

Call Me Anna: The Autobiography of Patty Duke Study Guide

**Call Me Anna: The Autobiography of Patty Duke by
Patty Duke**

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Plot Summary

Call Me Anna by Patty Duke and Kenneth Turan is the story of Patty Duke's life. Patty began her life as Anna Marie Duke, the youngest child of John Patrick and Frances Duke. Patty's brother, Ray became an actor and Patty followed suit, becoming one of the most beloved young actors of the sixties. However, Patty's carefree public life belied a mental disease that was characterized by often erratic and uncontrollable behavior, behavior that led to three failed marriages and multiple hospitalizations. Call Me Anna is not just a story of how one woman became a beloved actress, but a reference manual for other sufferers of undiagnosed manic depression.

Patty Duke became an actress in the late fifties at the age of eight. Patty did not choose this for herself, but was encouraged by her mother and her brother's managers, the Rosses. The Rosses took over Patty's life, changing the way she looked, the way she talked, even her age and her name. In time, as Patty's career took off, the Rosses took more and more control of her life until finally Patty was living with them on a full time basis. Patty's mother became something of a servant to the Rosses, playing babysitter to her own daughter on multiple commercial and movie sets, washing the Rosses' laundry, and answering phones.

The Rosses made Patty's childhood unpleasant, displaying a fierce determination to make her a star that was so intense that Patty never was allowed to play with her friends, to have privacy, to even make friends. In fact, Patty accuses the Rosses of everything from verbal abuse to sexual abuse. However, Patty also admits that if it were not for the Rosses, she never would have become the actress she is today. The Rosses got Patty multiple commercials early in her childhood, arranged for her to make appearances on several television shows, and even got her a spot on a television game show, in which she made more than thirty thousand dollars. However, this appearance led to a grand jury indictment and Patty being forced to testify before Congress.

When Patty was twelve, she auditioned for the part of Helen Keller in the Broadway play, *The Miracle Worker*. Patty had trained for nearly a year, learning how to navigate obstacles with her eyes closed, pretending to not hear, and speaking as though she were deaf. The producers of the play were concerned about her age and possible growth, but Patty convinced them she was the best one for the part. Patty made her stage debut in Philadelphia, an experience that began a run that would last a year and a half. During the run of the Broadway version of *The Miracle Worker*, Patty would become deeply attached to her co-star, Anne Bancroft, as well as other cast and crew of the play. During this time as well, Patty would be the youngest actress to have her name above the play's name on the marquee, a media ploy that deeply embarrassed Patty at the time.

After Patty left *The Miracle Worker*, she was tapped to play the same role in the movie version. This was like a reunion of sorts for Patty, creating not only a movie that she would continue to be proud of throughout her lifetime, but also reinforcing relationships



that would also last a lifetime. It was also during this period that Patty was molested by John Ross.

After *The Miracle Worker*, the Rosses made a deal with ABC to begin a television show to showcase Patty's talents. Patty spent a weekend in Los Angeles with Sidney Sheldon, the bestselling author who was a television writer at the time. Sidney Sheldon created the premise of the show, identical cousins who were the same on the outside, but radically different on the inside. The show ran for three seasons. Patty found the show boring and trite, bored with the characters. However, it was on the set of this show that Patty met her first husband, Harry Falk.

Harry Falk was an assistant director on *The Patty Duke Show*, who was many years older than Patty and already married. However, Harry's marriage dissolved during a brief absence from *The Patty Duke Show*. When Harry returned to the show, he and Patty began dating. The Rosses allowed this at first, but soon became concerned when it became clear the relationship was serious. The Rosses moved *The Patty Duke Show* to Los Angeles in an attempt to separate the lovers, but this act only led to a final break between them and Patty. Patty and Harry married in a small ceremony in 1965. They would work together on what would become the last three episodes of *The Patty Duke Show* and discover that marriage and work do not always mix well.

After the cancellation of *The Patty Duke Show*, Patty slipped into a depression. Patty would have panic attacks at the idea of going to the grocery store. On vacation, Patty refused to read a book to share with Harry because the words simply did not make sense to her. During a fight with Harry, Patty took an overdose of pills. Finally Harry had Patty hospitalized in Los Angeles. Patty was transferred to a mental institution, where she suddenly broke free of the depression that left her unable to speak, speaking more than she had in months. After her release from the hospital, Harry promised to never have her hospitalized again.

Patty and Harry's marriage became strained. Patty would often threaten to take pills when they fought, manipulating Harry's emotions. During a separation for work in 1968, Patty was thrown into a frenzy when she learned of the death of Robert Kennedy, a politician she not only supported but for whose campaign she had worked. When Patty could not reach Harry, she became distraught. Eventually Patty would learn that Harry had been in their home with a lover.

Harry and Patty's divorce was a simple one, mostly because Patty thought if she gave Harry all he wanted, he would come back to her. Instead, Patty would arrive at Harry's house late one night and find him with his lover. This time when Patty took the pills, she did not make sure someone would find her quick enough to save her life. It was only with luck that Patty's friends discovered what she had done and got her help. During that time, Patty was filming a movie, and this attempt on her life, coupled with erratic behavior, caused a split between her and the director of the film, a man she had considered a close friend after their work together on *The Miracle Worker*.



After the divorce, Patty did a movie called *My Sweet Charlie* with Al Freeman. Their relationship began roughly, but by the end of the film they were close friends. During this film, Patty's hotel room was searched on a tip and marijuana was found. The marijuana was not Patty's, but she was never able to defend herself on this fact because no one bothered to ask. No charges were ever brought against her, but knowledge of this find would plague Patty for years, especially based on the erratic behavior she continued to experience. This included her acceptance speech for an Emmy she won for *My Sweet Charlie*, a speech that was rambling and incoherent.

