to my thigh and now they're graduating high school and they're taller than me. It makes me tear up when I watch the videos because every year you just see them get bigger and bigger. It's just such a cool thing. And they always cry backstage the last night and I always cry because they've been with me now

for eight years, you know, from 10 to 18 years old.

TM: This show has really become a tradition for people. So what does that mean to you? How do you feel about that?

JL: It's just so special. Families come every single year and say the holiday season wouldn't be the holiday season without this show. Or we have a lot of first timers that join the cast... I can't tell you how many parents or grandparents come up to the merch table after the show and say, "I didn't know what this was, I just came because my granddaughter was in it, but oh my gosh, I'm coming next year and I'm bringing all six grandchildren." And it's so cool to see how it's really all about the connection. I think they feel the connection between my band and the crew and the dancers and the choirs and Toys for Tots. It's like a special energy that kind of flows throughout each person that's in that room. It's really unique. I've toured all over the world and I've done a lot of really cool things, but there is nothing like the feeling in that theater for this show. I can't describe it, you kind of just have to experience it, but it's really something special.

TM: Oh I'm sure! It has to feel like some sort of holiday magic...

JL: It does, it really does if it feels like magic. And then after all the shows, Toys for Tots calls and they give the counts and it's like, man, we did 350 toys at night. That's so cool... and all the dancers always bring the toys with them. A lot of them, even at their dance schools, will have bins and then just bring the bins with them to the show. So everybody working together and it's just really cool.

TM: Was Toys for Tots tied in right from the start of your first show?

JL: They were. I've always been a person that believed, if you have a platform, use it to do something good in the world. Ever since I was really small, I always like

to give back to the community. So, when we decided to do this Christmas show, it was kind of a no-brainer for me.

So how it works is I communicate with the Marines in every single city before we go. When doors open... so say the show is at seven, people can start entering the theater at 6 or 5:30 and they'll arrive a little bit before that, and they wait in the lobby with all the boxes. As people come in, they donate their toys. So then at the end of every single night, they're usually leaving with trucks full of stuff. I mean, that there is some holiday magic.

TM: I love that. Obviously, you're juggling a lot. How do you make space to enjoy some of the quiet moments when things get chaotic?

JL: Oh, it's so hard. I'm a Capricorn. I am an overachiever, perfectionist, and workaholic. For example, I worked till one o'clock in the morning last night, and I was at my laptop again at 5:30 in the morning today. My husband is my perfect balance of that where he always says you need a break and he tries to get me away and I think the times that I feel relief from all of this stress and the planning is walking my dog. We walk her two or three times a day and it's my fresh air break... my sunshine break and it's definitely a de-stressor unless she's chasing the mailman because she knows he's sweet and then I'm stalking this poor man instead of enjoying my walk.

TM: Your show is full of sparkle, but I'm sure there's so much behind-the-scenes work too. Can you share a moment from backstage that stands out? One of those memories that makes you cry or laugh every time?

JL: There's so many. Two immediately come to my mind. They're short, so I'll share both, but the first one is that a few years ago at the Peekskill show I walked backstage after the performance and some girls in the choir were just crying... hysterically crying and hugging each other because they were so excited about what just happened on stage. And for me, it made me tear up and then I'm hugging them and because it's just like, how cool is this? Like the Christmas magic... the magic of it all... all of us doing this together. And it always really touched me how much the show means to people.

I've also had behind-the-scenes moments at the merch table... I always tear up when I talk about it, but a woman had come up to me and told me her daughter that she took to the show has severe depression and she had not seen her smile like that in years. And then



PHOTO CREDIT: ARTHUR GONZALES

I'm hysterically crying in front of the line of all these people with this woman that I've never met before, but we're hugging because we're so connected from this beautiful moment. And I think that's when I really realized moments like that... how much this show means to people and how much it means to me... and how powerful it is.

TM: Those are all such beautiful memories...

JL: They really are... this show is so special to me.

TM: So you also have a new album coming out. Tell us a little bit about that.

JL: Yes, so everything's growing astronomically. This year was probably one of the busiest years of touring we've ever had. And one of the most successful years we've ever had. So, I really buckled down and decided to create this record. I'm really excited for it to come out in January.

TM: That has to be so exciting for you... congratulations on the new album! I'm looking forward to listening to it.

JL: It really is... thank you so much!

TM: Do you have a date it's going to be released?

JL: Yep... January 17th. January 17th. Wonderful. Yeah. So you sent me the artwork for the album.

TM: And lastly, what are some words of inspiration or wisdom that you would like to give the readers?

JL: Ooh, that's a good question. I would say to live a life that you are going to be really happy with when you look back. I always think about when I'm 80 years old, am I going to look back on my life and say, "Man, like I really tried. I went after my dreams. I'm so happy with what I built." Or am I going to look back and say, "I wish I had given that more," or "I wish I hadn't let other people deter me from doing what I really wanted to do in life." Because I can say as someone I just kind of fought the hard road... and the path less traveled with this career path and it's not been easy. To be able to wake up every single day and do something that brings me the utmost joy and happiness is such an incredible thing and it's something I'm always going to be grateful for. You don't ever want to have any regrets. ■

**LIVE A LIFE THAT
YOU ARE GOING
TO BE REALLY HAPPY
WITH WHEN
YOU LOOK BACK.
DON'T LET
ANYTHING STOP YOU
FROM GOING AFTER
YOUR DREAMS.**

JESSICA LYNN

MEGAN ROGERS



Megan Rogers shares the heartwarming journey behind her creation of *Rosie the Reindeer*, a character who shines in her own unique way and how she uses her platform to inspire children and families.



Megan with her mother, Amy, who passed in 2020 of cancer.



Tattle Magazine: Your background is rooted in dance, and you've performed with some incredible artists! How did that experience shape your transition into storytelling for children?

