

BOOK  
CLUB  
KIT

MARJORIE HUDSON

# INDIGO FIELD

BY MARJORIE HUDSON

In this sweeping, multi-generational saga, award-winning writer Marjorie Hudson reveals the secrets of contemporary Southern neighbors—family troubles, tragedies, long-held resentments, loves. *Indigo Field* raises the dead and forces a reckoning—and finds the possibility of common ground.

Dear Reader,

When I came to rural North Carolina more than thirty years ago, I immediately was entranced by the land, the history, the people. The fields and pine forests spoke to me in rustling breezes, in sweeps of wildflowers through the season.

My neighbors were retirees and old-time farmers, activists and artists, Black and white church people—I was living at the cusp of the Old South and the New. An Occaneechi activist spoke a blessing on the first day of my local river festival. Neighbors kept jars of arrowheads. Mine was a community so full of life and layered stories, I knew I would write about it some day.

A chance encounter with an older man jogging on my road set me wondering—why would he leave his brand-new planned development across the highway to run on my crumbling country road? What was he running from? Colonel Randolph Jefferson Lee was hatched in imagination, and I began to write his story. Then Miss Reba Jones, an elderly Black woman who had worked as a midwife, showed up in a novella about Jolene Blake, a young farm wife with a Down syndrome son. These stories were collected in *Accidental Birds of the Carolinas*, and my fictional Ambler County was born. But I was not done. Their voices haunted me, prodded me, to tell more.

It took thirty years of living to begin to understand how their lives wove together, making a whole, in the novel *Indigo Field*, a story of hidden lives revealed, broken lives seeking healing.

I hope you enjoy meeting Miss Reba and the colonel, Jolene and Bobo and all the others. And I hope when you pass by an abandoned field full of broomsedge and rocks the shape of sleeping deer you think of *Indigo Field*, shimmering with the secrets people and places hold in their hearts, waiting to be heard.

Sincerely yours,  
*Marjorie Hudson*



## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“Hudson weaves a mesmerizing story of loss, injustice, and revenge conspiring to darken the human heart and the redemptive and unexpected ways the light comes in.”

—**SUE MONK KIDD**

*New York Times* bestselling author of *The Invention of Wings* and *The Secret Life of Bees*



“Get ready to be swept off your feet by Marjorie Hudson’s glorious big-hearted novel. I love this book!”

—**HELEN FREMONT**

National bestselling author of *After Long Silence* and *The Escape Artist*



“Inhabited by unforgettable characters and haunted by unspeakable crimes, Marjorie Hudson’s loamy Ambler County, North Carolina, is every bit as richly drawn as Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha.”

—**MINROSE GWIN**

Award-winning author of *The Accidentals*, *Promise*, and *The Queen of Palmyra*



“A provocative new voice in contemporary Southern fiction.”

—**MICHELE TRACY BERGER**

Winner of the Carl Brandon Kindred Award for her story “Doll Seed,” published in *FIYAH: The Journal of Black Speculative Fiction*, and author of *Reenu-You*



“A book of Old Testament wrath and New Testament forgiveness.

A magnificent, magical debut.”

—**VALERIE NIEMAN**

Sir Walter Raleigh Award-winning author of *In the Lonely Backwater* and *To the Bones*

“Marjorie Hudson is a spiritual geographer, charting the landscape of a changing Carolina community and its intertwined lives, past and present, Black and white, rich and poor. The ancient pines on Gooley Ridge overlook Indian burials and bank foreclosures, bird and people migrations and delayed vengeance, sweet love scenes and brutal assaults. Like Pat Conroy before her, Hudson writes up a mighty storm.”

—DALE NEAL

Novello award-winning author of *Cow Across America*  
and *Appalachian Book of the Dead*



“Miss Reba and her present-day antagonist, a retired white man from across the highway, are each on a journey of transformation in Hudson’s shimmering world of a wild pasture filled with rising spirits.”

—LALITA TADEMY

*New York Times* bestselling author of  
Oprah selection *Cane River, Red River, and Citizens Creek*



“What a gorgeous book! You’ll love these characters and the many migrations they take on the way to finding home. Unforgettable.”