During this time, Patty began dating seventeen-year-old Desi Arnaz Jr. Patty went to dinner with Desi the first time because she believed he wanted to talk about a recording contract. Instead, Patty found herself on a date. Patty quickly fell in love with Desi and they began an affair that was highly publicized because of both their celebrity. Lucille Ball, Desi's mother, objected to the relationship and threatened to throw Desi out of the house on several occasions if he did not stop seeing Patty. At one point, Desi broke off the relationship, but Patty followed the family on vacation, reuniting with Desi. Toward the end of their relationship, Patty learned she was pregnant. The press believed Desi was the father and Patty allowed them to believe it. However, Patty had also been involved with two other men about the time she became pregnant and believed one of them was the biological father.

In the summer of 1970, Patty met John Astin at an ABC affiliates convention. During this convention, a discussion of death took place and Patty could see John Astin had the same paralyzing fear she had. This led to an affair that ended after only a few weeks when John returned to his wife and three children. This same summer, Patty sublet her apartment to a man she met in her apartment lobby, Michael Tell. Patty was supposed to do a play in Chicago. However, her erratic behavior and physical illness caused Patty to be fired from the play. Patty returned to her apartment, suffering from what she thought at the time was morning sickness. Michael cared for her through her illness, so when he asked her to marry him out of the blue, Patty agreed.

Patty and Michael rented a private plane and flew to Las Vegas for the wedding. Afterward, Patty spent most of the evening paying off Michael's gambling debts. A short time later, Patty flew to New York alone and called Anne Bancroft for help in getting out of the marriage. The marriage lasted only thirteen days.

After the birth of her son, Sean, Patty and John Astin reunited. They married when John's marriage to his first wife was finally over. Patty and John took custody of John's three boys when his ex-wife decided she could not longer handle them. In time, Patty adopted the boys and raised them as her own, alongside Sean and her younger son, Mackenzie. John and Patty took the boys on the road and worked doing plays in multiple venues. This lifestyle was adventurous, but it created a tension that took its toll.

During her marriage to John Astin, Patty began seeing his psychiatrist, Dr. Harold Arlen. One night, after having suffered insomnia for several days and going without eating, Patty experienced what she continues to believe was a spiritual revelation. This revelation allowed Patty to discover that there is something after death, relieving her



lifetime fear of death. However, this episode so frightened John that he rushed her to Dr. Arlen in an attempt to bring her out of it. John refused to believe the experience was spiritual, but believed it was a psychotic break. This caused resentment on Patty's behalf, especially when John turned to Buddhism after the death of his father and expected the entire family to follow his lead. Patty filed for divorce in 1985 after thirteen years of marriage, based largely on John's religious conversion.

In 1982, while filming a short lived television show called *It Takes Two*, Patty had an attack of laryngitis. Due to the fact that she was filming that day, Patty went to a doctor who gave her a cortisone injection. While the cortisone solved the laryngitis, it set off a manic attack that caused Patty to have gastrointestinal problems, an inability to sleep, and wild, uncontrollable thoughts. Patty went to see Dr. Arlen during this period and was finally diagnosed with manic depression, a mental illness marked by wild mood swings that is now known as Bipolar Disorder. Patty began taking Lithium, a natural salt normally found in the human body, and has been able to avoid the sudden highs and lows that have marked her adulthood up to this point.

In 1985, two major events took place in Patty's life. First, Patty ran for and won the presidency of the Screen Actors Guild, a union for actors. That same year Patty began work on the film, *A Time to Triumph*. The film was about a woman who joined the army to get medical benefits for her husband. As part of the preparation for the film Patty met with two drill instructors who were to help her prepare for the scenes in which she must go through basic training. One of the instructors was a new graduate named Michael Pearce. After spending a week together working out, Patty and Michael began an affair. They married in 1986, six months after they first met.



Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Introduction and Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Patty Duke is an actress who rose to fame in the sixties with the Broadway play *The Miracle Worker*, which was followed by a movie version for which Patty became one of the youngest actresses to win an Oscar. Patty then starred in her own television show called *The Patty Duke Show* in which she played identical cousins.

In the introduction, Patty relates a meeting with Sid Sheinberg, president of MCA, that was overshadowed by the memory of a previous meeting between the two of them. The previous meeting took place in 1970 while Patty was guest, starring on the television show *Matt Lincoln, MD*. Patty had walked off the set of the show because she learned the crew was not to be allowed to eat until the cast was fed. This led to Patty hitching a ride with a couple of soldiers to a local military base that housed Section 8 soldiers. Patty invited more than a hundred of these men to have lunch on the television set. This led to a meeting with Sid Sheinberg that ended with Patty throwing his own Mickey Mouse clock at him. However, during the current meeting, Patty was clear headed and calm, the new president of the Screen Actors Guild.

In chapter one, Patty tells her readers how she began life as Anna Marie Duke, daughter of John Patrick and Frances Duke. Patty had an older brother, Ray, and sister, Carol. The family lived on Thirty-first Street until Patty was twelve, in a tiny two bedroom apartment that eventually became too infested with bed bugs to be habitable. Patty's father was an alcoholic, and some of her earliest memories of him are of performing on bars where he had taken her instead of the park. Patty remembers terrible fights between her parents until the one day her mother kicked her father out of the house. This had happened before, but this time it was for good. Afterward, Patty recalls having to meet her father at various bars in order to get some money to see the family through.

