



COOKING THE BOOKS : AUGUST 2024

T-I-L

Beet and Burrata Salad





Hello and Merhaba

It's been a whirlwind of a summer and it has been glorious. My family and I travelled to the UK and Turkey, I finished the final draft (for submission) of my novel, and I think I need a root canal. Eeeek!

Okay, so first things first. Check out this absolutely glorious [beet and burrata salad](#). I omitted the fried sourdough (sacrilegious, IMO) but I needed to cut back on the carbs and so the dough had to go. *But*, but, it still tastes divine. Give it a try!

I'm not done with the food yet, says the foodie :) I had to share pictures of just some of the fab dishes we tried.

Left: Mezze sampler at the Rooftop Mezze 360 in Istanbul

Middle: Sticky Toffee pudding at a pub in Windsor, UK

Right: Poached sea bass in parchment with tomatoes and a delicate broth at a famous and very old restaurant in the spice market at Istanbul called Pandeli which opened in 1901. A must try!

That's it, folks...have a lovely rest of the summer.

I'm kidding. Read on.

Book News...



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Susan Marston

Susan Marston
Editorial Director and Publisher

Junior Library Guild
Gold Standard Selection

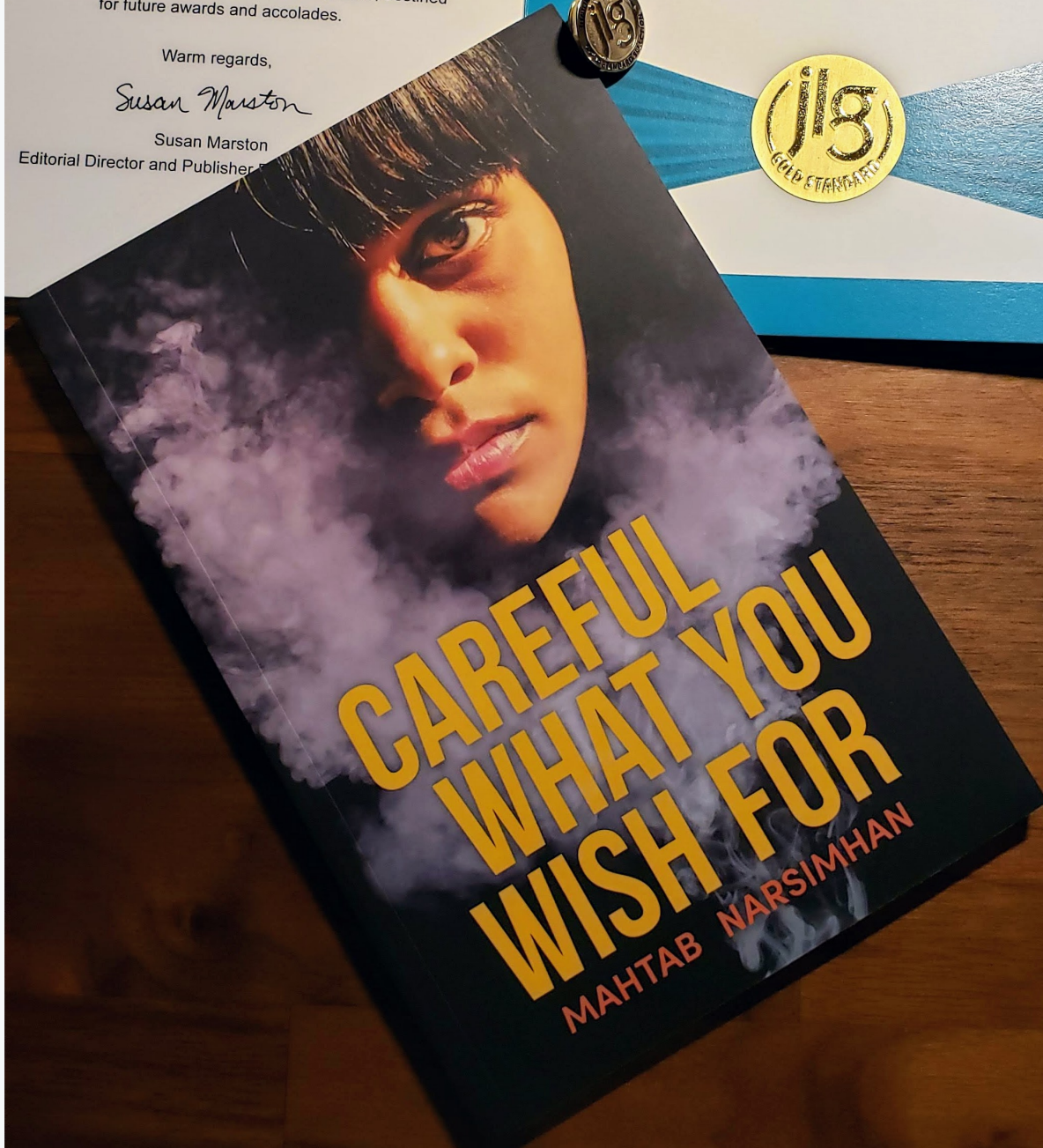
AWARD

presented to

Careful What You Wish For

Mahtab Narsimhan

Author



CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

Thrilled that it's received the JLG Gold Standard Award. Most of us write for the pleasure of it, but validation and recognition are always welcome.

