

Amber's Update



Who parks here? It's a mystery, this designated space in downtown San Jose.

Murder Mystery Edition *-or the more politically correct-* Detective Fiction Edition

I'm used to a bit of mystery when I go to my vacation rental to clean up after guests and prepare for the next ones.

Mysteries like: why is there a kitchen chair missing, and where is it? Who took off with the wine opener (again)? Who left their police badge in the bedside table? Did someone bring a pet? Where did all the beach towels and pillows go? How is there a dead fish on the back porch? Can all the dishes really all fit in one dishwasher and if they can, do they get clean? Did the last guest really eat Hostess Donettes with avocado ranch dressing in bed? Did the people who left their handblown glass pipe and a baby pacifier on a high shelf in the kitchen really think I'd send it back? And my least favorite mystery: what in the world could this stain on the sheet/duvet/towel be, and should I even try to get it out?

Yes all these things have happened, and it's part of my job to solve these mysteries quickly and effectively so the next guests have a clean and organized home for their arrival. Recently I was getting the house ready for a corporate retreat group. We have a different way of arranging the furniture that is more conducive to meetings and breakouts spaces, so we were getting things in place. After we were set up, I went through the house as usual, while listening to an audio book on my phone. It's a murder mystery for one of my book clubs. I don't read them often, and this one is not very good. But still, I have listened enough to want to know "who done it." Bodies are piling up. Everyone who is not dead, and some who are, are suspects and have motives.

I sat down to scrub off some scuff marks the cleaning team missed from the stairs (this job is often not glamorous), when my husband came in from his walk around the outside of the house with a large clear plastic bag.

The bag contained several towels with blood on them. Not a little bit of blood. Not the amount of blood you might see from a cut or a fall. The amount of blood you would see from a murder scene. A large beach towel and several kitchen towels were soaked, still wet and red.

“My god, there was a murder here!”

“Maybe they killed and roasted a pig?” my husband said.

“What do we do?” I asked, thinking we should call 911.

“Well, I think we throw these away, probably not worth trying to wash them,” he said.

“Take a photo! Take a photo of the towels! For evidence!”

He sighed, took out his phone, stuck it in the bag and took a photo (not including photo here, you are welcome). I asked what the bag smelled like, keeping my distance. He actually put his nose to the bag and inhaled. “I don’t know,” he said, turning around and taking the bag back outside.

My imagination started going wild. Did the last guests murder someone? They were a family in town for the son’s wedding. We had found a razor blade on the glass coffee table. Did they have a cocaine party or was it the murder weapon?

Or, could it be my cleaning team, deciding they had enough of their boss? What should I do to investigate this murder? Because that is a LOT of blood. I ran around the house again, looking for any other evidence and could find none.

I decided to start with the cleaners. I called the boss, and he answered. He was still alive. I asked if he found the bloody towels. “Oh yes,” he said, “I’m sorry forgot to tell you. They were on the deck.” Hmmm highly suspicious. How could he forget this much blood?

“What do you think happened?” I asked, like the detective I was.

“Oh I don’t know maybe some lady had her time?”

Really? What an idiot, clearly this was far more blood. As any woman would know.

Which I did not say out loud. Again, highly suspicious.

It was alarming enough that I then contacted the last guest to inquire about the bloody towels and a “Was everything alright?” which was a diplomatic way of asking if anyone was killed and they forgot to mention it.

My husband, the logical one, helpfully pointed out it would have been premeditated murder since they booked many months ago for their son’s wedding, and they did a

terrible job of covering their tracks by leaving the towels out on the deck. Still, how would the guests account for the towels soaked in a truly alarming amount of blood? The message I got back was not what I expected. It was not a murder. Or, it's an excellent cover-up story.

“Oops,” he wrote, “I thought we got it all cleaned up.”

According to his note back to me, five hours before the wedding a relative in her 70s had a terrible accident. She fell off the cliff down at the beach, suffered severe injuries and was bleeding profusely from a secondary artery. Others in the group were away doing last minute wedding stuff and there was no car at the house, so they knocked on a neighbor's door for help and the neighbor took her to ER. He offered to replace the towels.

I have yet to corroborate this story with the neighbors. I am assuming the relative is still alive. So, no murder.

This is why I don't read murder mysteries.

Three Things

1

Do you wear glasses or contacts?

Did you know there is a law in the United States called the Eyeglass Rule? Your ophthalmologist or optometrist must give you a copy of your Rx, ***whether you ask for it or not, and before offering to sell you eyeglasses***. The Eyeglass Rule is enforced by the Federal Trade Commission.

This was news to me when I recently went for an eye exam at a new provider. At this new place, I did not have to beg for my Rx in person and by phone and have it snail-mailed to me a month later, which is one of several reasons I didn't like my old optometrist, who also tried to coerce me into buying supplements and their extremely marked-up glasses.

There are many options to buy glasses that are more affordable than your eye doctor; Warby Parker is a favorite, but there are also online sites where you can have your old glasses re-lensed. Why have only one pair of boring glasses? I wear progressives, and I'm sending in a pair of funky collector Ray Bans sunglasses in orange denim, which are about 20 years old, to be re-lensed with my current Rx. I ordered progressive sunglass polarized UV lenses with an orange tint. I'm excited to be able to wear these again, for less than \$150 including shipping. I'll let you know how I like them and if I recommend the company I'm using, in my next newsletter.



2

My husband and I made a very short visit to LA to visit Bennett our oldest son, by way of Bakersfield (long story), that included riding public transit, art, books,

fantastic food, and a very funky and lively hotel lobby in Culver City. Have I told you how much I love hotel lobbies?





3

People-watching is one of the reasons I love hotel lobbies. But really you can people-watch anywhere. The best (and only) restaurant I've been to in Bakersfield attracted not only a friend who recently moved to the area (also a long story) but this girl with the longest hair I've ever seen. This girl can never commit a murder. If she leaves a hair behind, detectives could identify her without any testing whatsoever.



Two More Things

Please please VOTE in this presidential election!

And consider donating to the disaster relief efforts in Western North Carolina. The Asheville area is special to me and I have friends who live there, who no longer have houses, cars, clean water, or roads. The devastation from the hurricane is widespread and the need for help, especially for those living in poverty, is huge.

Take a look at this [list of vetted organizations](#) accepting donations. There is something for every interest; food, water, diapers, schools, pets, shelters.

\$mall amounts add up.

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Best regards

Amber McClain Shaw, writer/artist/ambivert

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