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**JULY 2021**  
**NEWSLETTER**

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## **new look, who dis?**

*long time, no speak*

Hej Friends - I hope you're all doing well. I'm back! Like all of you, 2020 turned out to be a hairy year. By Christmas I was burned out, so laid low until I felt ready to come back.

In that time, I've binged books, travelled to Sydney, and done a lot of thinking. And here I am, refreshed and excited for what the future holds. Join me?

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# online this month

*so many new and fancy things*

Along with a new-look newsletter, my website has also undergone a facelift. Gone are the longwinded book reviews, replaced by One Sentence Reviews. I'm not sure about anyone else, but I love economy. Rarely do I read long book reviews, so why do I want to write them?

The good news is, this leaves me more time to review the more of the things I love. Rad.

What about my own writing? Well, that's in there, too. I'm filling my blog at the moment with Playlists for each book, behind the scenes stories about each of them, and 'field trips' that helped complete the books. Check it out, won't you?



## *mental health and writing tips*

You all know I'm about to be that person banging on about mental health. But, you know what? That's only because if I've learned something I think might be worth passing on, then I will.

Same goes for writing tips. I've done a stack of learning lately, and am pulling out the best advice I can. Whenever I can, I'll share them with you, too.

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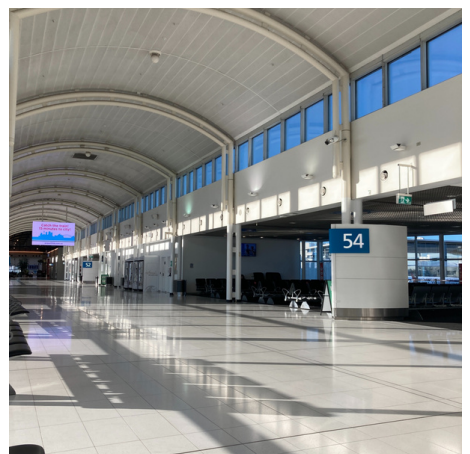
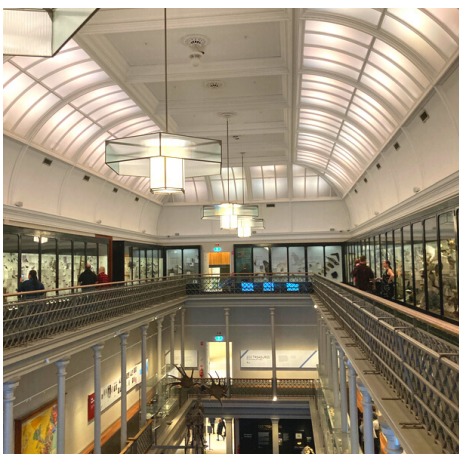
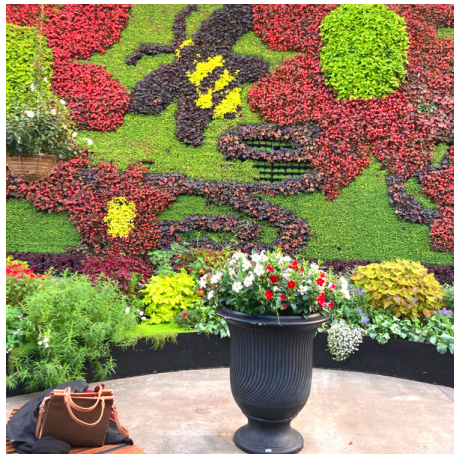
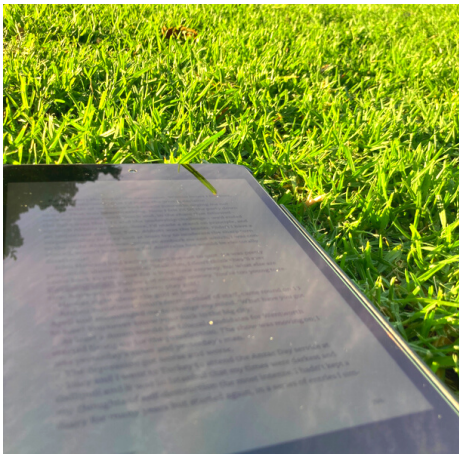
**Want to chat books, writing, or mental health? My inbox is always open - feel free to connect.**

# behind the screens

*it's been a busy few months*

It's a weird old world at the moment, isn't it? I feel uniquely lucky to be living in Australia. Our low number of cases have meant I've been afforded the opportunity to visit friends and family in Sydney lately.

It was the perfect getaway, offering me the chance to properly unplug, relax, and make some decisions about my writing life going forward.

