

The Story Behind the Story for the favorite daughter

I have long been fascinated with the world of memory.

It's a world that belongs only to us as individuals; it is a solitary world that can only be shared in the most fragmented way with anyone else. It's almost as if memory has a secret life: we carry it inside of us and we are tied to in an inextricable way.

How does memory define us? I often wonder. Who are we without it? Why do memories often have a hold on us and yet they also slip away so easily? Of course, these aren't questions with solid answers. They are questions we must live into; they are questions that slip between our fingers and our minds.

To answer some of this, I turn to story. This time, I turned to a story where the most prominent figure in my protagonist's life, her father, is losing his memories.

The Donohue family name was inspired by one of my all-time favorite authors, John O'Donohue, the Irish poet, author and philosopher. His thoughts on memory moved me to write this novel. What he says about questions is this—they are "like a lantern." And I think that is exactly right. If I take the questions I have about memory and our lives, and I shine it onto the page, a story evolves and grows. That is where *The Favorite Daughter* came from—the lantern light of my questions about memory and family.

Lena Donohue has been betrayed by her sister and in the painful aftermath, she chooses to separate from her family both geographically and emotionally. But she can't truly separate, at least not in spirit, because she loves her father and her brother, she loves her hometown, and she loves the pub her family owns and operates.

Now that her father is losing his memories, she must decide not only what she will do but also who she will become. Forgiveness never comes easy, and family dynamics are the most complicated thing we experience. I put Lena smack dab in the middle of it all and watched her find her way.

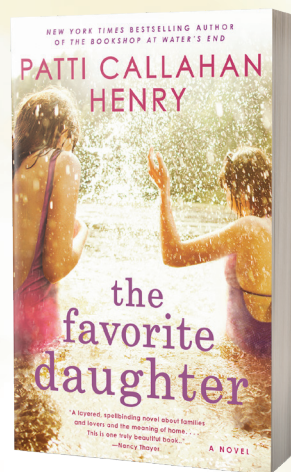
As Lena, her brother Sean, and her sister Hallie begin to craft a memory photo album for their father, family secrets echo into all their lives. Lena discovers her true story, and opens her heart to her family's past.

It's not often that a writer's past and a story's future mesh as it does here in this tale. Not because I'm the favorite daughter—most likely far from it—but that it also taps into my first career as a Clinical Nurse Specialist who worked with brain injuries and fractured families.

The Favorite Daughter is set in Watersend, South Carolina, just as *Bookshop at Water's End*. We revisit the establishments, beaches and waterways that define a town and its people. With a devastating sister's betrayal, a local pub full of quirky characters, a family's Irish secret, and a charming brother who can't quite wrangle his two sisters together to deal with the crisis, we have a novel about the power of memory, the magnetic draw of family, learning forgiveness and the elusive idea of "home."

Welcome again to Watersend and the families that inhabit this lush land.

—Patti Callahan Henry



"The problem with memories isn't with the ones that she couldn't let go of, but with these that wouldn't let go of her."

—Lena Donohue in *The Favorite Daughter*



Photos from Patti's trip to Ireland



Photo of Patti in Ireland