



## Owl Island: A Novel

*Randy Sue Coburn*

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In this accomplished and dazzlingly written new novel, Randy Sue Coburn brings to life with tremendous heart, humor, and wisdom the Pacific Northwest enclave of Owl Island and its many unforgettable inhabitants.

Among the aromatic cedars and lush firs, close to where Chinook salmon maneuver the choppy waters, Phoebe Allen has lived quietly and self-sufficiently for twenty years, raising her daughter, Laurienne, and running a small fishing-net business. But Phoebe's past suddenly washes up on the shores of Owl Island: Renowned independent film director Whitney Traynor buys a house nearby on Spit in the Wind Road, forcing Phoebe to pry open the lid she's kept clamped on her secrets and scars, plunging her ordered existence into chaos.

Whit was charismatic enough to "charm the ice off a dog dish" when Phoebe first fell in love with him as a voice on the radio, and he has not lost his touch—or his propensity to stir things up without even trying. Phoebe, Laurienne, and everyone else living on Owl Island are affected by his arrival. And Phoebe's newfound intimacy with Ivan, a longtime friend and neighbor, far from offering escape, only further complicates matters. Memories of Whit transport Phoebe to a time long ago—one of innocence and awakening, passion and purpose, euphoria and regret—before their intense relationship came to an acrimonious end.

All these years, Phoebe has concealed truths from her daughter and may now be forced to divulge them. As the past rushes toward the present like an inevitable tide, Phoebe must also confront the early loss of her mother, whose own mysteries are at last beginning to surface.

A deeply affecting portrait of mothers and lovers, daughters and forgiveness, *Owl Island* reveals the damaging power of secrets, the importance of community, and the liberating lessons of love.

## Owl Island: A Novel Details

Date : Published May 1st 2007 by Ballantine Books (first published January 1st 2006)

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Author : Randy Sue Coburn

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## From Reader Review Owl Island: A Novel for online ebook

### Deb says

I'm sorry to say I chose this at the library by the cover & the inside synopsis. I really wanted to like it but I just couldn't get engrossed in the reading like I usually do in the books I love. I couldn't relate to the main subject's obsession when younger or the jumping back & forth in time. The story was boring to me & didn't capture my attention, so it was easy to put down then I delayed picking it back up :( ... I tried hanging in there through the first half of the book before giving up on it, which I rarely do :( ... Then I skipped to the end to skim through for the outcome. I'm sorry but I don't recommend this for anyone over 40.

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### Carol Aselton Benoit says

Good, good book. A little different than I usually read, and I can't remember why I bought it...maybe it was the location. I have never been to the northwest, and this book is not only set there, but the location is a major part of the story. Randy Sue Coburn is an excellent writer. Her characters are real, scenery descriptions are amazing. The heroine tells the story reliving her life by reading memoirs -- hers and her mothers.....obviously a troubled person from a troubled family and she has raised a troubled daughter. It is well done, and you can understand where each one is coming from....not sure where they are going! Well worth reading.

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### Darlene says

This was a decent read. A story being told by a woman, Phoebe, recalling her young life as a teenager, having a crush on a radio dj, Whit, dealing with a mother who is dying as well as trying to figure out what she wants in life. She falls for a dj, who is older, and also is a writer. She finally meets him, helps him write a movie. Along the way, she doesn't finish school, does everything for him, giving her all to him. When she finally sees things for what they are, she leaves him, with a man she met who worked on one of the sets. They move out on the coast together, get married and have a child--a child she isn't totally sure who the father is. Her husband dies from an accident they had. Life goes on, she raises her child and lives a quiet life. Until her former lover, the one she had left, given everything for, moves in on her road. One thing leads to another, he meets her daughter, not knowing who her mother is and possibly could be her father. Phoebe confronts her daughter and also him, telling him she doesn't know for sure if he is the father. The daughter takes it upon herself to run a DNA test and finds out he isn't her father. That the man she grew up knowing was her father, really was. Phoebe finally gets rid of all her demons of any feelings she may still have for Whit, and what she wants for herself. She finally realizes she really does want what she's had all along, the man who has been there for her through everything. In the end, they remain together, take a trip. Her daughter and her get past the not telling her truth of Whit and the possibility he could be her father. This book tells the story of what so many women go through in their lives trying to find their inner happiness and the roads, twists and turns they have to take to get there and the sacrifices as well.

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### **L.K. Merideth says**

I stopped reading this book after about 74 pages. My guess at the genre of this book is self-actualization (psychology) in women. I had just finished reading "Escape" by Barbara Delinsky, and that is how her book was classified by the Library of Congress. Owl Island seems to be in the same genre, and very similar in character and plot development. When the book started in on dream interpretations by therapist friends, and the symbolism of a bird flying inside of house - it just put me off the book and I lost interest in the characters. Reminded me very much of the main character in "Escape" communing with coyotes in the forest. Just not my cup of tea, and I didn't want to waste any more time reading it.