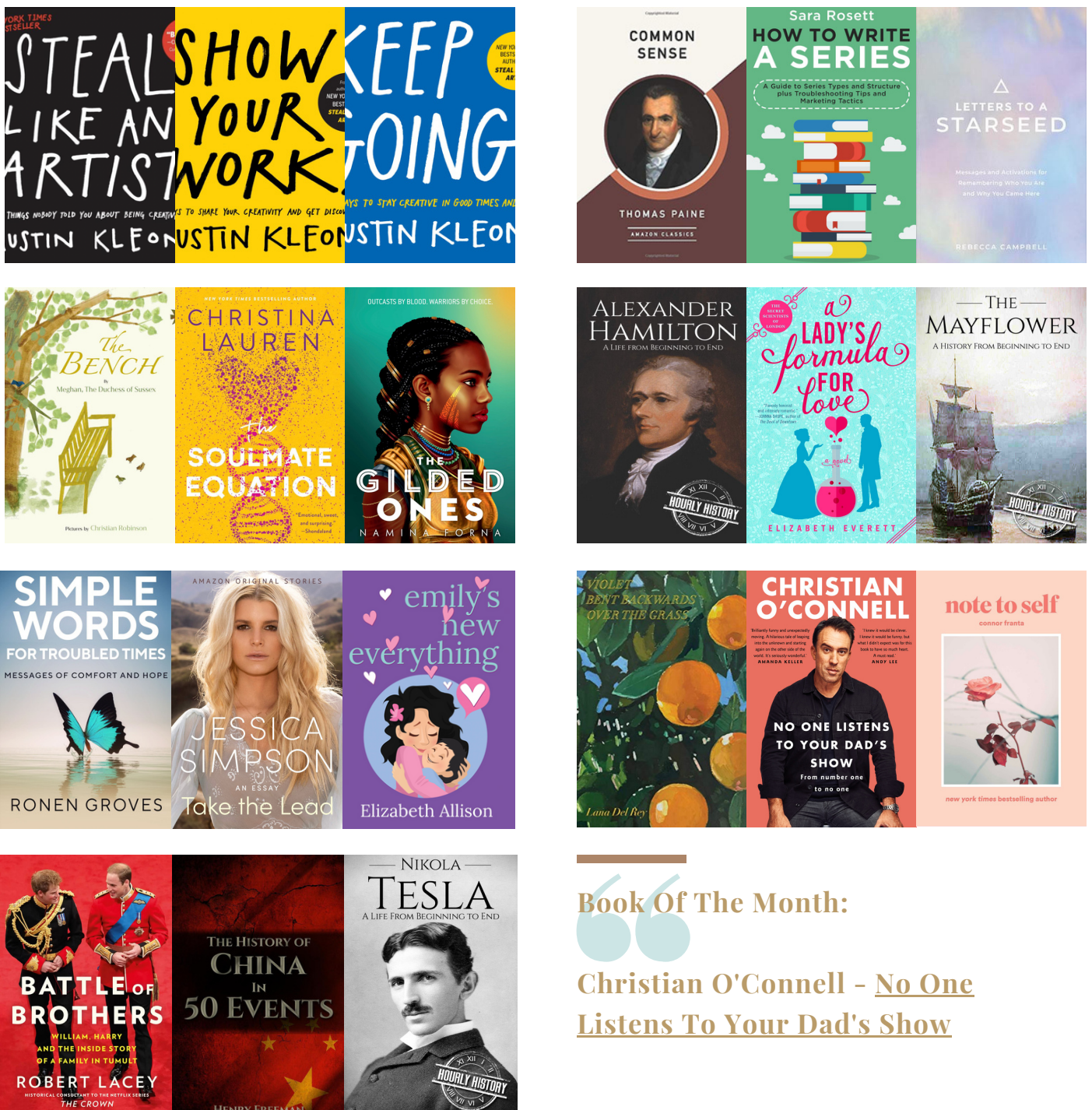


# reading wrap-up

*all the books I devoured last month*

And I do mean devoured. The discovery of WhisperSync books (karaoke for books, highlighting words as you read) has helped my concentration, allowing me to get back into reading just as many books as I did when I was a teenager.

June's books were wide and varied.



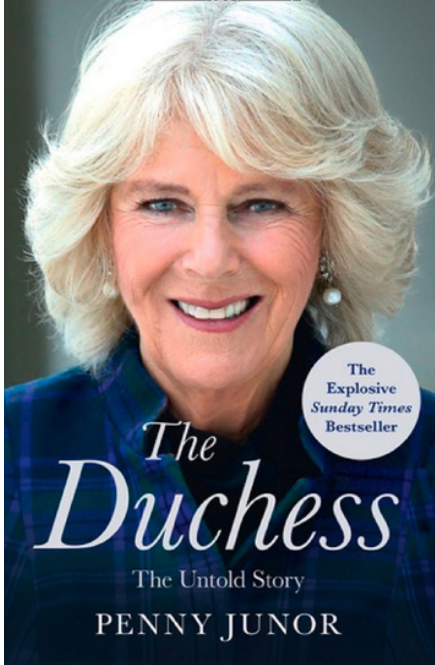
## Book Of The Month:

**Christian O'Connell - No One Listens To Your Dad's Show**

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# reading right now

*and you should read it, too!*



## THE #2 SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

*'The last untold account of the biggest crisis to hit the royals since the abdication ... Explosive biography by Britain's top royal author ... A gripping story of human frailty, love, loss, sadness, and tragedy' Daily Mail*

The relationship between Charles, Prince of Wales and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, is one of the most remarkable love stories of the age. It has endured against all the odds, and in the process nearly destroyed the British monarchy. It is a rich and remarkable story that has never been properly told – indeed, it is one of the most extraordinary, star-crossed love stories of the past fifty years.

### *why am I reading this?*

This is my first book of July and managed to thumb through the first few chapters last night.

Like a lot of you, I've watched *The Crown*, devoured all the documentaries and yes, I've held high teas for royal weddings because how good is cake?

To that end, I love a good royal biography. At this point, I have so many that it's not even a guilty pleasure - it's just pure pleasure. Without getting into a debate about how useful or useless the royal family is for us, I love the pomp and ceremony, the whiff of scandal, and all that gorgeous architecture.

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**Belinda says:** Probably a good idea to not be completely biased when writing a biography. It makes it much more fun when you're able to analyse from the other side of the fence.

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# excerpt

*untitled project*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Greenwich Arms Pub, London

At some point, the difference between drunk and sober is just a mouthful of beer.

‘I am *so* sorry,’ slurs a girl in go-go boots and a silver sequined dress. Her cheeks flush as she pushes damp blonde curls from her face. Her kohl-rimmed eyes water under the strain of having just deposited her days’ takings on the slate floor. At least she didn’t hit the carpet.

And the difference between drunk and falling over is, well, it’s probably a little more than a mouthful, but you get the picture.

Anyone who’s ever romanticised the idea of working in a pub—from a *Coyote Ugly* dance sequence across the bar, to a Tom Cruise-looking barman with cocktail shakers and a side-serving of ‘Kokomo’—has obviously never had the pleasure of cleaning vomit from a fruit machine with a shaggy toothbrush late on a Friday night. I don’t want to look too hard, but I can’t help wondering exactly what she’s downed; this looks like someone squeezed the life out of a glitter-filled stress ball.

‘Might be time to head home, hey?’ I return from the cleaner’s room with the aptly titled Vomit Comet, grab a mop and bucket and drop them by my feet. I place a hand on her shoulder and watch her carefully. She’s not living her best life today and I don’t want to be responsible for making it worse. ‘Have you got a way to get home safely? Do you need me to call someone for you? A taxi? Your partner?’

Lips trembling, she looks around and shakes her head as she starts crying. I’m talking full body-shaking, shoulder-wracking sobs that draw the attention of other patrons. Between burbles, she utters something about hating Johnny with his stupid blonde hair and the heinous act he’s committed only three weeks before their wedding. Yikes.

He’s a low-down dirty cheating Essex boy and, just as I’m about to join in the boo-hoo chorus for philandering boys (because haven’t we all been there?) she clamps her hand over her mouth and darts towards the toilets. Her friend, who is in only a marginally better state, offers an apologetic grimace before disappearing into the darkened hallway.

‘You ‘orright over there?’ Gus calls from behind the bar. ‘Want to swap? I’m just about done here.’

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## excerpt

Angus Ballantyne, bar manager and Glaswegian native, looks like he'd be more at home guarding the North Wall with Jon Snow than in some dingy London pub pulling pints on a Friday night. But I'm so glad he chose to work here because I'm not sure I would have survived the last ten years without his warmth and quick wit. Oh, and giving him grief over his woolly ginger beard and hipster uniform of rolled shirt sleeves, vintage suspenders and trousers that look like they've been purchased from the Royal Horse Guard's second-hand shop.

With a pinched face, I wave a hand in his direction. My stomach curdles as a chunk drips from my gloved finger. 'All good.'

Moments later, those same girls slip past me sheepishly, making their way out the door and into the muted lights of the evening, leaving me to consider whether this actually is my version of 'all good'. Now, it's only the bar flies left, the old codgers who are so ingrained in their seats that the only way they'll be leaving here is in a Guinness-shaped coffin—complete with wheezing widget. Thankfully, it's almost close and even they'll be swept out with the night's detritus soon enough.

Or not.

I gift the fruit machine one final spray of disinfectant before lugging the Vomit Comet back to the cleaner's room. The zap of fluorescent lights coming to life reminds me of the fact that this is a claustrophobic bolthole that reeks of dank water with a dusting of Domestos-scented candle.

On my way back to the bar, I stop by the kitchen. Chef Alastair is hidden behind a mountain of pots and pans, surrounded by a few other cooking staff. I snaffle a roast beef sarnie from the communal tray by the door.