Megan Rogers: Honestly, performing is great. I can definitely say that it's fun to be out, but I don't think it shaped much about storytelling for me. I think that more of my dance roots with owning my studio did that because I got to work hand in hand with kids... Whereas my adult performing opportunities like with what the NFL brought, was an adult crowd. Definitely the studio life rounded that out because I got to see everything through their eyes. Even if I was teaching the dance to a popular story that they've already seen on the television 15,000 times it's fun to see how they retell it or how they would dance to it. So that helped a lot working hand in hand with kids in my time as a studio owner.

TM: What inspired the character of Rosie the Reindeer, and why was it important for you to create a story with a female lead?

MR: When we were in the studio process or during those years and in the process of writing shows every time, we would get to Christmas we were copying the exact same shows that had been done... A Christmas Carol, The Nutcracker, The Grinch... time and time again. I had done that for years growing up dancing, but then when I owned, I was completely over it. I want a good female lead. Why are there no good songs about Mrs. Claus or Cindy Lou Who by herself? I remember being like, we should just create our own character, we should just have a female reindeer. And they were like, "Well, there's already a reindeer, it's Clarice." But she wasn't like a strong lead. We need someone who shines their own way. And so we kind of came up with a show we collaborated on. It was Rosie the Rhinestone Reindeer at first.

I just kind of leaned into the dance thing because my mom was my studio seamstress and receptionist. We did everything dance-related together. So she was like, "Oh, we'll make her a Rocket." And I was like, yeah, because we love the Rockets.

So we did that, we created it and it was just a stage show in 2011. And then years later, after my mom passed, I just picked that character back up to really round it out and bring it home for our family.

This way we can share this book with my children every year and we can remember Mimi.

TM: The story of Rosie is so relatable – a reindeer who finds her own way to shine. Why do you think this message resonates so strongly with children and parents alike?

MR: I can speak from both perspectives. I mean my sister and I are four years apart. She's younger than me and I was a very outgoing extroverted person, a very blunt loud person as a child especially, but my sister was a lot more of the wallflower... she was quiet, and she kept to herself. She enjoyed it that way, but going through school my sister was constantly coming home frustrated... so-and-so teacher said, "

You know, your sister would have done blah blah blah," or "Your sister did it this way." Things like that and it affected Sarah when we were younger, not so much now as we've grown, into adulthood. So, I saw that shadow. Not then... I had to really grow up and look back and go "Wow, she was really living under a shadow that was cast by me," and I wasn't doing that to her on purpose.

I think that we all gravitate towards those comparisons naturally. Then as a mom, I had Stella, she's my first, in 2017. Everything was just rockin' and rollin', and then my middle child came in 2020, and I'll tell you what, that is when I really started seeing some true colors about myself.

As a parent, I was comparing them, well, she did this as a baby, and she did that, and then as they aged, well, you know, Stella was always so much better at this, and I was like, wait, what am I doing?

You know what I'm saying? I'm becoming that... I don't want them to live under it, why am I doing it? So, I think that story of comparison, it really hits home. It is a big deal for children, but I don't think they grasp it until adulthood, because I've had so many grown women come up to me and say thank you so much for the story, because my teenagers are struggling, or my 20-year-old is struggling because her older sister did X, Y, Z, and I have something to talk to her about now

TM: You had mentioned losing your mom... that was clearly a huge turning point for you. How did that experience influence the themes in your book and inspire you to create this particular story?

MR: I knew that with it being her favorite show for all those years... my mom was like you've got this amazing story that you're sitting on you need to write a book. When she passed it was something that had nagged at me every Christmas since 2011 and I just kept putting it off because of life, that's what we do... we talk ourselves out of things so quickly, so easily. And here I am trying to teach kids and tell them you can do whatever you want to do, but I'm talking myself out of this as an adult, you know? So, when she passed, I don't know what it was, but it was just very awakening for me.

I've had a lot of loss and a lot of tragedies that fall in my young adult life, lost a lot of really close friends and family members, but mom just hit different. We were like, "wow, we're about to do every single holiday without mom." She passed on October 26th, then it was like... boom, their anniversary... Boom, Thanksgiving... And so that year, I was like, I have to retell the story of Rosie to my family, and it's gonna be choppy, but I gotta put this out there because I feel like mom is honored in that. It's taken a lot of shape since then, even over the last four years, you know?

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE SHINING NOW DOESN'T MEAN IT'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE EASY, BUT YOUR LIGHT CAN STILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE TOUGHEST TIMES.



just all gonna be shiny and wonderful if they just go live their dream and do you boo, but it's not like that... life is so much more outside the scope of just yourself and your feelings and your own gifts... it's about all of us and it's community, it's a bigger picture, it's being the hands and feet for Jesus... it's laying yourself down to do for others. I would always want to tell Rosie, "Hey, I'm so proud of you... you've got this... this is your shine, but use your shine to help others don't use it just for yourself. And if you hit something hard you keep going, it doesn't mean that you're without."

TM: I've seen like you have little stuffed Rosies and that like there's a mascot... Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MR: Yeah, so the mascot was something that in 2021, our first season after we published, being from the dance world, you're a theatrical person by nature, so it was never going to just be a book. It was always going to be a full experience for me. There's going to be a song. There's going to be a mascot. And so I just don't rest on certain things. Sometimes that's a flaw because sometimes God is just telling you to go on his time and wait. But I got that mascot, I ordered it the first year and it was so funny because it had no eyesight at all. So you're in this giant head with these huge antlers and it's pitch black inside the head. And I mean, kids loved it. For the first couple of years, I could not pay people to put the costume on. And now I've got them lining up around the block. They're literally like, please let me play Rosie this year. That is such a blessing at how it just evolves with the brand.

The stuffies, we have those, the pajamas. We have a huge pajama line that's gonna drop in 2025 called the Cozy Rosie. And our new character comes out—it's a boy character because we get that question all the time... "what do you have for boys?" So we have a little moose, his name is Murphy. Murphy the moose is going to be introduced in 2025, in our second Rosie story.

TM: Lastly, do you have a favorite quote?