In chapter two, Patty recalls the dark depressions her mother often suffered. Patty's mother, Frances, would often wake the children in the middle of the night and force them to sit up with her when she struggled with insomnia. There were times when Frances would turn on the gas and attempt to kill them all, but she would always open the windows first. Once Patty's mother was sent to Bellevue for treatment of depression, but it was such a terrible experience that she begged her children to never make her go again.

The book begins with an introduction that describes some of Patty's darkest behaviors. In 1970, Patty was twenty-four, an actress with nearly twenty years of experience. However, this experience did not stop her from not only disrupting the set of a television show, but inviting more than a hundred crazy soldiers to descend for a meal. This introduction contrasts the woman Patty Duke was at twenty-four with the woman she is at thirty-nine, a controlled, calm woman who has been undergoing treatment for manic



depression for several years. It is this contrast that tells the reader how important this treatment was for Patty Duke and why this book is so important to her.

Patty began her life in a most ordinary way, living in a small apartment with her parents and two siblings. This normalcy quickly fades, however, when Patty tells the reader how her father was an alcoholic and her mother suffered dark depressions that occasionally led to half-hearted suicide attempts. This gives the reader some idea of what origins might have led to the trouble Patty would have later in her life. It also gives an idea of the inherited factor of depression and other forms of mental illness, including the one that will plague Patty most of her adult life.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary and Analysis

In chapter three, Anna Marie Duke was taken, at the age of seven or eight, to meet the Rosses. The Rosses were her brother Ray's managers in his endeavors as an actor. Ray had had a decent career, with several credits under his belt, and someone thought it might be a good idea to introduce Anna Marie to the Rosses as well. The Rosses expressed caution in taking on Anna Marie, but decided to take a chance. Anna Marie had never really been interested in actors, though she had often played pretend with friends.

In chapter four, Ethel announced to Anna Marie that they were going to change her name. Ethel told her that Anna Marie was dead and she was Patty now. This careless comment caused Patty to suffer a lifelong fear of death until a spiritual event in 1983 took the fear away. Patty would often have terrible nightmares and suffer panic attacks. The Rosses were unsympathetic to these fears, often laughing them off rather than helping Patty deal with them.

During this time, the Rosses also changed the way Patty looked, dressing her in outfits that were much too young for her age, and working with her on changing the way she spoke. The Rosses made publicity photos of Patty that listed credits she did not have and her age as six instead of eight. The Rosses pushed Patty hard, forcing her to work late into the night to get rid of her New York accent. Although Patty remembers it as torture, she never complained because she wanted to please. For auditions, the Rosses would teach Patty what to say to every possible question that might be asked, encouraging her to lie. This upset Patty because she was raised in the Catholic Church and lying was a sin.

In chapter five, Patty recalls how her career began with commercials. For a time in the fifties, the jobs dried up. After this period, however, the jobs were so numerous Patty could hardly keep up. It was the age of live television, an experience that Patty continues to be happy she was a part of. Patty would often create wonderful connections with the actors she worked with, finding parental figures in actors such as Walter Pidgeon and David Niven. Despite all her hard work, however, the Rosses would prevent Patty from hearing the reviews of her work, or even allowing her to see her work.

In these chapters, Patty Duke met and began working with her brother's talent managers. The Rosses were not actors themselves, but they had a strong understanding of what was involved in acting. John Ross would often spend hours prepping Patty for an audition, a role, or to use a specific accent. This was hard work for a child so young, but Patty was so eager to please that she allowed it. This suggests to the reader that Patty was a typical child, one who only wanted to be loved. However, Patty did not receive a lot of affection from the Rosses. In fact, the Rosses were tough



with Patty, not allowing her to receive praise for her work, not allowing her to even see her work. Not only this, but they forced Patty to go against her own values and lie.

The changing of Patty Duke's name from Anna Marie to Patty was a traumatic experience for an eight year old girl. Patty was told that the person she was before she met the Rosses was dead. This would lead to emotional struggles that Patty continues to deal with today. Not only this, but it also led to a deep, dark fear of death that would plague her dreams and her life until 1983 when a spiritual experience would free her of this fear. This moment defines Patty's life, making it a deeply important moment for the reader to recall as the book continues down the path of Patty's life.



Chapters 6-8

Chapters 6-8 Summary and Analysis

In chapter six, Patty recalls having nightmares of losing her mother, then having those dreams become reality when the Rosses had Patty move into their apartment with them. Patty's mother was not an active part of her career, but instead something of a babysitter and maid, doing all the things the Rosses did not want to do themselves. Patty saw her mother as a willing victim, someone who allowed the Rosses to walk all over her and did nothing to stand up for herself.

In chapter seven, Patty recalls working hard for the parts she wanted, but missing out on a few roles because she did not have the right experience or the right look. During this early time in her career, Patty recalls being a contestant on a television game show called The \$64,000 Challenge. The associate producer of this show would meet with Patty alone and give her the categories she should study. Patty would work all hours of the night with John Ross studying these categories, but if she still did not know the answers to some questions, the same associate producer would give her the answers. In the end Patty, and another actor, Eddie Hodges, split the \$64,000 prize money. A year later, the New York prosecutor began investigating allegations against the producers of The \$64,000 Challenge and Twenty-One. Patty was forced to submit to interrogation by the DA and to testify in front of a grand jury. In both instances Patty lied because John Ross told her to. However, when Patty testified before Congress, she told the truth despite John Ross's insistence she continue the lies.

