

Amber's Update



Late Winter Musings and Some Very Good Photos That Are Not Related to What I'm Writing

When I sit down to write this newsletter, I often don't know what I'm going to write about. And those are the most fun to write. When I carefully plan something out, it can be too prescribed or formulaic. I'm learning to trust my inner voice, what comes to the page without trying to control it, which is something I wish happened earlier in life but better late than never. It's the plight of a perfectionist, which I blame on my birth sign and my upbringing, which are dumb excuses and also true. I became a perfectionist in about 4th grade, which is the time I started keeping a

journal. I remember that carefree time, just before the age of ten or so, well enough to want to get back to that mindset.

This morning I saw a full 180 degree rainbow when I got out of bed, which when you understand the science behind it is even more wondrous than seeing one as a child.

And then, on my morning dog walk, nine white cranes standing on their thin legs in the ocean surf where it becomes shallow along the sand, feeding on something washing in on the big powerful waves. I puzzled over the unusual sight of so many cranes, and counted them several times to make sure I had the right number.

My dog had no interest in them, she was focused on another dog, a thick pale-yellow lab named Summer, ambling along beside a neighbor. I tried to get my dog to look toward the beach, but she was locked on Summer, the least threatening, slow-moving, most consistently friendly dog and owner in the neighborhood, protecting me from a nonexistent threat.

I don't know what my dog finds beautiful, but it's not nine white cranes. It seems more likely it's the clump of grass where Summer pees, which does not stir my soul. But my dog curls up under my desk when I'm writing, and sometimes sits facing me like a sphinx. I feed her and praise her roll-overs. We have a lovely relationship even though we don't see nine white cranes or a lump of urine-soaked grass in the same way.



Two cranes (or maybe the same crane) at the Santa Cruz harbor. These are the same kind of cranes I saw at the beach. It's fun to watch them hunt.

1

When I go somewhere to run errands, I will sometimes entertain myself by eavesdropping on other people's conversations. Actually, *sometimes* is a lie. I eavesdrop often. At Costco recently, an older woman with yellow hair said to the sample ambassador, "I think I will take this with me, I'm driving to Mexico to get my teeth worked on."



Low tide at Pleasure Point

2

Writing prompt: make a list of your first seven paid jobs,
in chronological order.

Here is my list.

I could add a lot of context to each job, but it's interesting enough without. These
jobs are all before graduating from college.

House cleaner

Babysitter

House sister

House sitter/plant waterer

Togos sandwich and guacamole maker

Graphic designer assistant (paste-up)

Graphic designer computer consultant

Advertising agency intern
Furniture store interior designer

The list says a lot about me, without saying much, right?
These first jobs had a big impact and there was a heck of a lot of learning going on,
mostly about myself.

Which one would you be interested in hearing about?

I'd love to see your first seven jobs list!



Check out this wacky plant! It's a long extravagant bloom from the plain spiky succulent-looking plant on the right.

3

Are you on Substack? I am, and I'm still trying to figure it out.
I'm migrating off of FB and Insta, you can find me wandering around in the
Substack writer section.



Artistic AF photograph IMO, thank you very much

Cute Dog Photo



Santa Cruz dog dressed as a Santa Cruz dog.
Unfortunately the owner was not in a matching outfit.

Page from My Art Journal



A great way to meditate if you don't like the regular kind of meditation.

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Is it spring yet?

Amber McClain Shaw, writer, artist, reader of many magazines
on Libby and eater of tater tots.
Currently obsessed with the word defenestration.

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