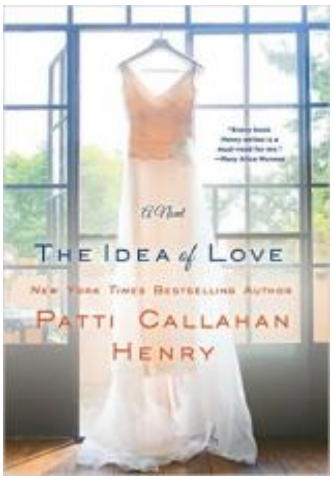
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The Idea of Love

by Patti Callahan Henry



About the Book

As we like to say in the South, "Don't let the truth get in the way of a good story."

Ella's life has been completely upended. She's young, beautiful and deeply in love --- until her husband dies in a tragic sailing accident while trying save her. Or so she'll have everyone believe. Screenwriter Hunter needs a hit, but crippling writers' block and a serious lack of motivation are getting him nowhere. He's on the look-out for a love story. It doesn't matter who it belongs to.

When Hunter and Ella meet in Watersend, South Carolina it feels like the perfect match, something close to fate. In Ella, Hunter finds the perfect love story, full of longing and sacrifice. It's the stuff of epic films. In Hunter, Ella finds possibility. It's an opportunity to live out a fantasy --- the life she wishes she had because hers is too painful. And more real. Besides. what's a little white lie between strangers?

But one lie leads to another, and soon Hunter and Ella find themselves caught in a web of deceit. As they try to untangle their lies and reclaim their own lives, they feel something stronger is keeping them together. And so they wonder: Can two people come together for all the wrong reasons and still make it right?

Discussion Guide

1. The title of the book, THE IDEA OF LOVE, makes us think about notions of love. How do you think Blake and Ella view love? How do you see these views change throughout the novel?

2. When we first meet Blake, we understand that he is desperate for a love story. How did you feel about him as he approached Ella and other women for their stories? Did his desperation change your perception of his actions?

3. As they try to find their way through life?s changes, both Ella and Blake resort to lies. Blake even states, ?The truth is

overrated.? Do you think there are moments when the truth hurts more than a lie, and does this justify the lie?

4. We watch as Blake tries to create a screenplay from his disjointed conversations with Ella. How did you feel about the fake story he was telling? How would you define a good love story?

5. Ella does everything she can to get over her heartbreak, including making lists and reading books on ?getting over? an ex. What are some things you?ve done to try and heal from heartbreak? What helped? What hurt?

6. Blake and Ella talk about the endings of love stories they?ve seen onscreen, how melodramatic professions of love are not the end, but rather the beginning of real love. In what ways do you think this is true? What defines ?real love? for you?

7. Ella befriends Mimi, the woman in the apartment below, and develops a surprising and nourishing friendship. What kinds of unexpected friendships have you found during a life crisis? In what ways did they help you?

8. Ella has lost her husband, her best friend, and has an awful job. She tells Blake a false version of her life conveying that she wishes her life could be different. Then she finally takes action. Do you think telling the story of how we want things to be can help us change?

9. Blake has spent his career writing successful Romantic Comedies. How have these types of movies defined or shaped your idea of love? Do you feel that these movies influenced your own love life? What is your favorite Rom-Com?

10. Best friends can help us, but like any real love, they can also hurt us. Would you have forgiven a friend who abandoned you during a crisis?

11. Why would Blake choose a town like Watersend to find a love story? What about the location helps to move the novel forward? In what ways does Watersend act as another character in the story?

12. Did this story end the way you wanted or thought it would? Can you think of any alternate endings? What would you choose for each character?

Author Bio

Patti Callahan Henry is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of several novels, including SURVIVING SAVANNAH and BECOMING MRS. LEWIS. She is the recipient of the Christy Award, the Harper Lee Award for Alabama?s Distinguished Writer of the Year Award, and the Alabama Library Association Book of the Year. She is the cohost and cocreator of the popular weekly online live web show and podcast "Friends and Fiction." She lives in Alabama and South Carolina with her family.

Critical Praise

"Patti Callahan Henry's new novel, THE IDEA OF LOVE, is so wonderful I wish I had written it myself. It's clever and funny and it makes you think twice about all your personal relationships. I can't wait to see what she writes next! Congratulations, Ms. Henry. This is a huge winner!"

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