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### **Janeen says**

Only one disappointing conflict. Great setting.

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### **Margaret says**

Phoebe fell in love with Whit when she was just 15 and he was just a voice on the radio. He brought her peaceful nights and a longing that she didn't understand. She felt a connection to this man with the beautiful voice and his varied taste in music. She secretly began to write letters to him, and he, in turn, would write back. The letters would only come every so often, but it was enough to know that he was thinking of her and carrying on a conversation with her as if she were an adult.

When Phoebe's mother died shortly after she returned from summer camp, she felt no need to stick around. She was an only child. She didn't have much of a relationship with her father. She was capable of being an accelerated student, but she saw no value in school. She packed up and left, singing in gigs at taverns, waiting for the day that she could meet Whit.

The day came and it was just as Phoebe imagined. He was brilliant and after doing some documentary films, he was ready to take on a bigger project; one that Phoebe's great mind and writing talent could help with. She is only too eager to be included. What she didn't know, though, was that Whit was a taker. He had a way of manipulating and conniving and at the same time pacifying Phoebe. When he finally revealed his true self, Phoebe couldn't take it any more. She left him, married, had a child, and became a widow in a short space of time.

Phoebe hasn't thought about Whit...not all that much anyway, for years. Her daughter has grown and lives in L.A. and visits Phoebe back on Owl Island in Oregon when she can get away from her hectic job. Phoebe has a quiet existence with her own business of making nets for the fisherman. She has friends on the island and a man who loves her but can't get her to commit. She is content. She is content until she learns that Whit is coming to the island to live in a house near hers and he is bringing his young wife. It could be her undoing unless she does something about it.

I loved the quiet, gentle writing that revealed characters so real it felt as if they were in my kitchen sipping tea with me. It took a long time for the entire story to be told. Chapters went back and forth from present to past, from Phoebe to Whit to Phoebe's daughter. Because the story flowed so well, though, I never felt impatient or eager for the book to be finished. I love island stories and have read many set in the south, so a

different view of island life, this one in Eugene, Oregon was refreshing. Maybe I can visit Phoebe some day. I would like that.

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## VaultOfBooks says

By Randy Sue Coburn. Grade: F

One of the worst books I have read in a long, long time. I could barely finish it. Maybe it was my mood during the book, or maybe it was the book itself. I strongly suspect the latter.

This is about the life of Phoebe Allen as told in the present and of her past life with her first lover, the charismatic Whit Traynor. He and his new wife have bought a home on Owl Island where Phoebe and her daughter have lived for the past twenty-plus years. Phoebe, now forty, and Whit, in his sixties, have not spoken since their quarrel and parting and Phoebe is apprehensive as to their inevitable meeting on the island.

Phoebe's daughter Laurienne and her boyfriend Cliff take us into the world of computer programmers. Phoebe we see both as a lovesick teenager and, in maturity, a net-maker for fishing vessels. Phoebe's neighbor Ivan is a potter who shows us the world of fine art and how artists manage to get their work shown. Lastly, the world of movie making and script writing is what Whit does and Phoebe did with him. Even Whits' new wife Jasmine, who could easily become a two-dimensional character isn't as she takes us into the world of astrology and intuition.

The owner and manager of a business that weaves nets for the local fisherman, Phoebe has been busy raising her daughter Laurienne – now in her early twenties – and creating a comfortable and secure life for herself and for her daughter after the untimely death of her musician husband Mitchell in a car accident several years ago.

As the novel opens, Phoebe is preparing for a barbecue, but little does she know how this event will change everything, even threatening to tear apart the very fabric of her quiet and insular world. At the barbecue she learns that the wealthy, maverick independent film director Whitney Traynor, along with his glamorous new trophy wife, has just bought a luxury home right up the road.

This writer makes it somewhat more difficult to get through the book easily. I found the book boring and crude with the same sex thrill and cuss words. What is so good about a man getting it off with a woman not his wife. I must be the only person who feels this way because the internet is littered with praise for this book.

It also keeps jumping back in time and takes awhile to get to the point throughout the story. I did finish reading it, but sometimes wanted to just toss it down. The first half of the book was overly descriptive and very broken up, going back and forth from the past to the present. I was about two-thirds through the book before I could read more than a few pages before being totally bored and shutting off my light and falling asleep.