In chapter eight, John Ross clipped out an article about a play being produced on Broadway about Helen Keller. Deciding that Patty should play the part of Helen Keller, John Ross made her read Helen Keller's biography and began training her to walk around the house as though blind, to not respond to loud noises, and to speak as though deaf. This training lasted a year. Finally the auditions for Helen Keller were scheduled to be held at the Booth Theater. Patty made it through the first audition, but the producers were concerned she would grow too fast and be too tall to play the part in the long run. Therefore, at the second audition, Patty was instructed to wear shoes with special two inch heels on them to show the producers what she would look like two inches taller. Patty then met with the producer. A short time later she learned she had gotten the part.

These chapters cover a volatile time in Patty's early life. First, Patty was taken away from her mother and watched as her mother did nothing to fight the situation. Clearly this causes Patty to resent her mother, to wonder why the woman did not fight for her the way some of the parents of the Rosses' other clients did. Although Patty was too young to understand at the time, the reader can clearly see that Frances Duke's clinical depression had a great deal to do with her inability to stand up to the Rosses. Frances felt inadequate and this caused her to give up the one thing she should have fought for, her young daughter.

To add insult to injury, Patty has been ordered to lie by the Rosses on multiple occasions. The worst of these lies is when they tell her to lie to the New York DA and a grand jury. However, Patty is old enough to know that lying is wrong, so she takes the situation into her own hands and tells the truth in front of a Congressional committee. This shows strength and determination on Patty's part, two things she will definitely need to survive the acting world. This becomes underlined when Patty fights for and gets the role of Helen Keller in the Broadway version of *The Miracle Worker*.



Chapters 9-11

Chapters 9-11 Summary and Analysis

In chapter nine, rehearsals for *The Miracle Worker* begin in the heat of summer. Patty did well in the rehearsals and began to forge a strong relationship with Anne Bancroft. In fact, Patty grew close to all the crew members, including the director, Arthur Penn. The most difficult part of the play was the fight scene that takes place between Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller at the end of the second act. This scene is extremely physical and parts of it are real because things such as slapping and pulling hair cannot be realistically faked on stage. There came a point during the run of the play that both Patty and Anne became convinced that the other was hitting too hard on purpose. However, they were able to work out their differences and remain close friends.

When the play opened in Philadelphia for its test run, the advance ticket sales were not good, but another play across town was forced to close and the ticket holders were given tickets for *The Miracle Worker*. This created a full house that called for eighteen curtain calls at the end of the performance. It was not until later that Patty learned this was an unusual number of curtain calls. Patty was caught up in the excitement.

In chapter ten, the success in Philadelphia caused some trepidation for opening night in New York. However, the play did just as well, receiving thirteen curtain calls. As the play went into full production, Patty found herself working a full day between school, eating, and working. On matinee days, it was twice as hard. During this time, Patty went on what would be the first of many vacations with the Rosses in the Caribbean on what was most likely Patty's money. The play was an amazing experience for Patty.

In chapter eleven, Patty had a full schedule with *The Miracle Worker*, but the Rosses still pushed her to do the occasional movie. Due to her crazy schedule and lack of sleep, the Rosses began feeding Patty pills such as Thorazine and Stelazine that Ethel would get from a nurse friend of hers.

Patty did not see her father after she began acting. Years later, however, Patty would learn that her father came to the theater often to watch her perform. Patty would also learn that her father had begun contacting the Rosses, coming to them for money to stay away. At the same time, Anne Bancroft decided to leave her role as Annie Sullivan. Patty was crushed by this decision and disliked her replacement, Suzanne Pleshette. However, over time they came to be good friends until Patty, too, convinced the Rosses it was time to leave the play.

In these chapters, Patty shares with her readers what was clearly a highlight of her life. Working on *The Miracle Worker* was like finally having a whole family for Patty. Anne Bancroft became something of a mother and big sister figure for Patty, a role that Patty deeply longed to have filled. Others with the play also became important to Patty, both in helping her improve her craft as well as filling the holes her missing family members



had left. The Miracle Worker did not only begin Patty on the road to success, but it became her family, her emotional stability. It is no wonder that Patty was crushed when it came to an end. All Patty had without The Miracle Worker were a couple of greedy talent managers who disregarded what was healthy for Patty and instead used her money to go on expensive trips and fed her drugs that today their very possession of would be grounds for arrest.



Chapters 12-14

Chapters 12-14 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twelve, the film version of *The Miracle Worker* began filming in the summer of 1961. Patty was reunited with most of the cast and a few key members of the crew, including the director Arthur Penn, on whom she still had a crush. When the film was completed, Patty was devastated by the loss, once again, of her *Miracle Worker* family.

In chapter thirteen, Patty recalls that it was during the filming of *The Miracle Worker* movie that the Rosses began drinking more heavily. This led to some sexual molestation of her at the hands of John Ross that included some inappropriate touching. During this time, as well, the Rosses began encouraging Patty to drink herself. After the filming of *The Miracle Worker*, Patty was cast in a play called *Isle of Children*. However, this play did not have a congruent plot and closed after only eleven performances. About this time *The Miracle Worker* was released and Patty received a Golden Globe. A short time later, Patty got an Oscar nomination.

In chapter fourteen, the Rosses entered into an agreement with ABC to do a television series with Patty. Patty was sent to California to stay with Sidney Sheldon, the television writer, for a week in order for him to learn about Patty so he could develop a series for her. Patty has no clue why Sidney choose the identical cousins idea, except perhaps because he saw that Patty had several sides to her personality that were not all comparable. The show began shooting in New York in order to avoid California child labor laws. Patty loved each of her co-workers, but found the characters of Cathy and Patty too boring, too cardboard. In fact, playing them was time consuming and she found it difficult to act with herself while pretending to talk to her alter ego. On top of this, Patty was also forced to use two separate dressing rooms as a gimmick for the public, something she found frustrating.