MR: I feel like it changes every day... it really depending on the mood. So I can honestly say, you know, God does not call the equipped. He equips the called because you do not, I am not a writer, Jennifer. I am not a writer. I am a dancer through and through. And for him to even give me these words, and just the way it all flows and meshes together so intricately and beautifully. And he brings so many things out that even adults or children can pick up. I'm like, that wasn't me. That was God. And he doesn't need you to be a good writer to get something out through you. He needs a willing vessel. ■

TM: We have to have those fun ways to honor those closest to us. In my own work, including with *Tattle*, I often hide small details, that only those closest to me might notice.

MR: I love that! In our book, and this was my illustrator's idea, but we've leaned into it so much now, but there's 23 hidden candy canes in the Rosie story. So, kids can go back and find them. Those Easter egg moments kind of teach you to slow down and look for things... there's things all around us that we can pull from for inspiration, for hope, encouragement and in my opinion you know just showing me that there's a loving God watching out for me even though times are hard.

TM: I love that you have those Easter eggs! It's so special! Can you share more about the charitable initiatives you're planning and why they're so important to you?

MR: This is exciting to talk about because no one's got to talk to me about this yet. I just have prayed about it so much over the last four years, like, God, what is our thing? It's not that these other charities aren't doing great things. I just want to know the ins and the outs and the guts of what this means, this ministry. And he kept putting this word in my lap, you know, the Shine Initiative. I think what it's going to round out to be is that every season in our community, and as soon as we get big enough, other communities, find a way to be the hands and feet of Jesus through your company. This year, what we're doing is providing pajamas, books, and hot cocoa kits to send home to all the kids who are in what we call the backpack program at our local schools. This program is for students who do not necessarily have the means

to actually eat food all weekend or on long holidays. So, the school system, by way of the local churches, provides extra food and extra care for these families. And we just wanted to take it a step up this year. So every kid will get a little bit more of a Christmas experience rather than just eating. Because yes, eating is the most important thing. A fed child is a happy child. But let's bring that Christmas experience home to maybe a family that couldn't really have that for their child. So, I think the Shine Initiative is going to be our name.

I think it's going to round itself out as God presents different cracks and just things that need to be filled in our community. And but the reading is a big thing. We love the school visits. And we also do a good kickback for media centers this year.

I think that's where it matters most when you break it down and work small and then just see how it can grow.

TM: if you could give Rosie some advice as she steps into her own "shine," what would you say to her – and what do you hope readers feel when they finish her story?

MR: I would tell Rosie just because you found your shine, don't forget where you came from. You always have to know where you've been, you know what I'm saying? But I also would tell her just because you're shining now doesn't mean, it's not gonna be a shine all the time. There's going to be challenges in your life. It doesn't mean that your shine's not there, it's just some times are harder than others because there's a dose of reality that I think a lot of kids are missing. We tell them that the world's

**LIFE IS ABOUT
MORE THAN
JUST YOUR OWN
SHINE—IT'S
ABOUT USING
YOUR LIGHT
TO HELP OTHERS
ALONG THE WAY.**

MEGAN ROGERS

COZY WINTER READS

Snuggle up with these enchanting tales, perfect for chilly days. From snowy adventures to heartwarming friendships, these stories spark imagination and celebrate the joys of wintertime magic.

The Snow Thief

Written by Alice Hemming
Illustrated by Nicola Slater

Squirrel excitedly discovers snow for the first time, only for it to mysteriously vanish. A charming winter adventure exploring change and the magic of the forest.



A Cozy Winter Day

Written by Eliza Wheeler

The animals of Acorn Village enjoy warm, creative winter days filled with indoor crafts, snowy fun, and evenings of songs, stories, and togetherness by the fire.



Sugar and Spice and Everything Mice

Written by Annie Silvestro
Illustrated by Christee Curran-Bauer

Adventurous Lucy the mouse struggles with baking but learns the value of teamwork when friends help her turn mishaps into a sweet success.



Wish

Written by Chris Saunders

Rabbit asks friends what they'd wish for and selflessly grants their wishes. Grateful, they share their happiness with him in this heartwarming tale of generosity.



The Lost Library

Written by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass

A mysterious library, a ghostly librarian, and a guarded secret lead Evan and Rafe to uncover a transformative story that reshapes their lives and their town.



Winter Lullaby

Written by Dianne White
Illustrated by Ramona Kaulitzki

Small Bear questions why other animals stay awake as winter nears, while Mama Bear gently explains the promise of spring that follows their cozy winter sleep.



CHECK OUT THESE NEW BOOKS
YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS!



Thank you
by Jarvis
With inviting collage illustrations, Jarvis brings his

singular whimsy and sweetness to a musing on gratitude that spans the ages. The moon brings nighttime, and the sun the day. With no yellow and blue, we'd be a world without green lights, and without itches we'd never know the relief of a scratch. From oversized plants that offer hiding places to boots that somehow know the way, from siblings who bravely take the first plunge to yourself for being you, award-winning picture-book creator Jarvis spans the gamut from the silly to the sublime and opens the endless possibilities for giving thanks. Strikingly illustrated in bright, clear colors, this uplifting picture book is poised to make a thoughtful gift.



Unicornia: Learning to Fly
Written by Ana Punset
Illustrated by Diana Vicedo

Do you believe in unicorns? School, friendship, and

a certain magical beast will enchant beginning readers in this first of a series.

Welcome to Unicornia, the most wonderful place ever! Claudia is about to start her first day at the Unicornia Academy of Magic, where she'll learn all about spells, potions, and most importantly, unicorns! But she will need to ace her first unicorn flying test at the end of the week if she hopes to advance. With the help of her new friends, will Claudia learn to ride in record time? Get ready for unicorns, glitter, and magic galore in this shimmering story of friendship and fun. This popular series, with sweet illustrations and a simple, humorous text, is poised to charm young unicorn fans everywhere.



SCAVENGER HUNT

WINTER WONDERLAND EDITION

- Pine Cone
- Squirrel
- Snowman
- Animal Tracks
- Icicles
- Deer
- Snowy Tree
- Bridge
- Holiday Lights
- Frozen Puddle
- Cardinal
- Bird Feeder
- Snow Drift
- Sled
- Footprint
- Chimney Smoke
- Firewood
- Bare Tree
- Pinecone
- Frost
- Snowflake
- Sledding Hill
- Hot Cocoa
- Ice Skates
- Warm Hat



Remember to be respectful of living creatures! Watch them with curiosity without disturbing their homes or them!