—STEPHANIE POWELL WATTS

Author of *We Are Only Taking What We Need*,  
winner of the Ernest J. Gaines Award and an Oprah Summer Read, and  
*No One is Coming to Save Us*, Winner of the NAACP Image Award



“A transcendent book, a rich and beautiful tapestry,  
woven with dazzling craft and an artist’s touch. ”

—WALTER BENNETT

Winner of the Alabama Author’s Award,  
author of *The Last Kiss* and *Leaving Tuscaloosa*



“[In *Indigo Field*] the revelations belonging to story can enlarge our world and our time, bind us together, and bring on a spirited whirlwind of more life.”

—MARLY YOUMANS

Author of *A Death at the White Camellia Orphanage*,  
winner of The Ferrol Sams Award for Fiction, and *The Wolf Pit*,  
winner of the Michael Shaara Award for Excellence in Civil War Fiction

When people gather to discuss a book, it's a bonus to share food and drink inspired by the story. Here's a drink inspired by a scene:

*Young always-in-trouble TJ tries to calm his friend Bobo during a storm by adding an inch of Old Lucy's shine to a can of Cheerwine, then swirling it around, his thumb over the pop-top hole.*

Below is an all-grown-up version. I call it *TJ's Lightning Bolt Cheerwine*.



# TJ'S LIGHTNING BOLT *Cheerwine*

INSPIRED BY

## INDIGO FIELD

*A novel of the South*

In a martini glass, pour 1.5 shots of domestic vodka  
over cubed ice

Fill to the top with chilled cheerwine and mix gently

Float 2 or 3 marischino cherries on top of ice

Drink through a fun, colorful straw

### ALCOHOL FREE VERSION

For a zingy, alcohol-free version, substitute 2  
tablespoons fresh squeezed lemon juice for vodka

Add extra cherries!

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*Indigo Field* invites discussion of such big themes as love of place, family love and losses and secrets, injustice and racism, the spiritual power of nature. It also raises questions: What happens to history if we suppress the stories? How can elders keep history alive? How can people let go of vengeful feelings about the past and find reconciliation?

I hope such themes and questions will inspire lively conversation! I recommend you start by reading the first page out loud —or any other section members select —to reconnect with the fictional world before you start. – Marjorie

1. *Indigo Field* opens with an abandoned field inhabited by spirits and great trees that know human stories. Have you ever been to a place like that? Do the Gooley Pines remind you of any trees you know?
2. Col. Randolph Jefferson Lee feels like a fish out of water in his retirement village. Why does he feel so out of place? Can you relate to feeling that way yourself at any point in your life? Do you know any retirees who can't adjust to retirement?
3. Were you surprised to learn about Rand's childhood hardships? How do you think that shaped him, made him the man he grew up to be?
4. When the story turns to Miss Reba's life, it's as if we travel through a portal to a different world. Could you relate to her world and her life? What surprising things and people do Rand and Reba have in common?
5. When the 14-year-old TJ Snipes comes into Miss Reba's life, why does she dislike him so much? Is TJ likeable to you? What finally brings the two of them together?
6. Miss Reba tells her secret stories to the spirit of Danielle – but nobody else. Why do you think Miss Reba has been keeping these stories secret? Who so you connect with most in those stories -- Old Lucy, Sheba, others?
7. Each family in *Indigo Field* contains a young man facing challenges and struggling to grow up – Jeff struggles for his father's respect, Bobo wants to be "the Man." TJ wants to find Lucy's Island and go live there. How successful are these young men in their quests? Which one do you think grows up the most?
8. When Rand's son Jeff arrives to help the archeologist protect the bones in Indigo Field, he does not know the complexities of local Indigenous history. Do you ever wonder what the Indigenous history is where you live? A hint: many river names on today's maps reflect the names of Indigenous nations.

9. Did it surprise you that Reba and Rand weathered the storm together?
10. The novel closes with a potluck feast in the Field, very different from the kind of dinner party Anne had in mind at the start. Or is it? A challenge: have a book club feast with some of the foods mentioned in *Indigo Field*: pimento cheese, fried apple pies, pound cake, sugar snap peas, Strawberry Shortcake, fried chicken, Cheerwine (or Cheerwine cocktails), Chicken bog, Nabs Crackers, shad or other river fish, and any favorites of your own.