Of all the people on the set Patty loved the most was director Stanley Praeger. However, the Rosses forced her to lie to the producers about Stanley in order to get him fired because she was too close to him. Also during this time, Patty was National Youth Chairman for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, a job she found both time consuming and heart breaking. This role allowed Patty to meet John F. Kennedy during a visit to the White House with two children who suffered from Muscular Dystrophy.

To this day, Patty has no clue how much money she made as a child. Whatever money she did make, only eighty thousand dollars was left by the time she was an adult. The Rosses spent it all on fancy vacations and many other things. However, Patty does not worry about the money, it is the life that was stolen from her that concerns her the most.

These chapters show a continuing number of abuses leveled against Patty by the Rosses while she was working with them. Not only were they feeding her drugs and alcohol, they were abusing her emotionally and sexually. To top things off, they were



spending her money as though it was theirs to spend, going on vacations, buying a new apartment, and paying off Patty's parents to stay away. Patty appeared to be a healthy child to the public at the time, but now the reader wonders how much impact this insanity had on Patty's future troubles.

Patty began working on The Patty Duke Show in these chapters. This show is one of the things that most of Patty's fans remember her fondly for. However, the reader is shocked to learn that Patty disliked the show and would have preferred to focus on her movie career. Once again, however, Patty only wanted to make everyone happy, so she did everything the Rosses told her to do. The reader must wonder along with Patty Duke what might have been different in her life if not for the Rosses.



Chapters 15-17

Chapters 15-17 Summary and Analysis

In chapter fifteen, Patty became old enough to date, but she was never allowed, so her first kiss was on a bus with a young actor on whom she had a crush. However, the boy found himself a different girlfriend a few days later and Patty remained confused and depressed when it came to boys. Then she met Frank Sinatra Jr. Frank was interested in Patty, but he traveled a great deal, so the majority of their relationship consisted of phone calls and letters. It was because of this relationship that the Rosses finally allowed Patty to get her phone hooked up.

During this same time period, Patty became so unhappy at the Rosses that she began sleeping all weekend so that she would not have to deal with them. About this same time, the Rosses began pushing Patty to sign a lifetime contract with them. Patty spoke with their attorney and chose not to sign the contract, causing Ethel to become infuriated. However, this one time Patty refused to back down. A short time later, Patty learned her father had died. The Rosses would not allow her to communicate with her family or to attend the reception after the funeral, choreographing her appearance at the funeral perfectly for the press. Later that same year, John Ross attempted suicide, nearly making a success out of it. That same summer, Ethel's mother, whom Patty had grown close to, came for a visit and became ill. Patty wanted to stay up all night and care for her, but was sent to bed because she had to work the next day. However, Patty learned the next woman that the woman she thought of as her own grandmother had died. This caused the first fight Patty would have with the Rosses in which she actually stood up for herself.

In chapter sixteen, Patty recalls seeing Harry Falk on the set of The Patty Duke Show in the early days of the show and telling the second assistant director that she was going to marry him one day. Harry left The Patty Duke Show for a short time to do another show, but came back. At that time, Patty pursued him until he finally asked her to dinner. To her surprise, the Rosses allowed Patty to go out with Harry even though he was years older than her and divorced. Patty and Harry dated exclusively for several months, including going on a vacation Harry took with Patty and the Rosses before it finally culminated in an intimate relationship. As a result, Patty became more forceful with the Rosses and they became determined to regain their control over her. The Rosses forced Patty to spend the summer hiatus from her show in Los Angeles filming a movie called Billie. Afterward, the Rosses arranged to move the set of The Patty Duke Show to Los Angeles, setting off a huge argument between Patty and Ethel that ended in Ethel accusing Patty of causing John Ross's attempted suicide.

In chapter seventeen, Patty went to New York to spend the summer with Harry, returning to the Rosses only long enough to collect her things. However, by the time she did this, Patty discovered the Rosses had moved without telling her. Patty moved into an apartment in Los Angeles, but she could not handle being alone, so she began



hanging out with the remnants of the Rat Pack, including Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis Jr. and Lee Marvin. Patty also began treating the Rosses poorly, ignoring them on set and humiliating them at any opportunity. In the fall of 1965, Patty underwent surgery for a ruptured appendix, an episode that set off the first of many manic episodes she would experience until her diagnosis of manic depression. This episode was marked by sleeplessness and excessive spending. Patty ended up moving in with Bob Sweeney, her shows producer, for six weeks. It was also during this time that Patty became engaged to Harry Falk.

A lot happens to Patty in chapter fifteen. Patty becomes aware of men, of sex and all that goes with it, leading to her first love affair with Frank Sinatra Jr. This affair is platonic and they continue to be good friends to this day. This affair leads to another, this time with Harry Falk, an assistant director on The Patty Duke Show who is older than Patty and married the day she meets him. However, Patty is determined to make him her husband, creating a situation that leads to a love affair the Rosses are afraid of. The Rosses have made attempts to keep Patty their property even after she reaches maturity, but these attempts were thwarted. The introduction of Harry into the situation adds a complication the Rosses did not foresee, therefore causing them to act quickly to attempt to get rid of this threat. The result is a situation that causes Patty to feel empowered and determined to live her own life. Patty finally breaks from the Rosses for a variety of reasons and embraces life on her own. However, Patty has never learned to live alone.