INSIDE LOOK

Aaron Becker's work invites readers to step into breathtaking worlds where imagination knows no bounds. The Caldecott Honor-winning creator of the *Journey* trilogy and luminous works like *Winter Light* masterfully balances visual storytelling with themes of wonder and renewal. In this exclusive interview, Becker shares the inspirations behind his stories, his love for nature, and how he keeps the spark of creativity alive.

Tattle Magazine: Your stories seem to blend fantasy with deeply resonant themes. What inspired you to start creating wordless picture books like *Journey*?

Aaron Becker: It's interesting what you're saying about combining fantasy with meaning. When I was a kid, drawing was a way of making sense of the world; on the page I could escape to worlds that were safe to navigate. These places, even now as an author, act as a sort of crucible to work things out on my own

terms. The creative process of book-making is a real privilege; to explore what's on my mind through story and then share it with the world.

TM: Many of your books focus on imagination and wonder. How do you keep that sense of wonder alive in your own life, and how does it influence your work?

AB: Parenting goes a long way on that front but I also think most children's book authors have an age they're stuck in and are forever operating from that vantage point. For me, it's the moment of becoming self-conscious, around 10 or so, when suddenly I realized that the imagination was a constructed thing. I've remained fascinated by the loss of unaffectedness, and I think that's tied to an awareness of wonder (and its fragility)!

TM: Nature and landscapes play a major role in your illustrations. Are there places in the real world that inspire the worlds you create?

AB: We spent six months this year living on a small island in British Columbia; the sky, the sea, the trees – it was rejuvenating and fulfilling all at once to be so closely linked to the elements. Perhaps there's a book to come from that experience!

New York Times Best-selling Creator Aaron Becker on Creativity and Wonder

ILLUMINATING

illuminating

TM: **Storytelling without words is such a unique approach. How do you think this style changes the experience for young readers?**

AB: Because readers must decode the imagery without the benefit of text, there's an ownership and a projection of self onto the page that is visceral and immediate. It's a story format that comes naturally to me, but I'm always amazed by the different ways people interact with my books. It's part of the privilege I was thinking about when you first asked about my work. Every reader takes something unique to them from the pages because I'm asking a lot of them. In the end, I think it creates a rich relationship between book and self.

TM: **With *Journey*, *Quest*, and *Return* forming such an impactful trilogy, was there a moment when you felt you'd reached the perfect ending, or was it hard to let go of these characters? (this one was about his trilogy of wordless books)**

AB: The purple bird and the girl with the red marker still live with me, both in my imagination and from the response from young readers who are still discovering the books. I do have a plan to write a prequel story about the girl's father one of these days. Perhaps in time for when the earliest readers

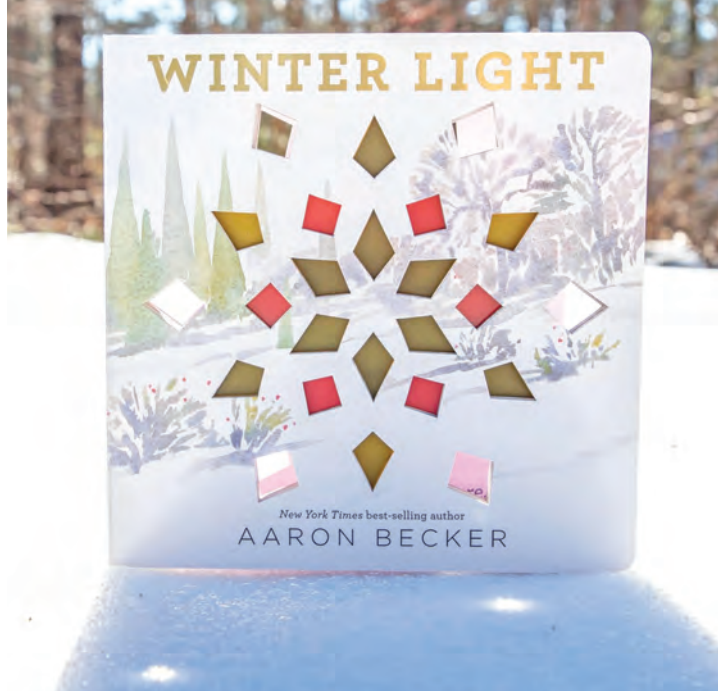
of my books are starting their own families!

TM: **You've inspired so many young readers to imagine worlds beyond what they see. What advice would you give to parents or teachers who want to encourage creativity in children?**

AB: Hold off on judgment. Give kids the space to think and work in their own ways. A lot of times, we're afraid our children might fail in some way and so we jump to offer suggestions and guidance. This can be helpful, to be sure, but more often than not, children just need time to discover what's next on their own terms.

TM: **Can you share a bit about your journey into children's books? Was there a particular "aha" moment that led you down this path?**

AB: After college I came across Chris Van Allsburg's book "The Wreck of the Zephyr". His pastel paintings of a flying sailboat totally captivated me and I decorated my apartment with pages from the book. It took another fifteen years or so, but from that moment on I knew I wanted to make something like that. I feel incredibly fortunate that it's panned out. ■



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AARON BECKER

Come winter, the days grow short. Sunlight filters through bare branches as ice crystals cover the meadow. In this quiet time, we turn to warmth and light, to family rituals and traditions. With jewellike die-cuts revealing the colors of the season against soft painterly backgrounds, Caldecott Honoree Aaron Becker captures the light of winter skies and lengthening days, the glow of candle and hearth, and the heart's yearning for spring's return.



Luminous die-cut companion books to *Winter Light—You Are Light*, *My Favorite Color*, and *One Sky* by Aaron Becker are available bookshop.org and independent bookstores across the country.



STORIES

stories



WINTER IS NOT A SEASON. IT'S A CELEBRATION. -ANAMIKA MISHRA

12 WAYS TO WARM UP TO WINTER



Is the snow calling you outside, or is the cozy warmth of home just too tempting to leave?

