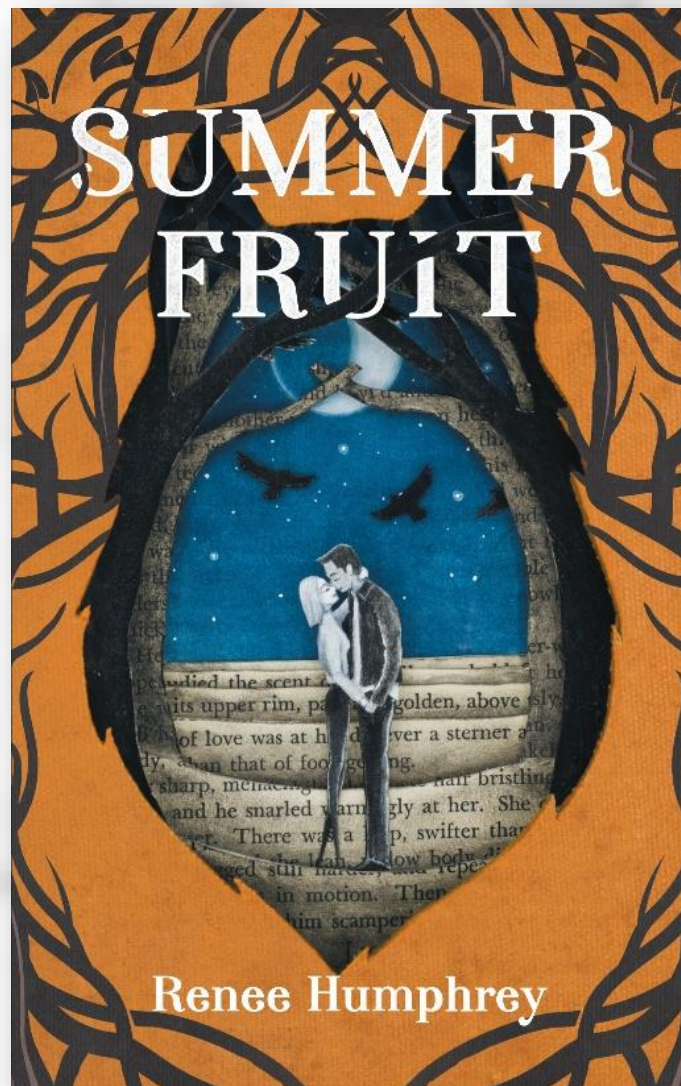




BOOK CLUB KIT

Everything you need to host an engaging book club for *Summer Fruit*

Book Club Author Q&A for *Summer Fruit*

What inspired you to set the novel on a remote Pacific Northwest island?

I twice went to a three-day writer's workshop event on Whidbey Island call Vortext, put on by Hedgebrook, in the Pacific Northwest. I had such wonderful experiences there studying with authors like Ruth Ozeki, Hannah Tinti and Rahna Reiko Rizzuto. The community and the location where the workshops were held (and the day or two spent getting there and then departing) was just so absolutely inspiring to me, its presence seeped into my body and then emerged as Hollow Island. I fictionalized the island because I never spent a huge amount of time there, so I needed to make most of it up.

How did your experiences as a visual artist and winemaker influence your storytelling?

I'm not a winemaker, but my brother is. He and I grew a wine label together for twelve years, and I now work telling the stories of numerous French and Italian winemakers, so I know their kind pretty well. The most important aspect of winemaking for most winemakers is the land they cultivate and the vines themselves, and working with them has deepened my appreciation and experience of nature. I think my writing has been mostly influenced by reading, either novels or screenplays. Painting is a different process altogether, although there's a soul purging aspect to both.

Jack's musical background is richly developed. Do you have a personal connection to music?

When I was growing up my parents were part of a local Flamenco troupe and my dad played guitar and my mother danced and sang and played the castanets. We also did a lot of musical theater, my parents and I, when I was young, and my brother played classical guitar. I went to dance class (ballet, tap, jazz) for much of my life before I turned 18, where music is an integral part. My uncles and significant other are musicians, and music is a huge part of telling stories on film and TV. So, yes, I suppose I do have some personal connections to music although I'm not a musician.

The novel contains elements of Aztec and indigenous folklore. How did you research or approach these cultural layers?

I read many anthologies of Native North American animal stories and I researched the internet quite extensively regarding global werewolf legends, which the Aztec/Mexican Nagual belief structure has some similarities with and so caught my attention. In many ways this book represents the stories and people I've been exposed to and influenced by, which has been a very west coast North American influence—from Mexico and up through Canada, with all of its history.

