



## Kristie Booker

Hello there 😊

Welcome to August's newsletter! I'm excited to share what's been keeping me busy lately.

### What I've Been Reading

*Nora Goes Off Script*, *Same Time Next Summer*, and *Summer Romance* by Annabel Monaghan



I've recently delved into three of Annabel Monaghan's books, and I must say, she's earned a spot on my list of favorite authors. Her talent for crafting banter and chemistry between characters is remarkable—it truly brings the story to life. As I work on my own writing, I strive to capture that same spark, though any writer will tell you it's no small feat.

Finding her books while making the final edits for *Summer in the Moon Garden* felt serendipitous. Immersing myself in her stories was a welcome reminder to relax and stay true to my own voice. It's surprisingly easy to lose your personal tone during the editing process, but Monaghan's fresh influence helped me hold on to my authenticity.

My journey with Monaghan's work began with *Summer Romance*, which quickly drew me in. *Nora Goes Off Script* had been on my to-read list since its release, but I hadn't gotten around to it. Impressed by *Summer Romance*, I ordered both *Nora Goes Off Script* and *Same Time Next Summer*.

While *Nora Goes Off Script* emerged as my favorite, with *Summer Romance* a close second and *Same Time Next Summer* following, I thoroughly enjoyed all three and read them rather quickly. Monaghan's novels embody the ideal summer read—charming, relatable, and genuinely enjoyable. They've not only entertained me but also inspired my own writing process, reinforcing the importance of an authentic voice and engaging character dynamics.

### What I've Been Writing

#### **From Ghost Stories to Moon Gardens: The Mystical Journey Behind *Summer in the Moon Garden***



I've always been drawn to the mystical and unknown. Growing up in the 80s—a golden era for supernatural horror—I developed an obsession with ghosts and the paranormal. I'd spend hours in our town's cemetery, reading old tombstones and imagining the lives (and deaths) of those who came before us. Movies like "The Shining," "The Exorcist," and "Poltergeist" only fueled my fascination with the supernatural.

This curiosity about the unknown has been a thread throughout my life, influencing my storytelling and now, my latest novel, *Summer in the Moon Garden*. In my last newsletter, I

shared how the story was inspired by my childhood friendships. Growing up in a small town with limited entertainment, my friends and I often turned to ghost stories, Ouija boards, and our active imaginations for excitement.

You might wonder how I transitioned from ghostly tales to a heartwarming story set in a moon garden. The connection lies in the sense of mystery and the exploration of the unknown that both themes share. Just as ghost stories allowed me to ponder the mysteries of existence and the limits of human understanding, a moon garden offers a space for reflection, transformation, and encounters with the unexpected.

In the likely case that you've never heard of a moon garden, it is a magical space designed to be enjoyed at night, under the soft glow of moonlight. These gardens typically feature white or pale-colored flowers that seem to glow in the dark, plants with silver or gray foliage that shimmer in moonlight, night-blooming flowers like moonflowers or evening primrose, fragrant plants that release their scents in the evening, and reflective elements like water features or mirrors. The overall effect is a serene, almost ethereal atmosphere that invites quiet contemplation and wonder—not unlike the feeling of telling ghost stories under a starry sky.

In *Summer in the Moon Garden*, I've woven together my love for the mystical with the serene beauty of nighttime flora. The result is a story that explores personal growth, hidden secrets, and the magic that can unfold when we open ourselves to new experiences—all against the backdrop of a luminous garden that comes alive under the moon's glow.

When I started planning *Summer in the Moon Garden*, I knew I wanted a setting that was both unique and symbolic. The moon garden offered the perfect blend of beauty, mystery, and metaphor. Here are five reasons why I chose this setting.

