

MEDIA KIT

BOOK OVERVIEW

Title: **The Wild & Bittersweet**

Author: Ranae LaFerney

Hook: In the midst of emotional heartbreak, a young woman from Los Angeles takes to the road on a whim and meets her destiny in the wilds of the Pacific Northwest.

Synopsis: In 1984, Melody Baumann's future is set—a summer trip to Europe, UC-Davis in the fall. She hopes to become a veterinarian like her father. But while abroad, she falls in love with British artist Michael Henley, then receives news that shatters everything: her father is dead.

Back home, grief and years of tension with her alcoholic mother bring Melody to the breaking point. Clinging to a promise her father made long ago, she sets out for Washington State, seeking something she can't yet name. Then, on a rural highway, far away from home, her car breaks down and fate intervenes.

Amid the rugged beauty of the Olympic Peninsula, Melody is forced to reckon with loss, longing, and an uncertain future. What begins as an escape becomes a journey that will bring about profound change and open the door to a life she never imagined.

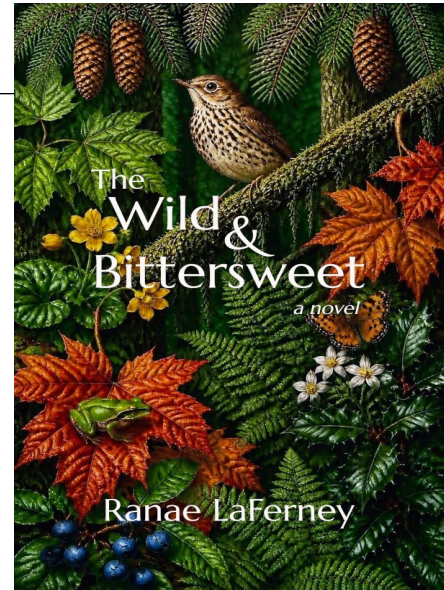
Genre: FICTION; Women's Fiction, 371 pages

Release: August 16, 2026

ISBN: Paperback: 9798192330265
 Kindle: 9798234172624

Price: [Amazon Paperback](#): \$13.99
 [Amazon Kindle](#): \$5.99

Links: [Book cover](#) (high res)
 [Author photo](#) (high res)





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Biography (40 words)

Ranae LaFerney writes fiction rooted in character, emotion, and a strong sense of place. Raised in the Pacific Northwest and now living on the Olympic Peninsula, she brings warmth and honesty to stories about the quiet complexities of ordinary lives.

Biography (102 words)

Ranae LaFerney grew up in the Pacific Northwest, where rugged mountains and rain-swept coastlines first sparked her imagination as a storyteller. A self-described late bloomer, she spent several years in corporate marketing before finding her true calling as a writer. Her fiction explores the complicated inner lives of ordinary people and the emotional depths beneath the surface. Readers drawn to richly developed characters An enthusiastic birder by ear and lifelong naturalist, Ranae can often be found hiking wooded trails, fly fishing a local stream, or tending vegetables in her garden. She lives with her husband on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State.



KEY SELLING POINTS

For readers who enjoy

- Emotional women's fiction
- Book club fiction
- Coming-of-age journeys
- Stories of loss and resilience
- Novels rooted in place and the natural world

Themes

- Grief
- Friendship
- Motherhood
- Second chances
- Found family
- Nature



Excerpt

The day she would learn that her daughter had died, Melody Baumann sat on her back deck, a cup of coffee in hand to wake the blood and mind and trained her ears on a pocket of trees to the east. A soft breeze rose up from the sea, swept over the basalt cliffs at shore's edge and across a gently sloping meadow below the house where thousands of Oxeye daisies waved in the first bands of sunlight. For days, she had been listening and waiting for a distinct birdsong to emerge from the woods.

That morning her long-awaited joy arrived.

She went to retrieve her journal from the kitchen; smiled to herself as she began to write—*May 23, 2003—6:20 a.m. The first song of the Swainson's thrush!*

Melody had long been enchanted by birds, grateful that she lived in the wake of their annual migrations, a vast assortment of colors and shapes and wingbeats set against the temperate, salted air of the northern Washington coast. Identifying various species and interpreting their sounds was her gift. Any serious birder could attest that experience and patience were key to spotting the more reclusive species. Melody had come to realize that for every creature she could get eyes on, the voices of a dozen more called from the periphery. She had learned to bird by ear, to listen for specific tones and patterns. A *chip-chip-chip* for warning. A long melodic song for attracting a mate. She could discern between the drumming of the regional woodpeckers—the Hairy or the Downy or the Red-breasted sapsucker—the Hairy being the fastest with its dry, rapid *rat-a-tat-tat*. Melody treasured the orchestrations of all birds but especially, and most personally, the flute-like whistle of the Swainson's thrush. Its song, performed by males, usually at dawn and in the evenings of late spring, carried a wistful and vaporous quality with notes swirling upward then fading away.

