

BOOKS&AUTHORS

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'When Light Breaks' reminds us to listen to heart

"When Light Breaks"

By Patti Callahan Henry (Penguin Group/New American Library, \$12.95, softcover, 278 pages)

BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN

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On the opening page of "When Light Breaks," Patti Callahan Henry uses the words "silver" and "dawn" twice in the same sentence.

Looking back at that first page after reading every page, I realized that it reinforces not just the South Carolina Lowcountry scene that character Kara Larson is seeing, but also her being.

Kara's tale is one of the dawning of her true self, trying to come through as she hurriedly suppresses it. The silver is the fog that keeps her from seeing clear-

Review

WHAT: Patti Callahan

GO
AND
DO

Henry, reading and signing her novel "When Light Breaks"

WHEN:
7 p.m. Thursday

WHERE:

Quail Ridge Books, 3522 Wade Ave., Raleigh. For information, call 828-1588.

ly. As light tries to break, she ignores it in favor of fulfilling the expectations of her family and what she thought she wanted. But that nagging dawning keeps prying, keeps asking questions.

The reader is along for the ride of Kara's life, one she thought was all figured out already. "When Light Breaks" is the third novel from Henry, who is also the best-selling author of "Where the River Runs" and "Losing the Moon."

Fans of Dorothea Benton Frank and Mary Kay Andrews will enjoy the similar Southern setting and cultural nuances. While Frank and Andrews' heroines are thrust into a changed life, Henry's Kara struggles against being her own catalyst for change.

Kara's questioning begins with a visit to Irish elderly woman Maeve Mahoney. Henry is a superb storyteller who weaves Maeve's story seamlessly into Kara's story. Kara volunteers to sit with the woman at a nursing home to fulfill yet another obligation, this time to the Palmetto Pointe Junior Society of a fictional town a short drive from Savannah, Ga.

Maeve begins telling a story from her youth in Galway, Ireland. It is a story that takes weeks for Kara to learn, one of tragedy and young lost love and life choices. But it is Maeve's question during their first meeting — about Kara's first love —

that causes light to peek through the cracks in Kara's busy life.

Suddenly the 27-year-old who still lives at home has one more item on her list and it's a big one. She is already busy with work as PGA Tour event planner, planning her wedding to a golf pro, dealing with her family and still



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suffering the repercussions of her mother's death nearly 20 years earlier: Even while Kara begins to seek that first, tragically departed love of her own, she doesn't slow down the other aspects of her life. If she does, she might begin to listen to the gathering, whispering questions. She tries to push them down, but they come up again and again.

Is she living her life or someone else's? Is he really the one? Can she maintain her integrity

and pursue her dreams? Can those dreams become reality?

Even for those readers — most, I would imagine — who don't have some epic, tragic, teenage first love, the ideas still resonate. Does it matter what was important to you when you were younger, before life got in the way? Should everyone get a mulligan and should you use it?

The ideas in "When Light Breaks" also appeal to anyone who has ever made a decision and later questioned if it was the right one. And who hasn't done that? The answers to Kara's internal questions — those hints and whispers — sneak up on Kate and the reader.

Upon finishing the book, I was disappointed that it was over but glad to have the opportunity to ride shotgun to these women's experiences. It seems like a quick, enjoyable read, and it is. But it stays with you afterward, as you wonder if there are hints of your own heart worth a listen.