

Happy August!



Hello, my friends! It feels so good to be back and writing to you. My friend, Lisa, recently sent me this.



offline
IS THE NEW
luxury

This summer I have made a concerted effort to reduce my use of technology and screen time. I can honestly say that it is so joyful not to be tethered to a device, plus I have so much more time to get things done. Unfortunately a side effect is that I haven't been blogging as much.



Dahlias purchased from Roger's Garden in Newport Beach, CA
It's hard to believe that August is upon us.

Unlike most parts of the country in the summer, Phoenix is the last place you want to be in July and August. Not only is it hot, but it is often the beginning of monsoon season so we get to enjoy high heat AND humidity. The upside is that there is no traffic, no lines, no congestion, but escaping to cooler locations is what most people do.



We just returned from our annual 2 week summer vacation in Newport Beach, California.



View from our villa

Staring at the Pacific Ocean allowed me time to contemplate the possible next steps in life. We've been vacationing in Newport and going to the same places for YEARS but now the children are heading off in their own directions. It is bittersweet but re-inventing travel destinations will provide

new opportunities and flexibility that we really haven't had being previously tied to school holidays or vacations.



While in Newport, I was able to paint and got a good start on two new projects. One Sunday morning I had the luxury of painting outside, in my pajamas overlooking the Pacific. The

only thing missing was a mimosa!



This painting was inspired by a photo my husband loved of Texas blue bonnets.



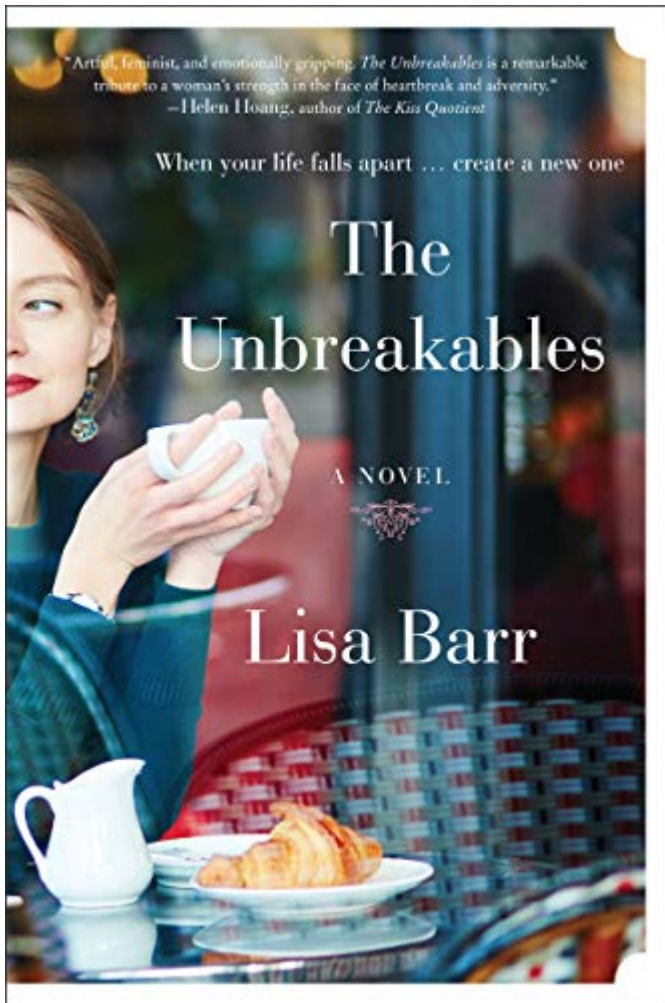
I follow [Cecilia Rosslee](#), a painter on Etsy and love her use of color. Her style is fun and loose, which is a very difficult technique for me. Her painting is SO much better but here is my interpretation. Neither paintings are done yet, but I feel like I'm getting closer.



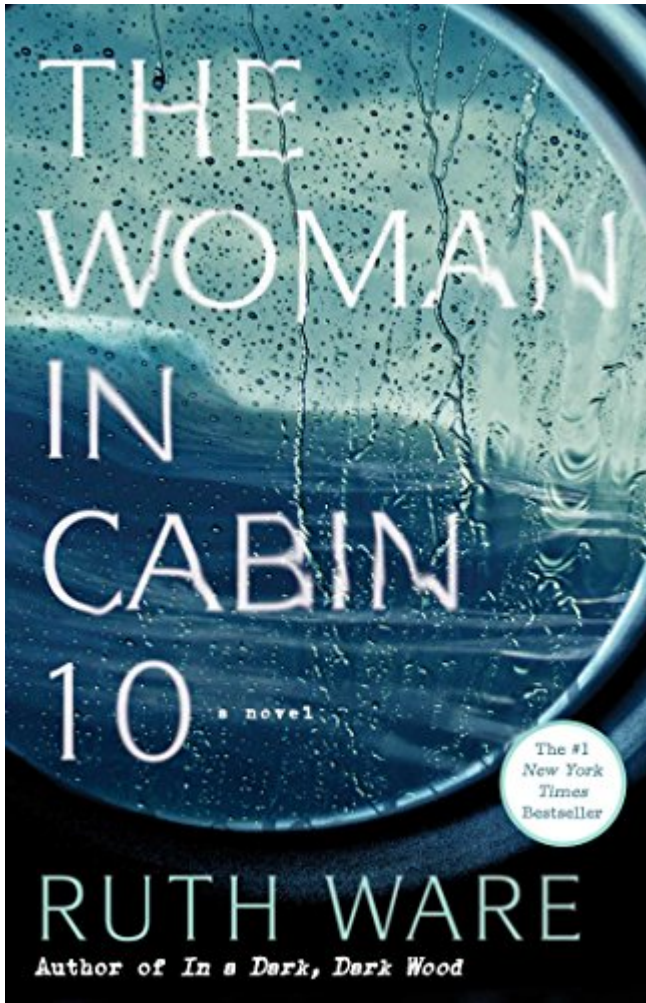
I still haven't found my over the top fabulous book of the summer yet, but I have had some good reads. I would rate these 4 out of 5 mostly because they were a bit predictable, but pleasant nonetheless.