Similar titles

- [Firefly Lane](#), Kristin Hannah
- [On Mystic Lake](#), Kristin Hannah
- [Crow Talk](#), Eileen Garvin
- [Go as a River](#), Shelley Read
- [Grief is the Thing with Feathers](#), Max Porter
- [Unsheltered](#), Barbara Kingsolver
- [Night Road](#), Kristin Hannah
- [Leaving](#), Roxana Robinson
- [Loon Point](#), Carrie Classon
- [Where the Water Meets the Sky](#), Diane LesBecquets



Why it makes a strong Book Club pick

- Rich themes of **grief, resilience, and reinvention**
- Strong discussion potential around **motherhood, family tension, grief, and life-changing choices**
- Evocative **Pacific Northwest setting**
- Emotional appeal for readers who enjoy **heartfelt, discussion-driven women's fiction**
- Explores **nature as solace** and the meaning of **second chances**

Discussion themes

Theme	Discussion Angle
Grief	How loss reshapes identity and decision-making
Motherhood	Becoming a parent under difficult circumstances
Second chances	Love, life detours, and starting over
Setting	Why place matters in emotional fiction
Friendship	The power of found family
Nature	Healing, belonging, and emotional refuge

Suggested discussion questions

1. Melody begins the novel with a clear plan for her life. How does grief disrupt that plan, and how does it open the door to a different version of herself?
2. How does the loss of Melody's father and the loss of her English love shape the choices she makes immediately afterward? Do her decisions feel impulsive, necessary, or both?
3. Melody's relationship with her mother is strained. How did that tension affect your understanding of Melody's grief and her sense of belonging?
4. What does the promise from Melody's childhood represent to her? Escape, hope, identity, connection to her father, or something else?
5. Big Kate becomes a turning point in Melody's life. What role does she play in Melody's healing and transformation?
6. How does the novel portray friendship as a form of rescue or renewal?
7. Melody faces pregnancy, heartbreak, and uncertainty all at once. What did you admire most about the way she handled those changes?
8. How does motherhood reshape Melody's identity and her understanding of strength?



9. The novel contrasts urban California with rural Washington. What does the Pacific Northwest setting add emotionally or symbolically to the story?
10. Nature, especially birds, becomes a source of comfort and meaning. Why do you think the natural world is so important in Melody's journey?
11. How does the book explore the idea of second chances—not only in romance, but in life more broadly?
12. What does Chris represent to Melody, first, when she meets him, and later when they reunite? How do they change during that period?
13. Michael reenters the story under tragic circumstances. How did that affect your understanding of their relationship and the novel's larger message about timing, love, and loss?
14. What does the novel suggest about fate versus personal choice?
15. In what ways is this story also a coming-of-age novel, even though it deals with adult responsibilities like motherhood and grief?
16. Did you have a favorite character in the story? What about this person resonated with you?
17. What moment in the novel felt the most bittersweet to you, and why?

INTERVIEW MATERIALS

Why I wrote this book

My aim in writing *The Wild & Bittersweet* was to bring the rugged beauty of Washington's Olympic Peninsula to life through characters whose distinct personalities, attitudes, and choices light up the page. TW&B reveals deeply human characters that inspire meaningful connections with the reader. Equally, the landscape is pivotal to the story; a main character unto itself.

At its heart, the novel explores the coexistence of life's greatest joys and deepest sorrows. I wanted to approach grief, love, friendship, and change with emotional honesty while allowing humor to move through every part of the story. Despite the heavy subject matter at times (grief and death), I made sure a glimmer of hope was always woven into the story to remind the reader that something new was on the way to bring yet another change, deeper meaning, or a thoughtful perspective.



Suggested interview questions

1. What inspired you to set *The Wild & Bittersweet* during this time period (1960s to 2003)?
2. Melody begins the story after a devastating loss. What did you want to explore about grief through her journey?
3. How does the natural environment depicted in this novel resonate with your own experience?
4. What is your writing process? Do you begin with characters and plot largely mapped out, or let the creative process take you where it wants to go?
5. Are any of your characters based on people you know?
6. What did you find most challenging about writing a character at her breaking point with tenderness and hope?
7. How did the 1984 setting influence the story's relationships, opportunities, and sense of isolation?
8. The title suggests both beauty and pain. What does *The Wild & Bittersweet* mean to you?
9. What do you hope readers take away about love, loss, and the meaning of finding one's place in the world?
10. Which readers do you think will connect most deeply with Melody's story?

CONTACT

Request a review copy or an interview!

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- [Goodreads](#)
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