



March 7, 2025



The Juicy Bits

The March newsletter covers:

1. Self-flagellation: Why do we do this to ourselves?
2. What am I doing with all my ARCs?

3. Everything Goes Better with Mystery

4. 3 March book recs

5. How to begin

Thanks so much for the kind feedback. A couple people suggested I break this into bits and send them weekly or biweekly -- **let me know you would prefer that** (though no promises, because I find the act of hitting send almost more stressful than the drafting).

In the meantime, I'm continuing with the current structure. But it will be short! Because February's was too long, and I'm on deadline. **Overcaffeinate & skim liberally!**

PERSONAL

1. Why do we do this to ourselves?

I spend a lot of time torturing myself. This past February, I cut out sugar for the third year in a row. Why February? Because it's clear of the holiday cookie season, and it's the shortest month of the year. If you know me, you know that I *love* pastries. I call a bad day a "two pastry day." I eat a lot of sugar. In theory, cutting out refined sugar makes me more alert to things sugar is in (pizza, ramen broth, chips, etc.) and mutes the craving for the rest of the year. In practice, I finish the month saying, "Well, *that* was pointless. I'm not doing that again." (But I will.)

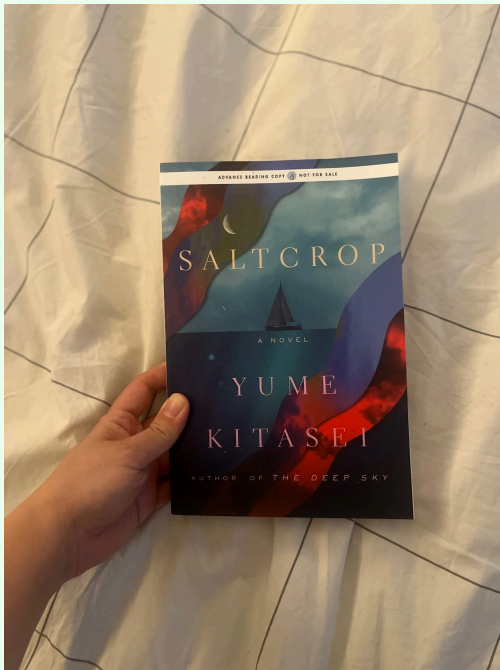
I'm on deadline right now, so you can bet I'm already back to popping candy to get me through my work. An impending deadline also sadly means I'm on a social moratorium (e.g. no hangouts), something that is very hard for an extrovert like me. But it's probably for the best, because I just paid my taxes and now have as little in my checking account as I did when I was in my 20s pending receipt of any publishing money (which could be *months*).

Why self-flagellate? I don't know, I'm a writer. It's in the job description. A lot of my non-writer friends ask me if writing is fun. I would say most of the time, it is not. But I'm compelled to do it anyway, and every once in a while, when I hit upon those brief moments of understanding about myself or the broader world, it's exhilarating.

Anyway, make sure you have a truly excellent hot chocolate before the cold weather ends.

AUTHOR UPDATE

2. What are you doing with all your Advance Reader Copies?



My Advance Reader Copies (ARCs) for *Saltcrop* arrived! The book comes out 9/30, so we're about six months out now.

ARCs are an early version of the book that hasn't been fully proofread.

Like this newsletter, they have typos and other errors, but hopefully not so many that everyone notices. They're meant for influencers, reviewers, booksellers, and librarians

who are deciding which books to stock or promote. The paper copies are bound like a paperback, and electronic ARCs are available on sites [NetGalley](#) and [Edelweiss](#)!

Of the thirty 30 I got, I gave one to my parents, kept one for promo like my very first [stop motion movie](#) to "unbox" them. The rest I'll be sending to friends and others in the book world -- authors, reviewers, etc. -- in the hopes that it'll help create buzz.

