



## **COOKING THE BOOKS : JANUARY 2025**

**Let it go...**

### **Roasted Salmon Nicoise Salad**



Happy 2025 dear

Hope Jan is off to a good start wherever in the world you are. Here in Vancouver, we've had very little snow, tons of rain and a damp cold. Nothing to put a damper on my spirits though.

Every year, one minute past midnight on 31st December, I'm stirred to do better, be a kinder human being. I'm sure it's the same for most of us.

While we make resolutions on how to do **more** with our time, there's an important thing we need to remember and that is how to let go...

I was reminded of it by James Clear (Author of Atomic Habits) in his latest newsletter and that is **"What do I need to let go of this year to create space for what I really want?"**

Something to think about, eh?

For me, it's to let go of everything that sucks up my time and focus on what's really important. Watching TV tops the list, followed closely by constant tidying and baking. I bake when I'm stressed or I just want to avoid bum in seat/hands on keyboard. It's great for my tastebuds, not so much for my waistline or latest work-in-progress.

Another important thing is to not dwell on anything that upsets me. Sure, I could spend hours fuming, but the *only* one losing time and energy is me. I let it go and so far, it's done wonders for my state of mind and my sense of wellbeing.

**What do you want to let go of, this year?**

Drop me a line and share. I would love to hear from you!

Which brings me to my dish of the month. [Ina Garten's Roasted Salmon Nicoise Salad](#). For those who don't like salmon (I know who you are ;)), substitute it with any fish of your choice. Heck, go wild and substitute it with any protein of a choice. It won't "technically" be a Nicoise Salad anymore but, I won't tell if you won't.

It's a delish, easy dinner for two or if you're having guests. Add some garlic bread and you're done. Like dinner! Enjoy.

**New baby arrival : 11 Feb, 2025**



The poster features a central, ethereal white figure of a woman in a long dress, appearing to glow against a vibrant red background. The red background is decorated with intricate, repeating floral patterns. The lower portion of the poster transitions into a dark, textured area where the title and author's name are placed.

Everybody loves a  
good ghost story

# Ghost Queen

MAHTAB NARSIMHAN

**GHOST QUEEN IS AVAILABLE 11 FEB, 2025**

***Hey, Ghosties, this is the Ghost Queen tuning in from the most  
haunted place in India!***

Teen vlogger Malika's ghost hunter channel is almost popular enough to start earning money to support her family. All she needs is one viral video—and she knows exactly where she's going to get it. Bhangarh Fort is the most haunted place in India, rumoured to be home to the cursed princess Ratnavati and her wicked captor. Malika convinces her boyfriend to sneak into the fort with her after dark and record the experience for her avid fans and followers. That's when things go terribly wrong. Can the "Ghost Queen" escape, or is she doomed to spend eternity trapped with a mad magician and the princess who rejected him?

**Check out the [book trailer!](#)**

#### **REVIEWS ARE IN:**

"Offers plenty of creepy thrills. Narsimhan skillfully balances a fast-paced plot with thoroughly dark, emotionally charged scenes. The connection to an actual legend and site in India enriches the story and heightens the fear factor. An entertaining ghostly romp that will draw in reluctant readers."

#### **– Kirkus Reviews**

"Modern and relevant...an important kernel of truth lies at the heart of all these stories. The writing is high-quality across the board: believable dialogue, layered characters, and fast-moving plots."

#### **– School Library Journal (SLJ) Series Made Simple**

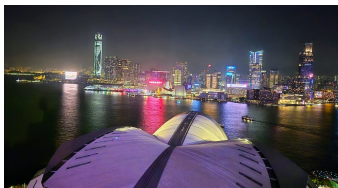
"Successfully offers a premise that will appeal to teens who prefer to spend their time on social media, combining an influencer protagonist with the pacing and resolution of popular short-form creepypasta content. Ultimately, the folklore-esque nature of this snappy read make it both fun and accessible."

#### **– Booklist**

**A teacher's guide will be available on my website shortly.**

## **What's up with me...**





Sharing a few pictures from my recent (and first!) trip to Hong Kong.

Clockwise from the top:

A view from Victoria Peak. The short tram ride up this mountain was fun and the view...well, I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions.

"Ran into" Moomin, one of my fave fictional characters by Tove Jansson, at a local mall. If you haven't read this series, I highly recommend you do so, asap!

Tsim Sha Tsui skyline viewed across Victoria Harbour

A Dukling dhow lighting up the harbour at night. Magical!

## Some final words...

My current fave quote (and precept!) for 2025 :

**"You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it, however."**

**~ From Illusions by Richard Bach**

Please remember to [whitelist my email address](#).

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter, and if you did, please share it with people you think might enjoy it. Or better yet, ask them to subscribe through my website.

Dance your way through 2025 just as enthusiastically as this [young lady](#)!

xo

Mahtab

## **Stardust Stories**

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