Winter is brimming with opportunities to connect, create, and make memories—inside and out—so why not embrace the season in all its frosty wonder?

1

SNOW SCULPTING CONTEST

Move beyond snowmen! Challenge the family to sculpt animals, castles, or abstract art.

2

FROZEN BUBBLE ART

Blow bubbles outside on frigid days and watch them freeze into delicate crystalline orbs before they pop. Capture them on camera for a cool memento.

3

ICE PAINTING

Freeze sheets of ice in shallow pans, then let kids paint on them with watercolors. The effect is mesmerizing as the colors melt and swirl together.

4

NATURE ICE ART

Arrange natural items like leaves, berries, and pine needles in shallow pans of water, then let them freeze into beautiful, natural ice ornaments.

5

BACKYARD WINTER OLYMPICS

Set up fun competitions like sled races, snowball target practice, and shovel relays. It's a great way to keep everyone active.

6

EXPLORE THE NIGHT SKY

Bundle up and head outside to stargaze. Spot constellations, track planets, or wish on shooting stars for a magical winter evening.

7

WINTER SCAVENGER HUNT

Tailor a scavenger hunt to the winter season. Include items like animal tracks, pinecones, or icicles. It's an adventurous way to encourage exploration.

STEP 1

Attach a balloon to the faucet and slowly fill it with water. Once mostly full, tie it closed. (No balloons? Use a bowl or bucket instead.)

STEP 2

Place the balloon outside or in the freezer until the outer shell freezes but the center stays liquid (about 5-10 hours).

STEP 3

Cut off the balloon, drain the water, and place a candle or LED light in the hollow. Your icy globe will glow for hours!



8 FREEZE ICE LANTERNS

Freeze water in molds with bits of greenery, berries, or flowers to create stunning ice lanterns for outdoor displays. Kids can get creative with their designs, and these make magical additions to snowy yards or porches.





9 FIRESIDE STORIES

Build an outdoor firepit, bundle up with blankets, and take turns telling winter-themed stories. Add marshmallow roasting for extra fun

10 GO BIRD-WATCHING

Winter unveils a whole new side of bird-watching. Bare trees make spotting cardinals, owls, chickadees, and woodpeckers easier, while feeders draw birds to your yard. Grab binoculars and explore parks or snowy trails, listening for calls and spotting tracks. It's a peaceful, family-friendly way to connect with nature—and discover the resilience of winter birds.

11 DIY SNOW GLOBE

Create personalized snow globes using jars, glitter, water, and tiny figurines. It's a hands-on craft that doubles as a keepsake.



12

HOT COCOA BAR

Turn a classic treat into an event by setting up a bar with unique toppings, like crushed peppermint, caramel drizzle, or flavored syrups.



Stirring Up Winter Cheer

There's nothing quite like a steaming mug of hot cocoa on a chilly winter evening. This season, why not elevate your cocoa game with a DIY hot cocoa bar? Whether it's for a cozy family night or a holiday gathering, a cocoa bar brings warmth, fun, and delicious creativity.

SET THE SCENE

Start with the basics—classic hot cocoa. Whip up a pot of rich, creamy cocoa using this recipe:

- 4 c whole milk
- 1 c heavy cream
- ½ c sugar
- ½ c cocoa powder
- ½ c chopped chocolate

Whisk together over medium heat until silky smooth.

COCOA BAR MUST-HAVES

TOPPINGS

Marshmallows (try flavored or mini), whipped cream, peppermint crumbles, chocolate shavings.

EXTRAS

Caramel drizzle, cinnamon sticks, or candy canes as stirrers.

FLAVORS

Offer syrups like hazelnut, vanilla, or even a dash of chili powder for adventurous sippers.



COCOA WITH A KICK

Take your hot cocoa to the next level with a splash of peppermint—it's like a winter wonderland in every sip. Top it off with a generous dollop of marshmallow fluff for a creamy, cloud-like finish. Want to go all out? Lightly toast the fluff with a kitchen torch for a hint of smoky sweetness. Sip, savor, and let the holiday magic begin (responsibly, of course).



Spencer Plaid Comforter Set
Levtex Home, \$140 +



Red and Green Plaid Indoor Outdoor Throw Pillow
World Market, \$30

Fireside Flannel Candle
Threshold, \$10



cozy + classic

Ready to embrace the season's coziest vibes? From soft textures to timeless pieces, these picks will bring warmth and charm to your wardrobe and your home.



Buffalo Plaid Cozy Crew Socks
LOFT, \$15



Sherpa Red and Black Buffalo Plaid Throw Blanket
Touchat, \$27

Plaid Alphabet Stoneware Mug
Stewart, \$12



Lofty Blanket Scarf
Universal Thread, \$17



READ. WATCH. PLAY.

Why just read a story when you can live it? Dive into the ultimate family experience where books, movies, and board games bring your favorite tales to life.