The lovely JLG gold pin hangs on my cork board at eye level. Every time I'm discouraged, or annoyed, or tired, this is good motivator to keep going. Even though every single book will never receive accolades or critical acclaim

(wouldn't that be cool!) it's nice to know some of my babies are lifting up the others.

Synopsis:

A lonely teen discovers a website that grants wishes.

Eshana is a bit of a social misfit. She feels more comfortable talking to people online than in person. One day she discovers a website that claims to be a safe space where young people can support each other in making their dreams come true. She starts talking with someone called Wise One. They hit it off immediately. Eshana admits to the Wise One how hard it is for her to make friends. The next day she goes to school and suddenly everyone wants to talk to her. Eshana is thrilled. But then, after telling Wise One about a girl who has been bullying her, she hears that the girl has been injured in a car accident. Are Eshana's wishes really coming true? If so, is having the life she's always wanted worth the costs?

This short novel is a high-interest, low-reading level book for teen readers who are building reading skills, want a quick read or say they don't like to read! The epub edition of this title is fully accessible.

Reviews :

"Young adult readers will enjoy Eshana's personality, the fantasy angle of the plot and the page-turner quality of the book as they wonder just what she'll wish for and, more importantly, how that wish will be answered." --Highly Recommended."-- CM: Canadian Review of Materials

"There's a quick pace and steady pulse to this brief story, and the ending is ultimately satisfying. The book presents basic lessons in cybersafety as well as overt positive moral messaging about being kind and grateful." -- Booklist

"Will engage reluctant readers who enjoy real-world-based fantasies...A satisfying tale about defeating an online predator and realizing the value of true friendship."-- Kirkus Reviews

"Narsimhan succeeds at creating a story for teens who are reading at a lower level without infantilizing the content...An excellent choice where hi-lo fiction is needed."-- School Library Journal (SLJ)

"This tightly written, high interest fantasy addresses real world issues and will keep even the most reluctant reader turning the page... Recommended." -- Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD)

What have I been up to?



From Stonehenge to the Cotswolds (Bourton-on-the-Water in case you're curious, where I devoured the most delish cream tea) to Hogwarts and finally Magdalen College in Oxford where I saw (worshipped!) the door C.S. Lewis passed every day on his way to lectures. I was *literally weak-kneed* given that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* tops my fave list of books.

How can one *not* be inspired by such a rich landscape, so much history and myth surrounding these places. My head's already imploding with ideas. Can't wait to get started on my next project.

So, you're probably wondering about that T-I-L (Today I Learned bit). This year was the first time that we'd been away from home for a little over three weeks and these are a few takeaways:

1) Shorter holidays work better for me. Staying away for 3 weeks was a bit much and I missed home that last week. See where your comfort zone lies to make the most of your holidays.

2) **Travel LIGHT.** This can be a game-changer, especially in Europe. My husband and I both had one carry on and one check in bag. TOO. MUCH. The best way to travel these days, is to take carry on. YouTube has tons of travel hack videos. Highly recommend traveling light and doing laundry somewhere mid-journey.

3) Visit a place(s) that has similar weather patterns. We went from cold/cool London to scorching Istanbul/Bodrum where the temp. was in the mid 40s (celsius). More clothes/ more weight, more stress about bags making it to a destination.

4) Depth rather than breadth. This applies to more than just travel. Plots, characters, settings, all benefit from depth rather than skimming the surface. We packed in too many places, and IMO, did not explore each to our

satisfaction. Next time, I'll be opting for only a couple of locations but will spend more time in each.

So there you have it. What I learned from my travels this summer. At last count, I had packed and unpacked bags a total of 15 times during this trip.

Hope you guys are smarter than me. I've already invested in some excellent carry-on luggage. More when I take the next trip.

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 ONE THING by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan is my new fave book about focus and productivity. (Shoutout to my sis, [Maz](#), for insisting I read it!) My current fave quote is:

What's the ONE thing I can do, such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary.

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter, and if you did, please share it with people you think might enjoy it.

Until the next newsletter, in the words of Captain America, [FLAME ON!](#)

Mahtab

Stardust Stories

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