

BookFilter: Patti Callahan Henry And The Idea Of Breaking Out Nationally

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THE IDEA OF LOVE

By [Patti Callahan Henry](#)

\$25.99; St. Martin's Press

Telling lies can get you into trouble. Telling lies can keep you sane. And telling lies can lead to true love.

For novelist [Patti Callahan Henry](#), telling lies -- or at least writing down the stories she makes up in her head -- is also a great way to celebrate being alive. Two years ago on June 23, 2013, Henry was diagnosed with cancer. (Her most personal book -- [And Then I Found You](#) -- had just come out a few weeks earlier.) Since then, Henry has fought through chemo, defeated the cancer and never skipped a beat in her flourishing career. And now, two years to the day from that scary news, she's publishing her eleventh novel, perhaps the one that will break Henry out to a wider audience.

Like many of her books, [The Idea Of Love](#) has a strong concept ready made for Hollywood (Henry has just started to work with an agent geared towards that world.) In the novel, a once-hot screenwriter of romantic comedies and dramas (think a male Nora Ephron) has endured two flops in a row. His marriage has also dissolved and his teenage daughter isn't speaking to him.

Desperate, he heads to small towns on the east coast, pretends to be an historian and charms local women into telling their stories. One of them -- he's sure -- will tell a story of true love that will break his heart and provide the kernel for a terrific new movie. He succeeds -- never realizing the sweepingly romantic tale he hears is no more true than his own false identity. Needless to say, the screenwriter and the pretty fibber fall hard for each other.

While Henry isn't a "regional" writer, her work is very popular in the southeast but little known elsewhere. If she can break out and bring the sales she enjoys there to the rest of the country, Henry's triumph of the past two years will be even sweeter. Rare for these days, her publisher is sending Henry out on [a full-fledged book tour](#). Before the official launch, I caught up with Henry at her home in Birmingham, Alabama.

To see the full interview, [head to BookFilter](#).

Here's Henry talking about her battle with cancer, the support of her family and friends and fans...and how that crisis was capped by Henry having a very serious hiking accident.

Here's Henry talking about how Nora Ephron inspired both this book and her work as a writer.

Here's Henry talking about being a preacher's kid. Her family moved down to South Florida and then moved again and again for four years, from seventh grade to tenth grade. Henry burrowed into books to escape her feelings of loneliness and found not just a place to hide but a source of strength.

To see the full interview with Patti Callahan Henry, [head to BookFilter](#).

NOTE: Patti Callahan Henry is a friend of the family for the past few years. Usually, I eagerly tell family and friends I can't review or write about their work. Conflict of interest! (Believe me, it's the easiest thing to do when

someone urges on you their unpublished manuscript or band CD.) However, when I met Henry she had already successfully published seven or eight novels with a major house and hit the bestseller lists, so her success and media attention had already established Henry as a writer worth talking about. Besides, she offered to make Bloody Marys for the interview.

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