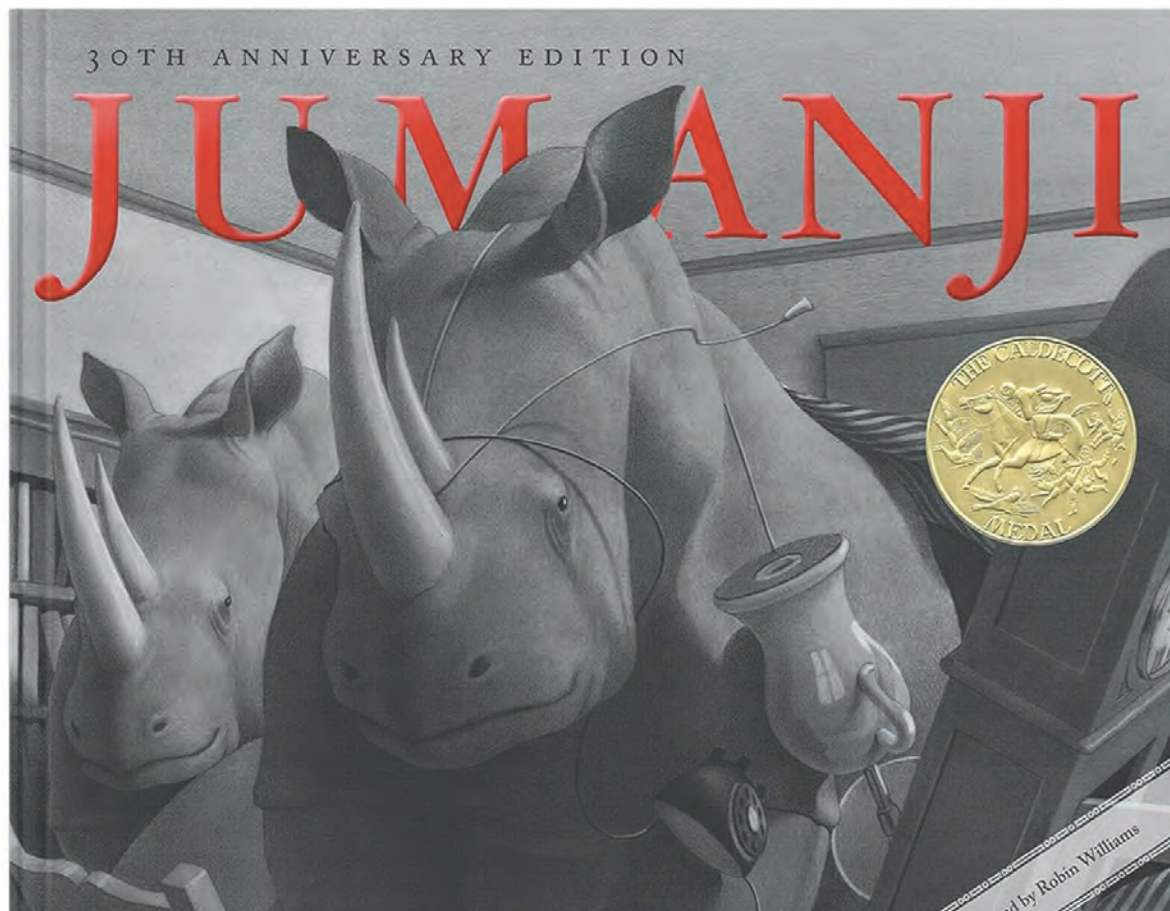
You know that feeling when you flip the last page of a book and wish the story didn't have to end? What if it didn't? Picture this: the characters leap off the pages, light up the big screen, and then invite you to gather around the table, roll the dice, and scheme your way through their world.

Welcome to the ultimate family adventure—where books, movies, and games collide, turning stories into full-on experiences.

This isn't just about following the plot. It's about living it. Imagine curling up as a family, passing around a beloved book, then watching its scenes unfold in a way only Hollywood magic can deliver. And just

when you think you've seen it all, you clear the table, grab your game pieces, and dive headfirst into the story. Suddenly, you're not just fans—you're strategists, adventurers, and problem solvers, playing alongside the characters you've come to love.

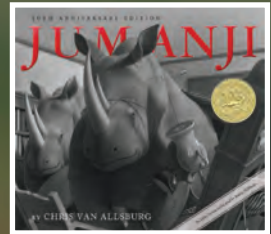
So, if you've ever wanted to uncover secrets, conquer kingdoms, or argue over who's the best at trivia (we see you, Player Two), this is your sign. Break out the snacks, shuffle the cards, and clear your schedules. We've rounded up seven franchises that let you read it, watch it, and then roll for initiative. Ready? Let's play.





JUMANJI

Step into a world where the roll of the dice can unleash stampeding rhinos or sweep you into an unforgettable jungle adventure. Jumanji isn't just a game—it's a wild ride through imagination and courage.



READ



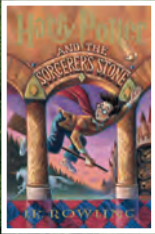
WATCH



PLAY

HARRY POTTER

From the enchanted halls of Hogwarts to the strategy-packed wizarding world on your game board, Harry Potter invites you to cast spells, uncover mysteries, and become part of the magic. Accio family fun!



READ




WATCH



PLAY



Chugging through the breathtaking landscapes of the Scottish Highlands, the Jacobite steam train crosses the iconic Glenfinnan Viaduct—a sight instantly recognizable from the Harry Potter films. Known to fans as the route of the Hogwarts Express, this real-life train ride lets you experience a touch of wizarding magic while soaking in some of Scotland's most stunning scenery.



in dreams,
we enter a
world

that's
entirely our
own

albus dumbledore

THE GOONIES

Hey, you guys! Grab your treasure map and get ready to set sail on an underground adventure filled with pirate ships, booby traps, and plenty of '80s nostalgia. Goonies never say die, and neither will your family game night.



READ



WATCH



PLAY

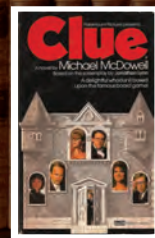


Relive the magic of *The Goonies* by visiting its iconic filming locations!

Start with Cannon Beach, where Haystack Rock frames unforgettable views and the thrilling Fratelli car chase scene. Nearby, explore Ecola State Park, the backdrop for the Fratelli hideout. Fans can also journey to Astoria for a deeper dive into this 80s classic's coastal charm.

CLUE

Who did it, where, and with what? Gather your wits and interrogate your friends in this murder mystery where everyone's a suspect. Based on the classic whodunit, *Clue* brings deduction and drama to your family's table.



READ



WATCH



PLAY



Take your *Clue* experience to the next level by hosting a murder mystery party! Transform your home into Boddy Manor, assign guests iconic roles like Professor Plum or Miss Scarlet, and let the sleuthing begin. With costumes, clues, and plenty of intrigue, it's a night of thrilling whodunit fun that will leave everyone guessing until the very end.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Follow Alice down the rabbit hole into a world of whimsy and wonder. Whether you're navigating a topsy-turvy tea party or strategizing your way through the Queen's maze, you're in for a curious and curiouser experience.