Patty experiences her first true manic episode, one set off by anesthesia during an operation, alerting the reader to what happens when Patty is out of control. This situation causes Patty to turn to a man, a theme of her life that will reappear again and again as she continues to tell her story. At this same time Patty becomes engaged to Harry Falk, showing both the reader and the Rosses that she is determined to live her life on her own terms.



Chapters 18-20

Chapters 18-20 Summary and Analysis

In chapter eighteen, Patty and Harry were married, but Patty's mother does not attend. Patty and Harry collect what is left of the money Patty made during her childhood and move into a small house in the San Fernando Valley. Patty convinces the producers to allow Harry to direct three episodes of her show. Unfortunately, these prove to be the final three episodes ever filmed for the show. During this time, Harry and Patty bought a house off Benedict Canyon in Beverly Hills. When it came to furnish it, Patty was working so Harry allowed his friend, Joanna Barnes, to help him. Patty was threatened by her and easily hurt by her natural grace and beauty.

In chapter nineteen, The Patty Duke Show ended, causing Patty to fall into a depression even though a part of her was relieved to see the show go. A series of attempted suicides led to two hospitalizations.

In chapter twenty, a period began in Patty's career where she failed to get the jobs she wanted. When Patty learned a movie was being made of the book, Valley of the Dolls, she convinced her manager and anyone else who would listen that she had to do it. When the film wrapped, Patty became pregnant with an ectopic pregnancy and had to have surgery. As a way to cheer her up, she was invited to a private screening of the movie. Patty hated it and still does to this day.

In the previous set of chapters, Patty suffered her first manic episode. In these chapters, Patty struggles with her first major depression. As a result of her erratic behavior, Patty spends several weeks in a psychiatric hospital, attempting to overcome the depression that has caused her to attempt to take an overdose of pills on several occasions and caused her to be unable to leave her own house. These behaviors are dangerous and debilitating, leaving Patty in a crisis she does not have the skills to deal with. To top it off, Patty has an ectopic pregnancy and is in a film that she, to this day, considers terrible. It is a difficult time in Patty's life, placing a toll on her new marriage, suggesting to the reader where the next few chapters will most likely take them.



Chapters 21-23

Chapters 21-23 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twenty-one, Patty moves back to New York in order to start filming *Me, Natalie*. Harry sends Patty alone to find a place to live while he finds a renter for their house in Los Angeles. During this time, Patty learns of the death of Robert Kennedy and is devastated when she cannot get Harry on the phone. When Harry finally arrives in New York, he accuses Patty of having an affair when he finds a note from a bouquet of flowers given to Patty by a friend's husband. A short time later, Patty learns that Harry had a woman with him in their home while she was away. Patty and Harry split up, reconciled a few times, then decided to divorce. One night Patty went to the studio where *The Patty Duke Show* was filmed and took an overdose of pills while talking to Harry on the phone. She was rescued by Fred Coe and returned to work the following day, but the situation caused tension in her relationship with Coe. When Patty returned to Los Angeles, her divorce from Harry was finalized.

In chapter twenty-two, Patty continued to carry a torch for Harry. One night Patty went to a restaurant across from her building to have some soup and ended up going home with Frank Sinatra. Patty and Frank spent several weeks in Palm Springs, but never had intimate relations. It ended when Sinatra's father, who was ill, needed his son. At the same time, Patty moved in with a friend, Sandy Smith. One night Patty could not sleep so she went to Harry's, but Harry was there with his lover. Patty was so depressed she took a bottle of pills, nearly dying before Sandy figured out what she had done and got her help.

In chapter twenty-three, after her suicide attempt, Patty began work in Texas on a movie called *My Sweet Charlie*. Patty developed a good friendship with her co-star, Al Freeman, a situation that she believes led to someone planting marijuana in her dressing room.

In chapter twenty-four, Patty got a call from Desi Arnaz, Jr. who told her he wanted to talk to her about producing a record with her. Patty and Desi became the next celebrity couple, despite the fact that Desi was only seventeen years of age to Patty's twenty-four. Patty claims to have not known how young Desi was despite his well publicized birth, but Lucille Ball quickly set her straight. In fact, Lucy made threats against her son to force him to end his relationship with Patty, ultimately putting a wedge between the young lovers, even though their relationship lasted nearly a year.

In these chapters, the reader learns how Patty's marriage to Harry Falk fell apart. To Harry's credit, it seems that dealing with Patty's depression caused a terrible strain on him. Harry turned to another woman, something inexcusable, but something he had done before. The end of the marriage was difficult for Patty, sending her into another depression and leading to her first serious attempt at suicide. However, showing the reader again how resilient she can be, Patty jumped right back into work and into

romance. Patty's brief affair with Frank Sinatra was more of a friendship than anything else, but her romance with Desi Arnaz Jr. was one that would create a complication in her life that would lead to more than just an argument with his famous mother over age. It is this affair that the reader should make most note of, because it will play an important role in the following chapters.



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twenty-five, Patty learned that John Ross died. This tragedy set off a manic episode that would color Patty's acceptance speech for an Emmy she won for her role in *My Sweet Charlie*. Patty was rumored to be on drugs or simply crazy after people saw her speech. The following day her manager put her back in Westwood Psychiatric Hospital.