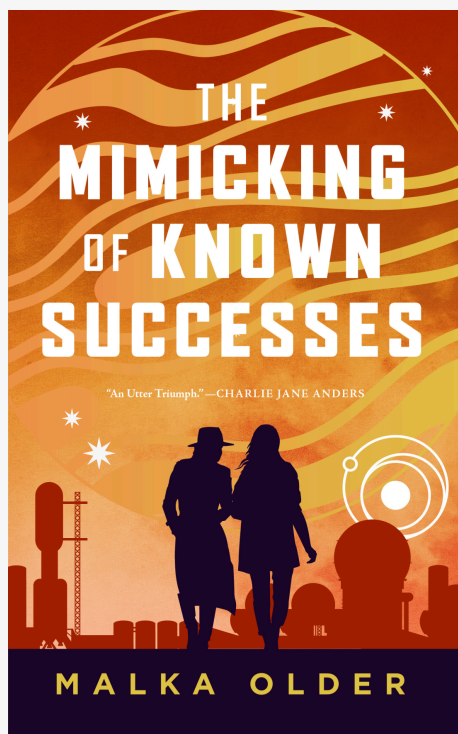
But I also couldn't resist giving one away on my [Instagram](#) (you can still enter before midnight EST on Sunday, March 9!) along with giveaways for *The Deep Sky* and *The Stardust Grail*. I'll also be giving away one here in the future. I suspect my publisher may host some giveaways via Goodreads as well (another reason to add it on [Goodreads](#) hint, hint). So keep your eyes peeled!

Other updates:

- I'm 50% through revising my draft of my "space whale thriller" due to my editor 3/21
- [The Stardust Grail won runner-up in the Libby Awards](#)
- The Hungarian translation of *The Deep Sky* is [now available](#) from Agave, and the cover is pretty neat

MUSINGS ABOUT SCIFI

3. Everything Goes Better with a Mystery



I love writing fiction that mashes up genres, and it feels like publishers are more excited about "crossover" fiction these days. As well they should be, in my opinion, because those books can cut across multiple audiences. I've noticed, for example, one category of science fiction that people seem to find more accessible is science fiction mystery.

Some recent ones include the terrifically fun [Mossa and Pleiti](#)

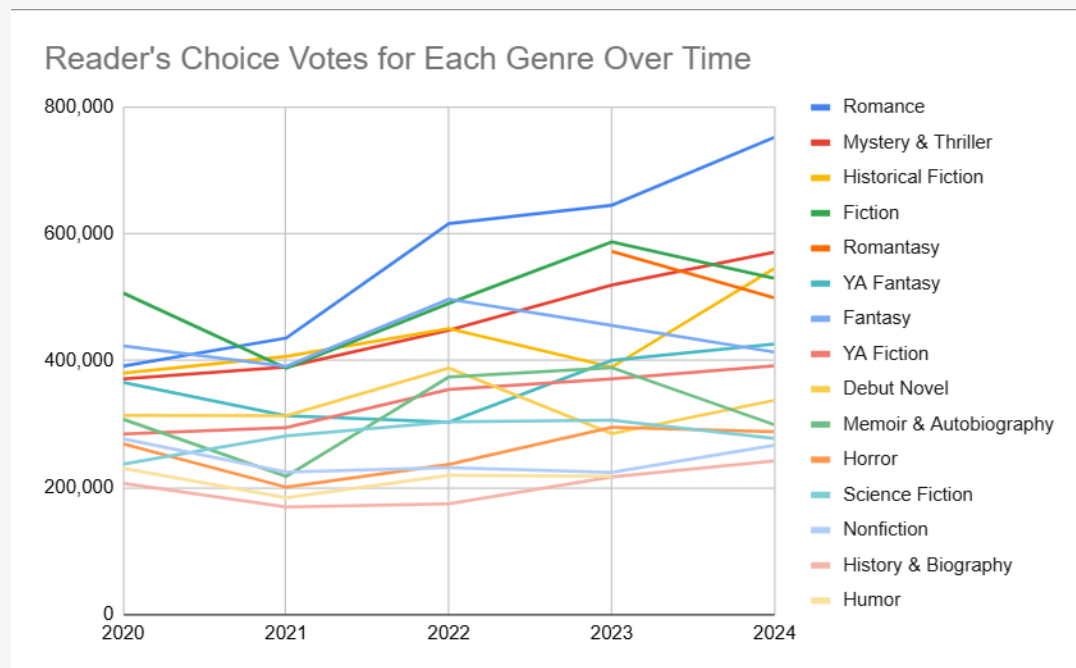
novella series by Malka Older set on the rings of Jupiter; [Six Wakes](#) and [Station Eternity](#) by Mur Lafferty; [Rose/House](#) by Arkady Martine; and the blockbuster [Murderbot](#) novella series by Martha Wells that's getting adapted

to [Apple TV](#) in May (!!). Oh yes, and my first book, [The Deep Sky](#), is a locked-room mystery on a generation ship.

