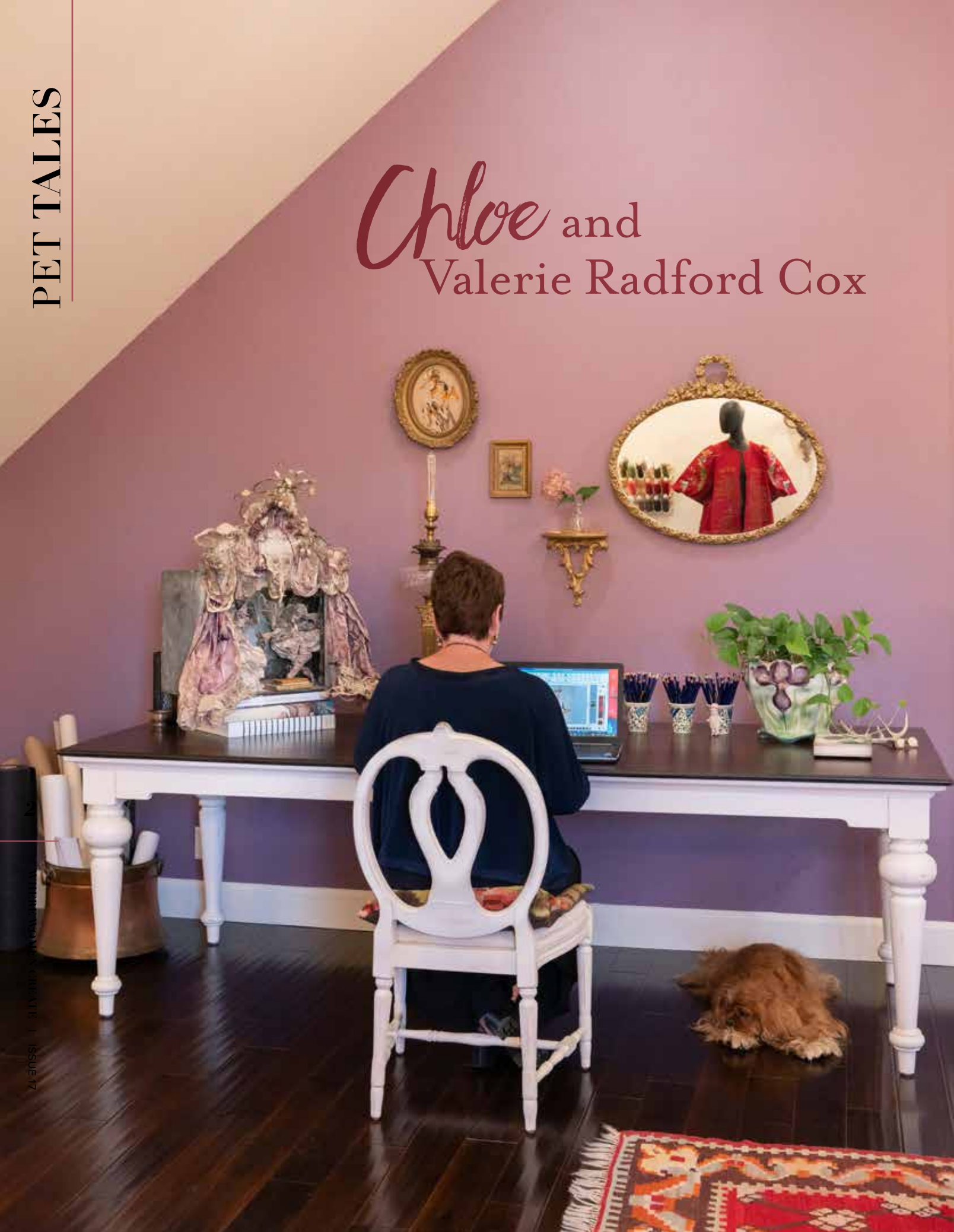


Chloe and Valerie Radford Cox



Hi,

I'm Chloe. I am the official Vernet Noir Design Studio assistant. This is my second Vernet Noir position. My last position was in Abu Dhabi, and I would sit on the balcony outside Mom's studio and greet people as they passed by. In the evenings, when we strolled in the cool air, lots of people would call out, "Hi Chloe!" and I would let everyone pet me and take my photo for their Instagram accounts. I felt like a dog ambassador because some people don't know that dogs are basically good, and they fear them. Can you imagine? I'm proud of the work I did there, and you know, I will admit, the attention was gratifying.