In chapter twenty-six, Patty tells readers how she met Michael Tell, a man she married after knowing him for a very short time. Michael wanted to sublet an apartment in Patty's building. Due to the fact that Patty was about to do a play in Chicago, she offered her apartment to him. That night they shared a drink in the apartment so Michael could see it. The following night they played Monopoly together. Patty went to Chicago a short time later and managed two days of rehearsal for the play before she became too sick to work. Patty was let go and sent back to Los Angeles. Upon her arrival, Michael was still in the apartment, so he cared for her through her illness. When Michael suggested they get married, Patty agreed for reasons she still does not understand. Patty spent the first few hours of their marriage paying off Michael's gambling debts. Later, Patty went to New York, did a disastrous interview on the Dick Cavett Show, and called Anne Bancroft to help her escape her marriage.

In chapter twenty-seven, Patty's pregnancy with her oldest son, Sean, became the popular gossip. Everyone wondered who the father was. Patty believed, through a simple counting of dates, that the father was John Astin, with whom she had had a brief affair. However, she allowed the world to believe Desi Arnaz Jr. was the father to spare John and his wife, Suzanne, any new pain. When Sean was born that February of 1971, Desi's father and sister came to see him in the hospital. However, Lucille Ball refused to acknowledge the child, adding to the final wedge between Patty and Desi.

In chapter twenty-eight, Patty tells readers how she met John Astin at an ABC affiliates convention and they bonded over a shared fear of death. They had a brief affair that ended when John returned to his wife. However, in late 1971, after the birth of Sean, John separated from his wife for good and moved in with Patty. They were married the fall of the following year. The following spring their second child, Mackenzie, was born. John made Patty happy, but what he did most for her was he began calling her by her birth name, Anna, in essence giving her her identity back.

In these chapters, Patty goes through another bout of erratic behavior, marrying a man she barely knows, having an affair with another, married man, and continuing her relationship with a seventeen-year-old child. During this time, Patty also spends money irrationally and shares a house with a woman she does not know. In the end, Patty becomes pregnant with her child Sean. Patty claims to know who the father of this child is, but with three candidates, the reader has to wonder how good her memory is.



However, Sean's birth not only pulls her out of this erratic behavior, but it brings her together with John Astin, the first truly stable man in her life thus far. John Astin cares deeply for Patty and manages to give her her identity back by calling her by her Christian name, Anna. This goes a long way to helping Patty heal the instability that has plagued her life thus far.



Chapters 29-32

Chapters 29-32 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twenty-nine, Patty and John take custody of John's three sons. However, having five children introduced a new chaos into Patty's life that she did not know how to deal with.

In chapter thirty, Patty tells how she hired two men who approached her on the street to be her managers. These men embezzled Patty's money, leading to a situation in which she and John were forced to take all five kids on the road to do plays in theaters all over the country.

In chapter thirty-one, Patty relates a story about a spiritual episode that took place in 1977. Patty was doing a film about psychic phenomena. The movie required long hours of work, leading Patty into a period of insomnia and an inability to eat. One night, on the way home, Patty began singing to songs on the radio she had never heard before and then became convinced that there is life after death. Patty then began to feel as though she were dying, leaving this world for something better. John pulled her back, but Patty then began repeating everything he said as he said it. John, frightened, took Patty to Dr. Harold Arlen, his personal therapist. Dr. Arlen gave Patty medication and tried to convince her that what she had had was a psychotic break brought on by exhaustion. Patty did not and does not believe that. About a year later, Ethel Ross died. This death caused Patty to reach out to her own mother and get her help for her own struggles with depression.

In chapter thirty-two, Patty's career continued, mostly in television, bringing her to the opportunity to play Annie Sullivan to Melissa Gilbert's Helen Keller. Patty was thrilled with the opportunity and used it to teach Melissa in a way Patty wished someone could have done for her. After making the film version of this *Miracle Worker*, Patty hoped to get the role of Annie Sullivan in *Monday after the Miracle*, a sequel to *The Miracle Worker*, but was passed over by her old friend Arthur Penn in favor of Ellen Burstyn.

In these chapters, Patty found love and a family, but it all came too fast and too hard. Patty was placed in a position that would be difficult for a mentally stable person. It is no surprise that Patty struggled as she did during the years when her five children were young. However, the psychotic break Patty suffered that she still believes was a spiritual experience shows how much strain she was under during this time and how volatile her undiagnosed illness really was. However, this period was not all darkness. Patty enjoyed the growth of her children and was able to play Annie Sullivan in *The Miracle Worker*, an experience she still treasures.



Chapters 33-36

Chapters 33-36 Summary and Analysis

In chapter thirty-three, Patty was offered a role in an after-school special that had a part in it perfect for Sean. Patty had always thought she would not encourage her kids to act, but Sean deeply wanted to. The experience was difficult for Patty, but she is deeply proud of the work Sean did and has done since then. So proud, in fact, that Patty has also allowed Mackenzie to become an actor.

In chapter thirty-four, Patty began work in 1982 on a short lived television series called It Takes Two. It was a wonderful series that Patty believed would be around for many years, but was cancelled after only one season. While working on this show, Patty had laryngitis and received a cortisone injection to treat it. This injection set off a manic episode that final lead to a diagnosis of manic depression. With the diagnosis came the Lithium pill that would allow Patty to avoid the extreme highs and lows associated with the illness.

In chapter thirty-five, Patty took on another series in 1985 called Hail to the Chief that again only lasted a few episodes. However, during this same year, Patty ran for and won the presidency of the Screen Actors Guild. Also during this time period Patty became active in politics, following several causes close to her heart and one close to her son, Mack's, heart: nuclear disarmament.