**Have a feast of your own at your book club meeting! Here's a favorite:  
Miss Phoebe's Jalapeno Pimento Cheese**

**Ingredients**

Large block of sharp cheddar cheese  
 Small to medium block of mozzarella cheese  
 1 small jar diced pimentos  
 Splash of Worcestershire sauce  
 Garlic powder  
 Jalapeno peppers chopped fine  
 Sea salt and ground pepper to taste  
 Duke's mayonnaise (not light or fat free)



**Directions**

- Grate both cheeses – don't use already grated cheese, it doesn't work
- Add the pimentos, including the liquid
- Splash the W. sauce over the cheese – add garlic powder, salt and pepper
- Add enough mayo to make a smooth consistency (I usually start with a spoonful and add more. You can always add more but can't take it away.)
- Add the jalapeños after the mayo – you can splash some jalapeno juice on it too and mix well
- The important thing is to make it the night before you are going to use it.

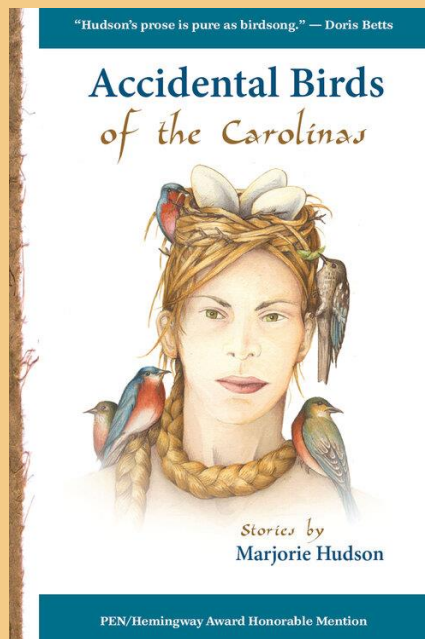
*Adapted from a recipe by Sue Farlow*

Learn more about Ambler county people in Hudson's story collection *Accidental Birds of the Carolinas*, which includes the novella "The Outside World," the story of Jolene's childhood and married life, and the story "New World Testament," the tale of John Lawson's friendship with Indian guide Eno Will, based on a true story.

Available in paperback and E-book at:

[Bookshop](#)  
[Amazon](#)

And at my hometown indie bookstore: [McIntyre's Books](#)



# INDIGO FIELD

## COMMUNITY READ GUIDE

**Does your group want to go big?** *Indigo Field* is the perfect novel for a Community Read. Libraries, colleges, local arts councils, church groups, bookstores, community groups, and schools can sponsor events bring diverse communities together for discussion and fun.

**Discussion can center on themes of compelling contemporary interest, including:**

- Hidden Black and Indigenous history
- Conflicts between new Southerners and locals in rural places and small towns
- How new retirement villages in rural places can relate to their surrounding communities
- Climate change and preservation of natural places and small farms
- How to face longstanding racial injustice

**Such discussions can help build creative partnerships in communities.**

**Invite the author.**

**Marjorie Hudson would be delighted to join you and speak at your finale** – in fact, she's done this before, with her previous Ambler County book, *Accidental Birds of the Carolinas*. She's also directed inventive Community Reads that brought together diverse elements of her community to celebrate books: *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, and *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. She is excited to share some ideas with you.

**For all Community Read event queries, please contact:**

**Marjorie Hudson**

Email: hudson [dot] marjorie [at] gmail [dot] com

Online form: [www.marjoriehudson.com/invite-marjorie](http://www.marjoriehudson.com/invite-marjorie)



For event scheduling, including Book Club Zooms, please contact:

## Marjorie Hudson

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**Marjorie Hudson** is the award-winning author of *Accidental Birds of the Carolinas*, Ambler County stories, and *Searching for Virginia Dare*, an exploration of the fate of the first English child born in America. She is the founder of the Kitchen Table Writers Workshop and has been a guest lecturer for many university programs and writing conferences. Her new novel, *Indigo Field*, explores the deep history concealed in an abandoned field in rural North Carolina. She lives on a century farm in Chatham County, NC, with her husband Sam and small fierce terrier DJ.

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Audio book release date: April 23, 2024

Follow Marjorie to receive updates and learn more about her books:

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