



Judith R. Hendricks

The Laws of Harmony
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Q: Why is food and cooking so important to your fictional characters?

A: I guess because food is so important to me. It's one of those things that gives life texture and rhythm. Music is another. Those things link us to each other and mark places in our lives. Which is why I can't remember where I put my sunglasses or the name of somebody I met last week, but I can remember the carrot cake I shared with my mom at the little upstairs café in LaConner, Washington twenty years ago, and all the words to *Rocky Raccoon*.

Q: How closely is the setting of San Miguel Island intended to imitate any real-life Pacific Northwest island?

A: Some books could be set anywhere, which gives the elements of character and plot more responsibility for carrying the story. But I always visualize my stories in very particular settings—sometimes real, sometimes wholly invented, sometimes a bit of both. San Miguel Island is an amalgam of places I know and love in the Pacific Northwest.

Q: *The Laws of Harmony* is your fourth novel. What do you know about writing now that you wished you had known when you started out as a novelist?

A: I wish I'd known that each book is utterly different and it's always like starting over. That probably would have saved me from panic on many occasions. I wish I'd known that you have to be gentle with yourself and patient with the story. No matter how many times I've thought I'd never find my way through the maze, or how many times I've been ready to quit in frustration, things have always worked themselves out . . . and I mean that literally. The knots have unraveled with very little help from me. The problem is that what I know now I could only learn through the experience of writing four novels. And still, I forget.

Q: To what extent do you actively resist writing works that can be categorized by genre or theme? For example, *The Laws of Harmony* seems to introduce and combine mystery, romance, self-discovery, and all things culinary.

A: I enjoy reading certain genres, such as mysteries, but when someone who's a school teacher or a cab driver keeps stumbling over dead bodies, there's a part of me that thinks, *Oh come on. You just solved a murder last month. What are the chances?* When I write, I like to include different elements in the story because real life is a fascinating pastiche of mystery, romance, self-discovery and—at least for me—all things culinary.

Q: How did you decide at what point in your story to conclude *The Laws of Harmony*? Is there any possibility readers might encounter these characters again in a sequel?

A: This question makes me smile because the ending came at three different points in earlier drafts. It finally came down to the relationships between Sunny and the other major characters and deciding which one was most important, what the story was really about. Sequels can be tricky. Just because you like the characters and still have questions about what might happen to them doesn't mean there's enough material for a sequel. Having said that, I admit to a certain fondness for the mother-daughter dynamic, and that I'm curious about what might happen between Sunny and Willa . . .