Once Laurienne is more in the picture, things get more interesting, but Whit is totally predictable from the beginning, and then the story is wrapped up in just a few pages, as if someone were in a hurry to close up the book. I might read another of her books, but I might not. Good description is always lovely to have in a book, but I felt she WAY overdid it. I kept skimming half and whole pages thinking, "When is she going to get to the point?"

It kept mentioning some famous stripper lady named Mimi that people made a movie about, and the author kept referencing her like we were supposed to know who she was. I sure didn't.

It is an okay book if you're into slow books and can tolerate adultery and unnecessary cuss language. The story barely picks up pace and the characters are not very nice. Thats why: F.

### **Marie says**

While this book was written well and the story flowed, the main character came across as a whiney spoiled brat even though she's in her 40's. To be honest, it wasn't the storyline or the writing that turned me off, it was the whole cast of characters. They ALL came across as self centered egotistical brats who when couldn't get their way acted so immature you wondered if there was any hope in a good outcome. A so-so book.

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### **Sherrill Watson says**

See the review. I was interested in this book because:

1. I have a friend in the Pacific Northwest;
2. I spent youthful summers in California at a resort, isolated like Owl Island; and
3. I also fell for and almost married a Famous Person. **HOWEVER**. My Famous Person was a thoroughly "good guy" but MUCH older than I was.

There is much realism about the film industry; "old" Kiki and her administrative assistant having to be so attached it's comical, as is her coming thru when it matters. There is a lot about being above-the-line or below-the-line, (or on the North Shore) the nobody said so to me. Owl Island itself and the paucity of characters is disarmingly contrived, as is not having to go to work, really, (don't those people have anything to DO besides agonize over what others said or did?), so it's just a good summer read. There is enough narrative to keep the story moving, albeit s-l-o-wly at times.

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### **Kris - My Novelesque Life says**

#### **3.5 STARS**

"In this accomplished and dazzlingly written new novel, Randy Sue Coburn brings to life with tremendous heart, humor, and wisdom the Pacific Northwest enclave of Owl Island and its many unforgettable inhabitants. Among the aromatic cedars and lush firs, close to where Chinook salmon maneuver the choppy waters, Phoebe Allen has lived quietly and self-sufficiently for twenty years, raising her daughter, Laurienne, and running a small fishing-net business. But Phoebe's past suddenly washes up on the shores of Owl Island: Renowned independent film director Whitney Traynor buys a house nearby on Spit in the Wind Road, forcing Phoebe to pry open the lid she's kept clamped on her secrets and scars, plunging her ordered existence into chaos.

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acrimonious end.

All these years, Phoebe has concealed truths from her daughter and may now be forced to divulge them. As the past rushes toward the present like an inevitable tide, Phoebe must also confront the early loss of her mother, whose own mysteries are at last beginning to surface." (From Amazon)

The novel reminds me of Luanne Rice writings. It is a cozy read about a family and their secrets and romance.

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### **Kathy Guilbert says**

I thought this book was really well written and fairly unique. Ranked high in both substance and wonderfully descriptive of the Northwest. The main character was very compelling too. Great read!

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### **sarah says**

I selected 4, then 3 stars for this book, feeling as though perhaps my rating was influenced too much by my need to read. This particular book was selected using my favorite method: browsing the physical stacks at my neighborhood library. I always judge unknown-to-me books by their cover, followed by a quick read of the first line of the book. If the line catches my fancy, I check it out. Otherwise, back to the stacks.

The setting of this book might be what caught, captured, and continued my interest. Most of the story takes place on a Pacific Northwest island, where long-time residents and new-money transplants navigate the realities of a small-town fishery culture near a large city. The plot ebbed and flowed between flashback and current, tracing the trajectory of the protagonist, an empathetic character who came of age in the 60s and experienced tragedies that shifted and defined her world throughout the story.

Worth a read. Easy and satisfying.

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### **Nettle says**

I had mixed feelings about this. As someone who knows the Pacific NW, I loved the specificity of the setting...but I also felt at times that it was overdone. And while I liked the characters and relationships, I was annoyed at the device of the protagonist's history being slowly revealed to the reader as the story progressed. It's one thing when the central mystery is a mystery to the protagonist; it's another when the protagonist knows the story but is rationing it out to the reader. I felt like, "Yes, get on with it already." I liked the story and writing enough to look out for other books by this writer, though.

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### **Clarice says**

This was... ok. It was definitely a romance novel as the main character had "violet" eyes. However... it was more one of those books where it's all about a woman finding what she truly wants and rising above the past

and all that jazz. It was decent, not phenomenal. First romance-ish novel I've read in a loooong time where that was probably the genre it would've been filed under.

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### **Marianne Terrigno says**

Kind of predictable but a decent read. Good summer beach book.

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