Then, last year, we moved to beautiful Oregon.

Hardly anyone visits us now, except a lady called FedEx and a guy called UPS. They bring presents for Mom and make her happy. They also give me treats, but they hardly ever stay and chat. Mom says this change in circumstances is due to something called a pandemic, and our friends will come see us soon. I hope so. As much as I love Mom, it's a little lonely up here on the hilltop.

Now we have a new studio, and my responsibilities are wide-ranging, for sure. I mean, I'm the one who gets everyone going around here. At the crack of dawn, I give Mom a little nuzzle in the ear (no loud barks before she's awake!). After tea/cuddle/talk time, we're up. No time for lazin' about, we have things to do!

Mom heads up to the studio to do her quiet writing. Dad and I do some garden work, which includes reminding the wild creatures of the boundaries. The cheeky chipmunk is especially clueless about personal space ... geez, he comes right up to the porch! Then just last week, I forced 23 wild turkeys to fly into a tree. Turkey poop all over our new lawn? No, thank you! This part of the job takes a lot of courage, but there's more to this girl than floppy ears.





Once that responsibility is checked off the list, I head up to the studio. My collar tag makes a satisfying “cachunk” sound as I hit each step, so Mom is waiting for me. We have a short happy reunion, with hugs and wags. Then we begin our workday by selecting colors for an embroidery. If I could be given this task to do by myself, it would go a lot quicker because it takes Mom a really, really long time to choose the spools. Sometimes it takes so long, I stick my head in the thread bin to see if there’s something hiding in there. If I do this, she’s a little rude and says, “Hey, outta there, that’s not yours!” I put up with her outbursts because I know it’s just artistic temperament.

When we (finally) have the embroidery machine going, I’m always hopeful that there will be time for a quick nap. But nooooo, she’s on the move again. Since it’s my job to make sure she is always safe, I spend the next couple of hours tailing her: cutting table, desk, closet, sewing machine, embroidery machine. Sometimes she is so engrossed in what’s she’s doing that she trips right over me! I know she doesn’t mean to hurt me, and she always picks me up and gives me a cuddle and says, “Sorry, sorry.” Then I give a little wag (NOT a big wag because it did hurt my dignity). The little wag is our signal that everything is OK between us.



Mom always says, “Good job, us; thank you for your help, Chloe.”

Another big responsibility is reminding her to take breaks. This one is a challenge because once she’s started on a project, she forgets about everything else. I do the reminding in steps: first, I nuzzle her leg. If no response, I nuzzle again. Next, paw on leg. At this stage, I’m likely to get only a pat and must resort to a bark. It’s a balancing act between responsibility and touching that temperament nerve.

After lunch (a late lunch, with my tummy grumbling like mad), I finally get to take a little nap. The rest of the day, I just saunter around the studio, evaluating fabric for softness, etc. Sometimes I casually brush against a roll of fabric just to see if it will fall over. The “boom” of the falling roll makes Mom jump. As astute as she is, she is still not sure if this is intentional on my part. She just absently gives me a cuddle and puts me in the napping chair.

Many hours later, we examine what we’ve accomplished during the day. Now comes my favorite part of the day, a slow walk around the garden, which ends with some quiet time on the green bench. We watch the sunset and the birds, and she rubs my back. I feel her take a deep breath. Being a studio assistant is hard work, but that deep, happy sigh is all I need to feel content. Good job, me!



More on Valerie
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