Why does it work so well? Well...people love mysteries more than most genres *winces in sci fi*, and more people are willing to pick it up if it has a mystery in it. I think this is because genre readers love their genre because of those specific plot structures and tropes, and they know sci fi mysteries will likely have those things -- plus a few fresh surprises.

Honestly, this was all an excuse to show you a fun little chart I made when I was procrastinating that plots the number of votes for each Goodreads Reader's Choice category over time. The four genres at the bottom are history and biography, nonfiction, science fiction, and horror. In theory crossover fiction gets a boost by combining markets. A great example is Kalliane Bradley's juggernaut of a debut last year, [The Ministry of Time](#), which combined science fiction, romance, historical fiction, and a dash of mystery/thriller.

If you look at this, it makes total sense that sci fi romance is growing. I was also surprised to see that horror hovers at around the same amount of reader votes as science fiction (even though I feel like horror is often taken more seriously by the literary world).



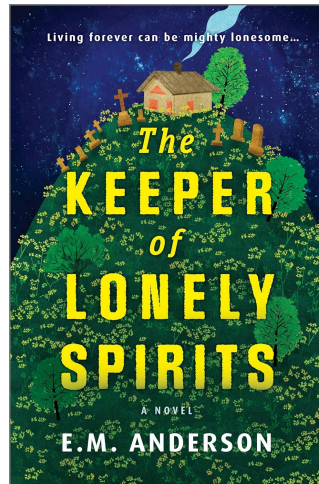
THREE BOOKS

4. New Releases



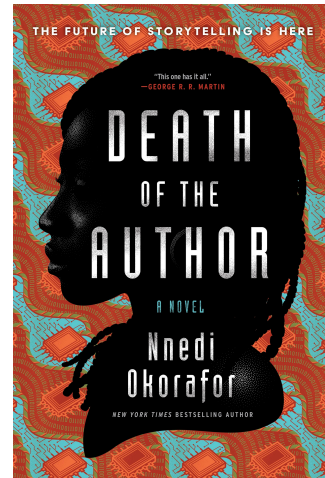
[Psychopomp](#) (3/25)

Speaking of genre mashup, I love Maria Dong's books. [Liar](#), [Dreamer](#), [Thief](#) was a dreamy psychological thriller, and this one is a science fiction mystery/thriller about a prisoner in a lunar mining camp who uncovers a secret about the world -- and herself.



[The Keeper of Lonely Spirits](#) (3/25)

E.M. Anderson's queer cozy fantasy follows an old ghost hunter cursed with immortality who finds belonging -- and love -- in Harrington, Ohio.



[Death of An Author](#) (1/14)

Nnedi Okorafor is one of my all-time favorite authors. Her new book, about an author in career crisis who decides to take a risk and write a strange sci fi novel, is already generating lots of buzz. I'm very excited to read it.

WRITING TIPS

5. How to Begin

I usually know what I want a final scene to be, but one of the hardest things for me is beginning. Once I get going, the story tends to gather its own momentum. As I work through revising my zero draft into a coherent first draft, I sometimes like to replot a chapter using this simple outline:

Theme:

Start:

Pivot:

End:

Once I have figured out 'what is the main thing this chapter about?', I think about different images or actions that might align with that.

Here's a made up example: say in the chapter, the character learns "sometimes drama isn't worth resolving." This is on the nose, but you could open with the character is wrestling with a ball of yarn that has gotten all tangled up. People stop by or call, arguments unfold, revelations are had. The pivot point is the thing that prompts the character to change position (or sometimes more significantly) - e.g. a friend gives them helpful advice to "f-- all of them." At the end, the character takes the whole ball of yarn and throws it in the fireplace.

Do you ever use this technique? If this is new to you and you try it, let me know how it goes!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Yume Kitasei' in a cursive, flowing script.

Yume Kitasei

Newslettering is a new thing for me, so let me know if this was interesting (and/or please shout about it and get your friends to subscribe)! I'm open to suggestions for future newsletters if there's anything you'd like me to talk about. And if you enjoyed this, please consider checking out [my books](#), or adding and upvoting *Saltcrop* on [Goodreads](#) or [Storygraph](#) anticipated lists to help me build early buzz. Thank you!!!

Yume Kitasei (she/her)

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www.yumekitasei.com

yumewrites@gmail.com

120 Broadway, New York, NY

United States of America



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