



## COOKING THE BOOKS : March 2024

### Superstitions and Salad!



Dear

Happy Spring and **Happy Holi!**

Nothing says spring like a riot of *colour*. In India, the festival of colours is called Holi (March 25). It's a day when everyone comes out into the streets to dance, celebrate, and smear each other with colour, and have a feast later. Enjoy this [joyous and foot-tapping song](#) from a Bollywood movie, War. One of my fave holi songs!

I couldn't resist sharing this yummy salad I made a couple of summers ago when I was growing chives at home. Those purple flowers are a visual and gastronomic treat!

And you can get the kids to help put this salad together by adding their fave veggies, or tearing up the salad leaves. It's never too early to introduce them to healthy foods!

**Recipe:**

1) Take a large bowl or platter.

2) Toss in arugula (or any salad mix) leaves, halved grape tomatoes, quartered peppers, halved baby bocconcini and diced avocado (added just before eating and is not shown here). As I mentioned before, Spring also gives you delicious chive flowers. If you're growing chives at home, you know what I mean. Toss in a few. They're peppery and delish.

Add your dressing of choice just before eating. I love this [fat-free and healthy dressing by Jamie Oliver](#). Enjoy art on a plate!

Tip: You can use any veggies you have lying in the fridge. That's what makes this salad so versatile, and unique each time. And you've used up leftovers with no wastage! Win-win, IMO.

**What if you knew what the future holds  
for you?**



# WARNED

## THE ASTROLOGER'S PROPHECY



EERIE TALES FROM THE EAST

MAHTAB NARSIMHAN

In India, astrologers are very popular. Many auspicious events are planned after taking an astrologer's advice, and based on the aligning of the



stars/planets on a particular day. And if he prophesies an event, people believe it and pay money to try and avert or reduce its consequences. See the scam?

Per widespread superstitious belief in India, only if the horoscopes of a couple match can they get married. Countless Bollywood movies have used this as a plot twist to create conflict and tragedy.

So what is a superstition?

Per the dictionary: *a widely held but unjustified belief in supernatural causation leading to certain consequences of an action or event, or a practice based on such a belief.*

I find this topic intriguing and it inspired my story, *WARNED*, which is the first book in the *Eerie Tales from the East* trilogy.

Here's a blurb:

**A remote village. A sinister servant. A death warning.**

12-year-old city boy Avi is forced to stay at a crumbling mansion in rural India while his parents are away on a medical mission. No Wi-Fi. No cell signal. No company besides a grandfather he barely knows and his sinister servant. The only glimmer of excitement is when an astrologer at the local fair predicts Avi is about to die *a horrible* death.

Of course, that's just superstitious nonsense. But when the astrologer's dire predictions start to come true one by one, Avi fears his time may be running out. He's too young to die! **Can he trust mysterious town outcast, Lalita, to help solve the mystery of the ominous prophecies before his own untimely death?**

*Eerie Tales from the East* brings you scary stories from around the world. Ordinary characters must rise to extraordinary challenges or risk losing the ones they love in these chilling, fast-paced novels with heart for 8-12+ year old fans of *Coraline*, *Goosebumps*, and *Small Spaces*.

Reviews

*"Warned is an engaging and compelling mystery that will connect with young readers while inviting them to seek answers alongside Avi and Lalita."*~ Amazon Reviewer

*"I loved this story. Not only did it provide a wonderful mystery with a touch of the supernatural, but it provided a great illustration of the caste system that has long existed in India. Avi's innocence of the caste system as a whole means that he says some things without realizing how bad the comments are, which provides some opportunities for learning. But his heart also means that even when some of the village elders try to get him to fall into line with the caste system and how to treat those who are "untouchables," Avi immediately sees the wrongness of it and tries to do something about it. The way he treated Lalita as a human being and the way he consistently challenged the way others were treating her was beautiful to see."* ~Jennifer C

*"My 10 year old daughter loved the book! It was mysterious and she didn't want to put it down!"*~ Ellie S.



Download a [WORD SEARCH](#) and [ANSWER KEY](#) plus a [DISCUSSION GUIDE](#) based on WARNED here!

Here's a list of [superstitions from around the world](#) and their origins. Do you believe in one or more? Drop me a line and let me know if you do. I'd love to hear from you!

## What have I been up to?

It helps to be flexible! Thanks to regular yoga practice, I'm able to do up a corner bed at my place by perching on a window sill in a forward fold, and pulling the edges in. It's one of the most annoying things to do...but yoga comes in handy. I've also practiced doing a split while making up the bed :)

This picture was taken, unbeknownst to me, by my husband. Thought I'd share it with you folks to let you know I do something else besides writing! Who says chores can't be fun and give you a good workout ;)

Cold, rainy evenings are perfect for writing. Sharing one of my recent endeavours when I needed half the dining table to spread out all my research while I wrestled my beast of a YA novel to the ground. Happy to say it is now complete and with my beta readers. Wish me luck!



## If you like WARNED, try these!

- Dust by Arthur Slade (one of my absolute faves of all his books. There's an

audio book too, narrated by Art himself)

- The Jumbies by Tracey Baptiste
- The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman
- Doll Bones by Holly Black
- The Nest by Kenneth Oppel
- The Night Gardener by Jonathan Auxier

## Some final words...

Looking for chilling fantasy novels in an exotic settings within Asia, with a sprinkling of mythology and a side order of mystery?

Check out both these series by yours truly:

[EERIE TALES FROM THE EAST](#) (Goosebumps meets Asian mythology)

[THE TARA TRILOGY](#) (A quest, a mystery, and a fairy tale, all in one)

I'm on [BOOKBUB](#) and would love to connect with you there!

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

*The Comfort Book* by Matt Haig is a little treasure trove from which I pick a gem or two whenever I feel like it. Here's a lovely thought I'd like to leave you with:

**"Each of us is born with a box of matches inside us." ~ Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*.**

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter! Fingers crossed ;)

Mahtab

### Stardust Stories

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