Step into Wonderland with a whimsical tea party! Serve colorful treats, tiny sandwiches, and mismatched teacups, and channel your inner Mad Hatter for a truly magical experience.



READ



WATCH



PLAY





"The secret,
Alice, is to
surround yourself
with people who
make your heart
smile. It's
then, only then,
that you'll find
wonderland."





1978
The Wiz
Film

A movie adaptation of the musical, starring Diana Ross as Dorothy and Michael Jackson as the Scarecrow, hits theaters.



1939
The Iconic
MGM Film

The Technicolor masterpiece *The Wizard of Oz*, starring Judy Garland as Dorothy, premieres. This film solidifies the story in popular culture, introducing iconic elements like "Over the Rainbow" and the ruby slippers (silver in the book).



1974
An
Animated
Sequel,
Journey
Back to Oz,
is Released

1900
Original
Book
Release

1910
Silent Film
Adaptation

1902
The
Wizard
of Oz
Stage
Musical

1925
Silent
Comedy
Film

1956
TV
Broadcast
of the
1939 Film

1975
The Wiz
Broadway
Musical

1985
Return to
Oz Film

Disney releases a dark fantasy sequel blending elements from L. Frank Baum's subsequent Oz books, notably *The Marvelous Land of Oz* and *Ozma of Oz*.

THE WIZARD OF OZ

There's no place like home—except for the magical land of Oz. Skip down the Yellow Brick Road with Dorothy and her crew, encountering flying monkeys and ruby slippers in this iconic tale turned interactive adventure.

2013 Oz the Great and Powerful Film

A prequel to Baum's original story, this Disney film explores the origins of the Wizard, starring James Franco and Mila Kunis.

1995 Wicked Book Released



READ



WATCH

2024 Wicked Movie Adaptation (Part 1)

The cinematic adaptation of Wicked, directed by Jon M. Chu and featuring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, offers a reimagined look at Oz, setting the stage for a two-part film series.



PLAY

2003 Wicked Broadway Musical

what good is the
warmth of summer,
without the
cold of winter
to give it
Sweetness.

john steinbeck





ALL I OWN

FEATURING "SOMETHING 'BOUT YOU"

AVAILABLE
JANUARY 17, 2025

PRE-ORDER NOW

JESSICALYNNMUSIC.ORG



MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

2017 | PG-13

MYSTERY/CRIME

Agatha Christie's most famous whodunit rolls onto the screen with lavish visuals and an all-star cast. Hercule Poirot's genius unravels a tangled web of lies, secrets, and revenge aboard a snowbound luxury train. With its suspenseful twists and stunning period details, it's a stylish murder mystery that keeps audiences guessing until the end.



WATER FOR ELEPHANTS

2011 | PG-13
ROMANCE/DRAMA

Sara Gruen's lush romance under the big top dazzles onscreen. Reese Witherspoon and Robert Pattinson captivate in this tale of forbidden love, loyalty, and the magic of the circus world.



THE GODFATHER

1972 | R
CRIME

Mario Puzo's mafia epic is immortalized on screen with Marlon Brando and Al Pacino. A story of loyalty and corruption, it redefined the crime genre and remains a cinematic landmark.



TWILIGHT

2008 | PG-13
FANTASY/TEEN ROMANCE

Stephenie Meyer's vampire love story leaps off the page with brooding romance and supernatural drama. Bella and Edward's forbidden love sparked a cultural phenomenon and redefined teen fantasy films.



HIDDEN FIGURES

2016 | PG
DRAMA/HISTORY

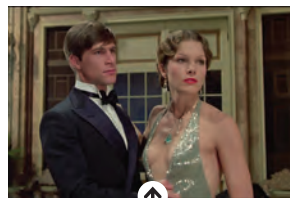
The untold story of the brilliant women behind NASA's space race success. Adapted from Margot Lee Shetterly's book, it's a powerful celebration of intelligence, determination, and breaking barriers.

CLASSICS TO CATCH

Kick back with a few classic adaptations on our watch list.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
DEBUTED ON FILM IN 1962



DEATH ON THE NILE
DEBUTED ON FILM IN 1978



THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
DEBUTED ON FILM IN 1953



HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON

2024 | PG
FAMILY/COMEDY

Crockett Johnson's childhood classic grows into a whimsical adventure, proving the boundless power of imagination. Harold's crayon draws a world where creativity leads the way.



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

2009 | PG
FAMILY/FANTASY

Maurice Sendak's beloved children's book transforms into a visually stunning journey of wonder, emotions, and self-discovery, capturing the spirit of childhood in a dreamlike world.



CHARLOTTE'S WEB

2006 | G
FAMILY/ADVENTURE

E.B. White's beloved tale weaves its magic in this heartfelt adaptation. A story of friendship, sacrifice, and life's cycles, it reminds us all why "Some Pig" holds a special place in our hearts.



WILLY WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

1971 | G
FAMILY/MUSICAL

Roadl Dahl's whimsical tale leaps to life with candy-coated visuals and Gene Wilder's iconic portrayal of the enigmatic Wonka. A timeless adventure in pure imagination.



PETER PAN

1953 | G
FAMILY/ADVENTURE

J.M. Barrie's classic tale of eternal youth and adventure enchants on screen. From Neverland to the Lost Boys, its magic remains a beacon for the young at heart.



THE HUNGER GAMES

2012 | PG-13
ACTION/ADVENTURE

Suzanne Collins' dystopian phenomenon roars to life with Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen, a heroine of fierce courage and quiet strength. The adaptation captures the brutal yet compelling world of Panem, where survival is a fight and rebellion brews in the shadows. It's a gripping tale of sacrifice, resilience, and the fight for freedom.

**KING OF ADAPTATIONS:
STEPHEN KING'S STORIES
BROUGHT TO LIFE**

From spine-chilling horrors to heartfelt dramas, Stephen King's stories have leapt from page to screen with unforgettable impact. These adaptations prove why King reigns supreme in crafting tales that captivate, terrify, and touch our souls.



THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION

1994 | R

Hope and friendship triumph in this prison drama adapted from Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption. Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman bring its emotional core to life.