'Hey, no, they're not for you,' Alastair complains, looking up from a fresh pile of sandwiches, cleaver in hand. 'I need them for a function.'

'On a Friday night?' I ask. 'Ten minutes before close.'

He pulls a face. 'It's called prep.'

For as long as I can remember, Alastair has kept us all well-fed during long shifts. He's been here longer than any of us, his salt and pepper hair hidden under a net, cooking the same dishes day in and day out.

Despite the routine, I swear he can magic up gourmet when most of us see plain bread and butter.

Guaranteed, I could never make a sandwich this tasty. I'm flat-out making cheese and Marmite. My phone vibrates in my pocket but, instead of weekend plans with friends, it's the bank telling me another direct debit has failed.

Deep breaths, I remind myself.

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## excerpt

Taking a moment to savour the melt-in-the-mouth beef and horseradish, I pirouette out the door and stop at the sight of Gus, burying himself in the corner with a phone to his ear. Someone at the bar nods in Gus's direction, he finishes his call in lightning speed and turns to face me.

'There you are,' he says, wiping his hands down his front. Glancing across the pub quickly, his eyes light up. 'Nat, can ye clean up the beer garden? The last stragglers have just left, so she's empty.'

I screw my face up.

'Do I have to?' I whine. Gus is right – it's empty. And it's a mess. 'Also, you promised we'd talk about the lunch service job. We really need to have that discussion.'

I really need that promotion. My credit card needs that promotion.

'Well, when you're done out there,' Angus calls after me as I cross the floor, 'can I see you in the function room? There's something else we need to discuss anyway.'

'The job?'

Lips pursed, he gives his head a tight shake.

My nerves light up at the implication of the old 'something we need to discuss'. Everybody past and present, especially the past, knows that the function room is where you go to get fired. It's big and hollow, with high ceilings and ornate ceiling roses, and a fireplace that's like a side salad—decorative and of not much use.

Oh hell, oh hell, oh hell.

'I did outside last night,' I say.

'I know.' Gus's beard moves along with that I can easily presume is a joyful smile. 'Funnily enough it needs to be done tonight too.'

'And there was a poo in the garden bed.' I put my hands on my hips and fix him with a look. If I'm getting fired tonight, I may as well go out with a fight. 'A human poo.'

'At this rate, you'll have your pub worker bingo card crossed off in no time,' a customer says through a smile that's barely concealed by a pint glass.

I'd love to see him get out there and scrub his cuticles with a bristle brush after a long shit shift. I glower at him.

'Go on, I've done a pre-poo check for you. You're safe.' Gus slices a fresh lime and reaches above his head for a clean glass.



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# author spotlight - katie ginger

*romcoms and cosy mysteries*

I live in the South East of England in a lovely little town by the sea and when I'm not battling the never ending pile of washing, I spend my time working, running around after my kids, and walking our King Charles Spaniel, Wotsit, and our three-legged rescue dog, Skips.

Writing has been a dream of mine since I was little. I wrote my first story about a mermaid when I was 9 and was thoroughly delighted to show it off to my teacher, having written a whopping four whole pages, complete with illustrations.

After a couple of life-changing experiences (redundancy and losing my lovely cousin to cancer at just 25) I rediscovered my passion and knew I had to get serious about making my dreams come true.



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I wrote my first short story about a mermaid when I was 9 . . .

I took a chance on Twitter and pitched my novel and in January 2018, I was lucky enough to secure a deal with HarperCollins, HQ Digital! I couldn't believe it was happening to me!

My debut novel *The Little Theatre on the Seafront* was published in September 2018, and shortlisted for the Katie Fforde Debut Novel of the Year 2019 Award. Lots more books have followed, including *Snowflakes at Mistletoe Cottage*, and my *Swallowtail Bay* series. My new series for 2021 features a wonderful countryside village called Meadowbank and you can read the first novel, *The Secrets of Meadow Farmhouse* now!

You can also find my short stories in lots of fab women's magazines! Recently I've been in *Yours Fiction*, *Women's Weekly Fiction Special*, and *Best* magazine!

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# about me

Belinda Missen is a closet romantic who met her husband after being introduced by a friend two states away. Just don't buy her flowers: they die.

They both now reside in country Victoria, surrounded by Lego, holiday photos, cat fur and half-finished pizza. She was once told that it didn't count but, in 2014, she won the Courthouse Youth Arts Over 26+ award for her piece: Obsession.

It totally counts.

Diagnosed with ADHD in 2020, Belinda is striving to normalise her diagnosis and mental health conversations within everyday life utilizing the Please Let Me Sleep approach. This means you'll probably find her online at odd times of the night.

Belinda holds a Diploma of Professional Writing & Editing and is currently studying a BA Communication (Creative Writing).



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