



A month of surprises!

I woke yesterday thinking it was Thursday—stressed about how much was still sitting in my to-do box. So, my relief, and joy, in discovering it was Wednesday prompted another cup of coffee while my brain reset. I blame April. It's always a busy month: Easter, a plethora of unnecessary public holidays straining my day job, and a few birthdays (including my own), disrupting each week. Throw in a few huge surprises and the month flew quicker than I could set my alarm!

My biggest surprise arrived in the form of my sister-from-another-mother popping out of hiding—in my house! After long-distance zooms and WhatsApp's for 6 YEARS, I am now confident my heart is healthy, even if my blood pressure took a hit. I can't remember such euphoria (sorry kids, and hubby) and while the flip side was a heartbreaking farewell, the few weeks in-between, sharing life and catching up with her and her family, overflowed with pure delight and joy, for which I am forever blessed and grateful. Covid taught us how to manage relationships in separation, and with a 7000km distance, I didn't dare to expect when we might see each other again. The lifetime connection swept away the missing years and cocooned both our families in love and wholehearted sincerity.



My daughter travelled to London on a whirlwind theatre tour for her final Uni year, and surprised both her brothers, which brought us all to tears. As a mom watching their

reunions (oceans away via live WhatsApp) the sheer joy and unconditional love they shared burst my heart. Another surprise visit from family-not-family proved that some connections are unbreakable, which is also a theme in my books. More delayed birthday celebrations added fun, blew my monthly alcohol average consumption, and left me humbled by the beautiful gifts I received.

I haven't decided if I like surprises, because my tally of them leans towards the unpleasant (with each passing birthday that tends to happen more often), but April teemed with them, so I may be converted.

Conclusion: best and busiest April ever!

Shakespeare is also an April baby, and fate decided he should die on the same day he was born. I think that's a neat idea for those left behind—one day to mourn and celebrate. Whether you love his work, are horrified by the concept of a son fiddling around his mother's fringes or remember falling asleep in class while a teacher you've long forgotten droned on about words you didn't understand (and would never use) the Bard of Avon certainly left his mark. The fact that he left his fortune to his daughter, and only his 'second best bed with the furniture' to his wife, makes me think his earring wearing had more to it than a fashion accessory... who knows? He was also very specific about not messing with his grave, which I find hilarious.

"Good friend for Jesus' sake forbear,

To dig the dust enclosed here:

Blest be the man that spares these stones

And cursed he be that moves my bones."

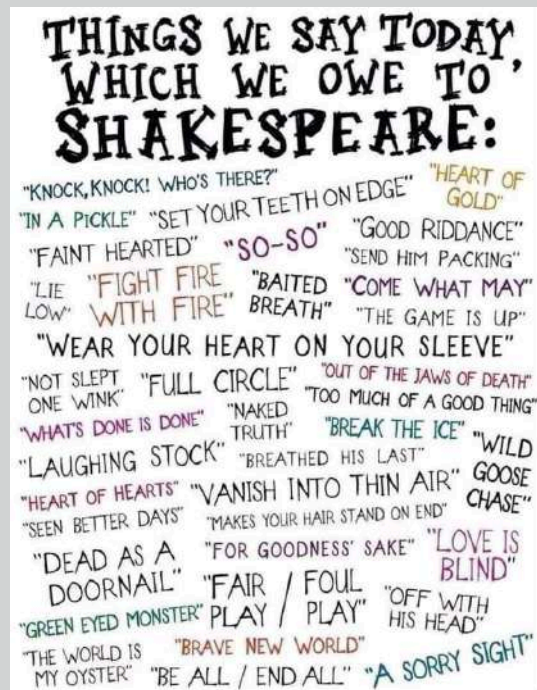
William Shakespeare

Harper Lee is another April soul and one of my all-time favourites.

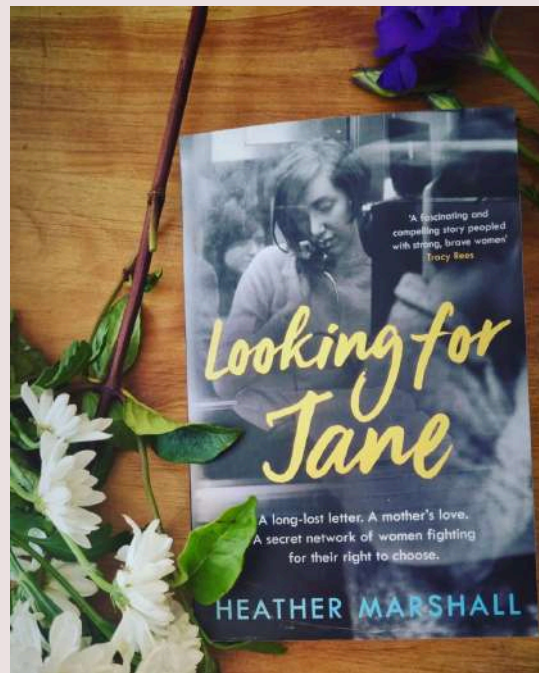
To Kill a Mockingbird will always be my moral go-to, and I'm not alone.

"Real courage is when you know you're licked to begin with, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.

Harper Lee



I've never relished the thought of anyone feeling the need to visit my grave—or guilt for not. Life should be too busy for such maudlin things, not to mention very few people seem to live anywhere close to where their nearest and dearest are buried. So, my delight in discovering that my ashes can be housed in a firework and set off at my wake thrilled me. First, because I'm a party person, and second, the idea of literally ending up among the stars could be my last fabulous adventure. The idea horrifies my children, so it's unlikely to happen, unless I can convince/bribe my equally adventurous friends to get it done.



Public holidays gave me some time to get out and about and share interesting conversations—the five love languages, banning of books in the US (and **Jodi Picoult's** fight against it—GO Jodi!), a young artist **simoneverfaille_art** who's energy and joie de vivre are immersed in her work. And of course, and always, women's right of choice, which being a mother enrages me.

Looking for Jane is Heather Marshall's debut novel on the subject, and a must-read. In tune with my love of Scotland and its history, **Ailish Sinclair's** three amazing books are also on my list. Pop over to my blog for more on all of this.

I'm almost finished the final edit of book one, and hope to do a cover reveal in a few weeks—that's exciting! Getting the final touches done will free me up to finish book 2, which I'm loving so far. I love my characters and their journey, and hope one day soon, you will too. I have a lot to share in May so stick around!

Thank you for sharing my journey

'Till next time

Ally

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