CARRIE

1976 | R

A high school outcast's telekinetic powers unleash fury in this chilling tale of bullying, revenge, and one of cinema's most unforgettable prom scenes.



STAND BY ME

1986 | R

A nostalgic coming-of-age story of childhood friendship, loyalty, and loss, adapted from The Body, with River Phoenix delivering a standout performance.



THE SHINING

1980 | R

A family's isolation in a haunted hotel spirals into madness. Jack Nicholson's chilling performance makes this psychological horror an enduring classic.



THE GREEN MILE

1999 | R

A death row inmate's miraculous gift changes lives in this poignant supernatural drama filled with compassion, heartbreak, and unforgettable performances.



MISERY

1982 | PG

An obsessed fan holds her favorite author captive in this tense psychological thriller. Kathy Bates' Oscar-winning performance makes Anne Wilkes terrifyingly unforgettable.

publisher's picks



Your Kindness Means So Much Thank You Notes, Box of 10
Hallmark, \$10

Show your appreciation with these thoughtful "Your Kindness Means So Much" thank you notes. Each box contains 10 beautifully designed cards, perfect for expressing gratitude and making someone's day a little brighter.



These gifts are more than just things—they're reminders to give with intention and make the world a little brighter with every thoughtful gesture.

gifts that inspire kindness

Spread Kindness Everywhere
by Maghen Gardner, \$15

Spread Kindness Everywhere takes children on an exhilarating kindness adventure, teaching them how to spread kindness in their homes and communities.



3 Simple Words - Embroidered Hoodie
Find The Good, \$80

This cozy hoodie, featuring the uplifting "3 Simple Words" embroidered design, is a perfect blend of comfort and positivity. Plus, 10% of proceeds will be donated to Mental Health America (MHA), supporting mental health initiatives with every purchase.



Be Kind Candle
Candier, \$34

This candle fills your space with a calming blend of bergamot, raspberry, geranium, violet, vetiver, and leather. Its soothing scent and uplifting message create a peaceful atmosphere while inspiring kindness in every moment.


Holiday Cultivate Kindness Tote
FEED, \$38

This festive tote is a stylish and meaningful way to carry your essentials. Featuring a "Cultivate Kindness" design, it's a perfect blend of function and compassion. Plus, every purchase helps provide 10 school meals to children in need.



The Kindness Challenge
The Adventure Challenge, \$35

Spread positivity with 30 scratch-off cards, each revealing a unique act of kindness. Perfect for inspiring small, meaningful gestures, this challenge encourages you to make a positive impact and share kindness with those around you.



I TOOK A WALK IN THE WOODS
AND CAME OUT TALLER THAN
THE TREES. -HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Fascinating Facts & Fantastical Fiction

Two Great Books for the Young People in Your Life!

MELLODY HOBSON,
barrier-breaking financier, demystifies money
for kids with a look at some wild and weird
facts about what makes the world go round.

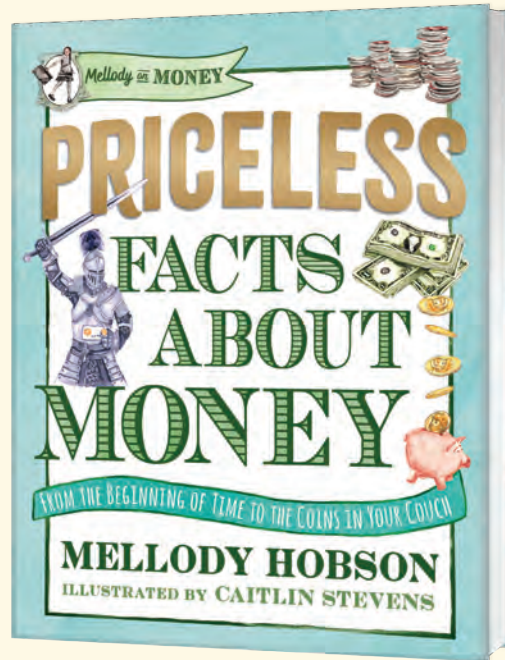
“There is no better teacher than
Mellody, whose passion for financial
literacy has inspired so many already!”

—REESE WITHERSPOON

actress, producer,
and entrepreneur



Illustration © 2024 by Mellody Hobson

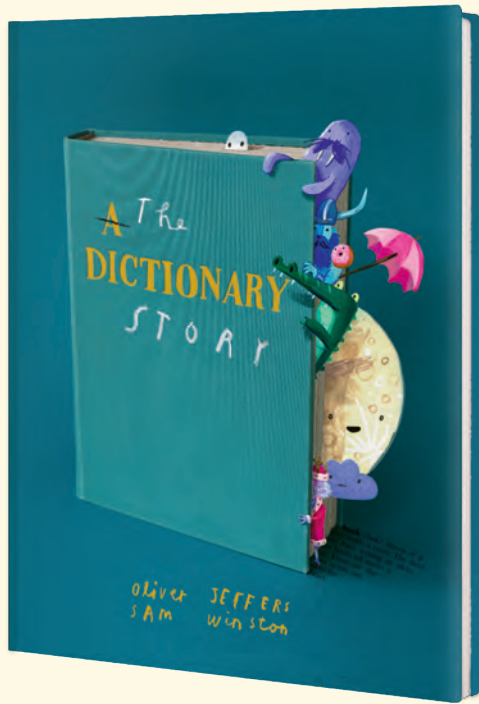


Ages 8–12

From the award-winning creative team of
Oliver JEFFERS and *SAM* WinSton
comes an enchanting picture book sure
to delight word lovers of any age.

★ “With hijinks and hilarity hidden on
every page, this is a sweet, strange, wordy
tale bound to delight all who pick it up.”

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)



Ages 3–7

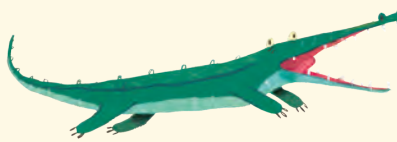


Illustration and background text © 2024 by Sam Winston & Oliver Jeffers

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