1. **A Space for Transformation:** Just as my protagonists Kat and Jess both undergo significant personal growth, a moon garden transforms from an ordinary space during the day to a luminous wonderland at night.
2. **Symbolism of Cycles:** The moon's phases mirror the emotional journey of the characters, representing change, renewal, and the ebb and flow of life.
3. **Sensory Rich Environment:** The fragrant blooms, soft textures, and visual beauty of a moon garden provided a lush backdrop for sensory descriptions, allowing readers to feel fully immersed in the story.
4. **A Retreat for Reflection:** Moon gardens are inherently peaceful spaces, perfect for the moments of introspection and intimate conversations that drive the narrative forward.

5. Connection to Nature: In our fast-paced world, I wanted to explore the healing power of connecting with nature, which is a central theme of the book.

Researching moon gardens for this novel was a joy. I spoke with horticulturists, visited night-blooming gardens, and even planted a small moon garden in my yard last summer. These experiences deepened my appreciation for these magical spaces.

I can't wait for you to experience of *Summer in the Moon Garden* for yourself. As you turn the pages, I hope you'll feel as though you're strolling through this enchanted space, experiencing its magic firsthand. The luminous flowers, the fragrant night air, and the revelations that unfold under the moon's glow—all of these elements are woven into the story, inviting you to lose yourself in this nocturnal world.

Have you ever visited or created a moon garden? I'd love to hear about your experiences or what you imagine a perfect moon garden would be like!



### **What I've Been Cooking**

#### **Blueberry Bliss Cake and Basil Oil Brilliance: Summer's Finest Flavors**










Three things have been consistent this summer: 🍷 blueberries, 🌿 basil, and 🍅 tomatoes.

Since the end of June when Mick Klug Farms put out the first of their delicious blueberries, I've made sure to have a five-pound box in my refrigerator at all times. They cover my yogurt every morning, find their way into my salads, and, of course, are the driving force behind my desserts. I love cobblers, pies, and crisps, but now, this recently reimagined blueberry cake has made it to the top of my go-to summer desserts.

### **Blueberry Bliss Cake**

- 1/2 cup salted butter softened to room temperature
- 1 cup sugar plus 2 tablespoons, divided
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/3 cup all-purpose flour

- 1 ¼ teaspoons baking powder
  - ¼ teaspoons salt
  - ½ cup full-fat sour cream
  - 2 cups fresh blueberries
  - 2 tablespoons turbinado sugar (optional, can also replace with granulated sugar)
  - Zest of one lemon
  - Plus whipped cream or ice cream for serving.
- Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 9-inch pan with cooking spray and set aside.
  - Mix 2 T of granulated sugar, turbinado sugar, and lemon zest in a small bowl.
  - In the bowl of a stand mixer, whip together the butter and 1 cup of the sugar (the rest will go on top) until pale and fluffy, about five minutes.
  - Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat well after each addition. Beat in the vanilla.
  - In a medium bowl, stir the flour, baking powder and salt. Gradually add the flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with sour cream, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition.
  - Gently fold in the fresh blueberries to the cake batter. Spread the batter in the prepared pan.
  - Sprinkle the lemon sugar mixture evenly over the top of the cake batter.
  - Bake 35-40 minutes, until the top is crackly and lightly browned.
  - Let the cake cool completely in the pan and slice and serve with whipped cream or ice cream.

 This basil oil recipe from [skinnytaste.com](http://skinnytaste.com) has changed my life. One, I always plant more basil than I ever eat and now I never have enough. Two, I will probably never make pesto again and I love pesto, so that's saying something. The best part—it's only 5 ingredients!

### **Basil Oil**

- ½ cup packed basil, stemmed, washed, and dried
  - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon of water
  - 2 cloves of garlic
  - ½ teaspoon kosher salt
  - 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Place the basil, water, garlic, salt, and red pepper flakes in mini-food processor and pulse a few times. Add the olive oil and blend until you have a smooth sauce. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 2 to 3 days.
  - Drizzle it on salads, meats, eggs, vegetables, pizza, and pasta.

---

---

Happy eating and reading!

Best wishes ✨

Kristie

**Kristie Booker**

P.O. Box 577631, Chicago, Illinois, United States of America



You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe](#)