Why did you choose a dead body washing ashore as the catalyst for the story?

That started as the first chapter, after I'd written a prologue about Jack getting to Hollow Island. Honestly, a lot of this writing process was pretty intuitive and these characters just sort of flowed out of me onto the page. Then I spent nine years developing and refining them in my spare time.

Which character was the hardest for you to write, and why?

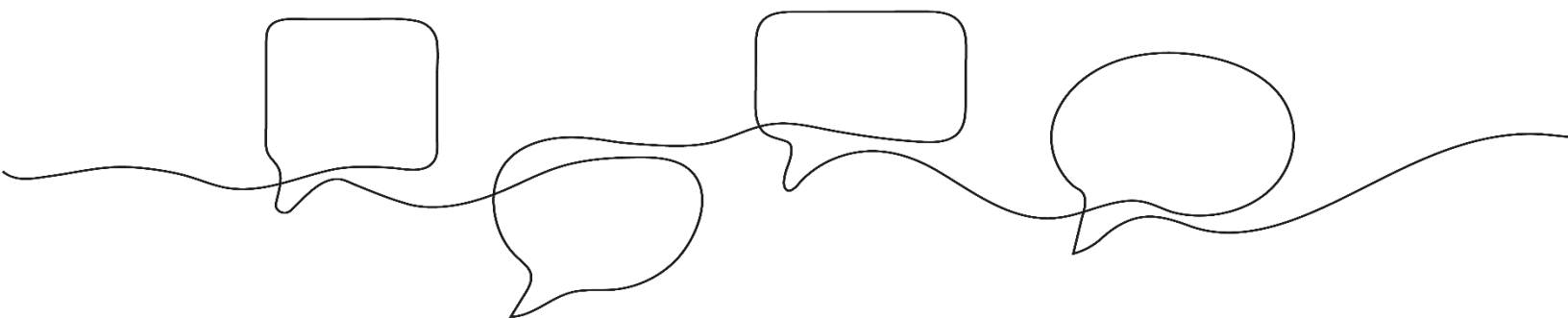
The character of Ben Mortenson was the most opaque for me throughout the whole process, because the killer was an actual mystery to me until about a year before I was finished writing the book!

***Summer Fruit* blends mystery with emotional introspection—how did you balance these elements?**

The mystery was mostly in the background during much of the writing process. I knew it was there and was important, but the emotional introspection was first and foremost. I cared most about who the people were and then finally found my way to solving and threading the mystery throughout.

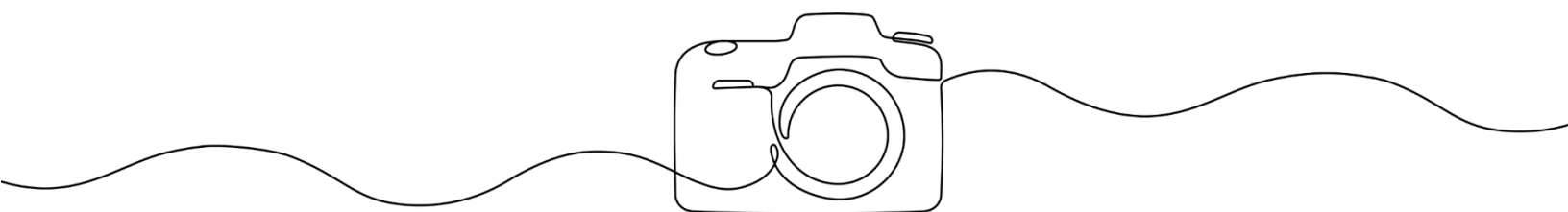
What do you hope readers take away from Jack's journey and his evolving relationship with Esther?

My basic understanding of human beings is that on a personal level we are mostly good, however, very clearly many of us do harm to one another, and some of that harm is deep and long lasting. The 'why does evil exist' question is one of the most common, and I certainly don't have an answer. But I do believe in forgiveness as a powerful tool to lend more credence to love than pain, and free ourselves as best we can.



Thank you for reading and discussing *Summer Fruit* with your club!

If you enjoyed the story, your voice can help others discover it too. A quick review on Amazon or Goodreads would mean the world—even a few words make a big difference!



I'd love to see your book club in action!

Snap a photo of your group reading or discussing *Summer Fruit* and share it on social media!
Use #SummerFruitNovel and #SummerFruitBookClub so I can celebrate with you!