



## On the Road Again

July 2023

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Dear ones,

I come to you today from Austin, where I'm in a hotel room with a lovely view of the bat bridge and have just had a treat of a breakfast brought to the room—bacon, fruit, tea. It is calm, and I will get my words done, and all will be well today. I remind myself of this often. In the aftermath of Jameson's death, nothing has made sense. I need to thank you—all of you—for the incredible messages of love and support you sent. I'm still answering; you know compassion is my kryptonite, so I have to go gently because I get easily overwhelmed. But I will get back to you, I promise. The notes were so welcome, so kind, and I am more grateful than ever to have you in my life.

Jordan is handling the change pretty well. Though they were bonded until they were three, for the past seven years they've merely tolerated each other, two big personalities competing for the attention of their humans, so she's not been despondent. She's very happy to be the sole recipient of our attention, and has gotten very chatty with us, and with her pet sitter, who sent me a note this morning laughing at her newfound extroversion. We decided she just hadn't been able to get a word in edgewise—Jameson was always the big talker.

I've leaned into this moment, knowing that I'm facing a new world ahead, and made several necessary changes to help realign myself. I didn't realize how much energy I was putting into keeping Jamie alive, keeping her comfortable and safe and happy. It was a year of great stress, and I somehow juggled that with writing a lot of words. Mostly because the two of us hung out in my office, and she was a good sounding board for plotting. We wrote a lot of books together. I'm getting my sea legs again, and have a super tight deadline ahead, so it's time to buckle down again, knowing she's looking over my shoulder.

After three weeks of paralyzing stasis, only breathing through the overwhelming grief, I shook myself loose and have been on the move since. New York. Arizona. Colorado. Texas. Florida is coming up, and more trips are planned through the fall. I've done research in all the spots for new stories, and ideas are coming again. I've also made several life-changing decisions, and will share them in subsequent newsletters. Suffice it to say, all were needed, and I am so excited about what the future holds!

When Randy suggested I join him in Austin (he has work here) I jumped at the chance. I've never been, and this sister city to my own is a lot of fun. I'm still hoping to see the bats, but they are nursing, so apparently don't fly as much during that period. We'll see. Right now I'm writing in the nice cool hotel room, handling this newsletter plus working on my new standalone, *A VERY BAD THING*. I wrote my [first exclusive essay on The Creative Edge this week](#) that dives into some of the specifics of researching a new book, especially one set in a new spot. And then, I blew up the book yesterday—something I always do about this point, when I can see all the mistakes I've made and find a plan to fix them.

The moment came at my favorite restaurant in Colorado, Pegasus, while eating a plate of chilladas (corn tortillas stuffed with scrambled eggs and cheese smothered in the best green chile you will ever taste) and it hit me like a lightning bolt. I had to borrow the server's pen and filled a napkin with ideas. I love it when that happens, and I've learned that this is my process. (Also, this would make a good Creative Edge essay, wouldn't it?) The vision was so intense I had to shush my parents while I worked out the several angles I needed to shift. I think it was fun for them to see the creativity manifest like that—my Dad is also my first reader and sounding board, so he hears a lot of this as I'm going—but the action of me throwing my hands in the air and talking to myself was a new one LOL.

I hope next newsletter to share all the things, and tell you I have a draft done. Wish me luck!

Onward...

## ▣ What I'm Reading



We've got three fiction and two non-fiction entries this month. All I could do last month was grieve and read, so there were a lot to choose from. Here's the best of the best.

### **Rebecca Yarros - [FOURTH WING](#)**

A stunning tour-de-force fantasy that is well worth the hype, and that's saying something. It has all my favorite elements, plus fated love and battle dragons. I mean...

### **Robyn Harding - [THE DROWNING WOMAN](#)**

Insidiously clever, with a fun twist, I couldn't wait to see what happened!

**Liz Fenton and Lisa Steinke - [FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE](#)**

Vivid settings, finely drawn characters, and realistic, human, unforgettable conflicts. This story swept me off my feet. I felt summer begin the moment I opened the cover.

**Helen Ellis - [KISS ME IN THE CORAL LOUNGE](#)**

Is there anything Helen can't do? I loved this, and got to see her at Parnassus, too. What a joy to hear her talk about her latest hysterical, poignant essay collection. Well worth a read, whether you need to laugh or cry.

**Honorée Corder - [WRITE YOUR FIRST NONFICTION BOOK](#)**

Honorée is a special lady who gives selflessly of her knowledge, her time, and her gifts to help people build their dreams. This is a great start if you're looking to write a non-fiction title!

## Poll

In answer to how you find value from your favorite authors, most of you said that book recommendations were something you loved, followed closely by blogs on life and writing, and giveaways. Happily, not too many of you want me to go away and write, but I hear all of this.

This month I'm curious about book length. I'm hearing scuttlebutt that the shorter the better. True?

### How long do you like your books?

100 pages

200 pages

300 pages

400 pages

600+ pages

I want a doorstop

**SUBMIT**

## July Recipe: Chicken Fajitas



My brother makes some pretty amazing fajitas. This is my favorite recipe of his, and when I re-created it, I must insist you don't forget the balsamic vinegar because it really makes the flavors come together perfectly. I've made this recipe with chicken, but it will work with any protein: beef, shrimp, even pork!

THAT SOUNDS GOOD!

You can find all of my recipes [here](#), and if you want some wine to go with the meals, [The Wine Vixen](#) has you covered.

## ☐ Contest

Every month\*, I draw a name from those of you who open the newsletter and send that lovely person a \$30 gift card to the bookstore of their choice. It's my way of saying thanks for being here. Enter below!

Last month's winner: Congratulations to rosewick! Check your email...

I WANT THAT GIFT CARD!

I'm feeling cheerier just writing this. Grief is isolating, which is why I decided to do some traveling, but it's also kept my joy at bay, and connecting with you makes me happy. So thank you. Read something great, let me know how you enjoy the fajitas, and I'll see you next month.

XO,



**Are you still here?**

Here's a kitten (or two) for your troubles!



**Did you like this newsletter? Share it with a friend!**



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