The Unbreakables by Lisa Barr is "a delicious, sharp novel about a woman who jets off to France after her perfect marriage collapses, putting the broken pieces of herself back

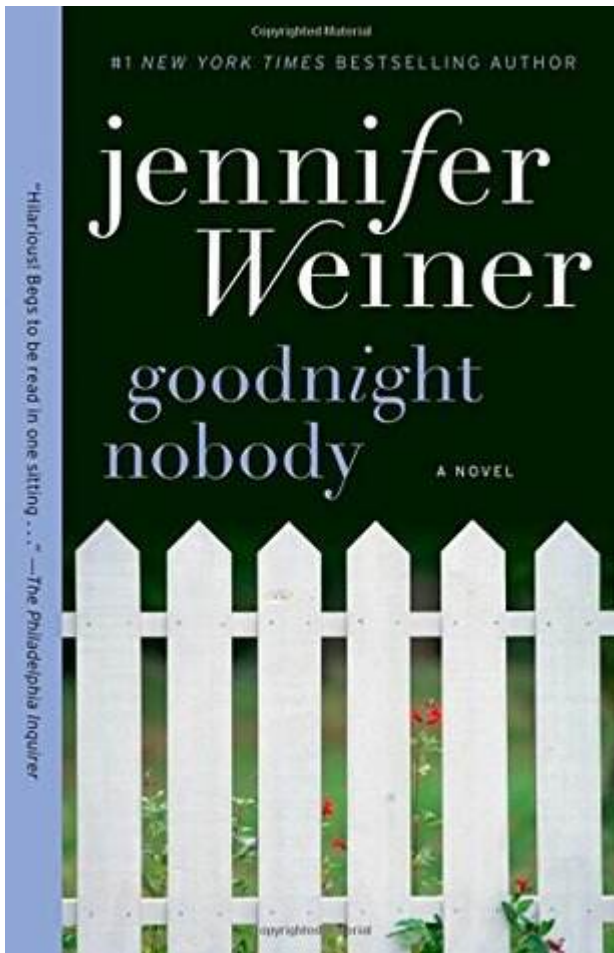
together while rediscovering her own *joie de vivre*".



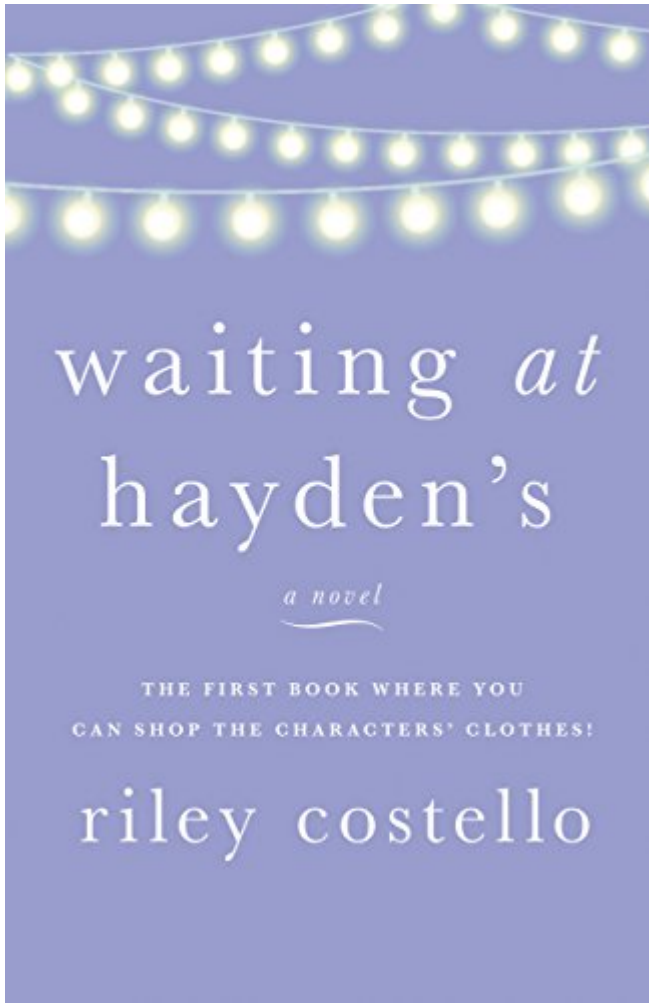
The Woman in Cabin 10 by Ruth Ware is a suspenseful novel set at sea on a luxury cruise ship.



Goodnight Nobody by Jennifer Weiner is set in a postcard perfect suburban Connecticut town and then there's a murder. I do enjoy the way Jennifer Weiner writes~~she does have a way with words!



I connected with Riley Costello as she was teaching outdoor exercises classes at our hotel in Newport. She, in addition to being fit, is also an author. This is her first book, **Waiting at Hayden's**. When I finished it, I pictured it being made into a Hallmark movie. Riley has trademarked an interesting concept called ShopFiction. In the book, when she describes a character's outfit, for example, you can click on the link, see the dress and then purchase it. Obviously you need a Kindle or other electronic format, but it's rather clever to see the characters come to life.



Do you have any good books to share? Hoping you are having a fabulous summer! Stay cool! I become an official empty nester in a few weeks and I'm trying to embrace the new life stage with grace.....yikes.

Mary