In chapter thirty-six, Patty and John's marriage, which had been volatile from the beginning, hit a new rough patch when John embraced Buddhism after his father's death. Patty attempted to be a supportive wife until one last fight finally drove Patty over the edge. Patty filed for divorce. The fall after her divorce became final, Patty met Michael Pearce, a new drill sergeant with the army who was assigned to help her learn the exercises utilized in basic training for a movie. Patty and Michael spent a great deal of time together and began an affair, despite the fact that Michael was still married. Michael and his wife separated and divorced, clearing the way for he and Patty to marry six months later.

In these chapters, Patty witnesses the growth and maturity of her children in the same career she was forced into, witnessing what it is like when it happens in a better atmosphere than the one in which she lived. These years also came with a diagnosis, a final understanding of the behaviors and depressions that have plagued her entire adult life. Patty finally had a pill to fix what ailed her. However, these years also came with disappointments and the destruction of her marriage. Like she has shown before, Patty rebounded from this difficult time and found a man she believed she could spend the rest of her life with. Marriage number four was not something Patty ever thought she would do, but it has lasted and it appears that it is exactly what Patty needed. Perhaps it was the medication that made the marriage work, not that it really matters. Patty has

found a way to a more stable, comfortable life and that was one of the main themes of the book.



Characters

Anna Marie Duke/Patty Duke

Patty Duke is an actress who became famous as a child. Patty Duke has appeared on Broadway, on television, and in the movies. As a child, Patty Duke appeared in both the Broadway version and movie version of Helen Keller's autobiography, *The Miracle Worker*. In fact, Patty Duke is the youngest actor to have their name appear above the name of the play on the marquee. Patty Duke was also the youngest actor to win an Oscar for her performance in *The Miracle Worker* movie. After this success, Patty Duke went on to portray identical cousins in the television show *The Patty Duke Show*. Later, Patty Duke appeared in multiple movies, mostly made for television movies, as well as several other plays and several short lived television series.

Patty Duke never wanted to be an actress. Born Anna Marie Duke, Patty was pushed into acting first by her mother and later by her managers. As Patty's star rose, so did the control her managers had over her every waking moment. In the end, Patty broke from these controlling, abusive people, but she had no skills to help her live on her own. To add to this difficulty, Patty suffered from a mental disorder that went undiagnosed until she reached middle age. Patty would have terrible mood swings that were accompanied by erratic behavior and physical ailments. Through all this, Patty managed to continue her acting career, marry four times, and raise five children.

Ethel Ross

Ethel Ross was one of Patty Duke's managers. When Patty's mother took her daughter to Ethel Ross, the Rosses made it seem they were taking on the young girl out of pity. However, the Rosses had a good eye for what production managers were looking for. Ethel Ross packaged Patty Duke, changing her hair, her dress, even her age and her name. Ethel pushed Patty to work hard, to put her whole spirit into each role. This push made Patty Duke the brilliant actress she would quickly become. However, Ethel's refusal to allow Patty to be a normal child in her free moments left Patty unable to survive as an adult in a world she did not understand.

John Ross

John Ross was Ethel's husband. Where Ethel was loud, pushy, and cruel, John was quiet, unassuming, a perfectionist. It was John's job to teach Patty what she needed to know to make a role work. John would often drill Patty late into the night, forcing her to repeat lines over and over again, to practice foreign accents until she sounded like a native speaker, to walk blindly through the apartment until a stranger would actually believe she was blind. John adored Patty, but he would rarely stand up for her to Ethel. As Patty matured, John's affection became confusing, causing Patty to feel as though John were a threat, a sexual predator she had to be wary of. Toward the end of her time



with the Rosses, John attempted suicide. This attempt was unsuccessful, but Ethel would eventually blame Patty for it.

Frances Duke

Frances Duke is Patty Duke's mother. Frances has struggled with dark depression all her life, possibly set off by the unfortunate timing of her mother's death. Frances married John Patrick Duke and had three children, only to find herself alone when John Patrick's alcoholism became too much of a burden on the family. Frances had no skills and no way to provide for her family alone. Ray, Frances' oldest child, had done some minor acting with the Rosses as his managers. This led to Patty becoming their client, her career paying for the family's basic needs even as Frances worked as a servant for the Rosses. Patty and her mother would be estranged for many years after Patty left the Rosses, but eventually would repair their relationship and remain close through Patty's diagnosis and treatment of manic depression.

John Astin

John Astin is an actor who is best known for his role on a television show called The Addams Family. John Astin is a quiet, gentle man who often avoided confrontation with his children and wife. John met Patty Duke at a party in which they both discovered that the other had the same crippling fear of death. This common fear brought them together and led to a brief affair. However, John Astin was married at the time and chose to return to his wife and three children. Patty Duke learned she was pregnant soon after and allowed people to believe the father was Desi Arnaz Jr., the young man she had been dating at the time. However, Patty and John both believed for many years that Sean was John's child. This child brought them back together and they soon married when John's divorce from his first wife was final. The marriage lasted thirteen years and produced another child, Mackenzie. However, the marriage ended in 1985, when Patty found herself unable to accept the Buddhism John turned to after the death of his father.

Harry Falk

Harry Falk was the assistant director on The Patty Duke Show. From the moment she saw him, Patty wanted to marry Harry. Harry was already married at the time, but Patty refused to allow that to be an obstacle. In time, Harry divorced his first wife and began dating Patty. When the Rosses learned of the seriousness of this relationship, they urged Patty to stop seeing this much older man. Patty refused, so the Rosses moved The Patty Duke Show to Los Angeles in the hopes of putting a wedge between the young lovers. This did not work. Instead, it only drew Patty and Harry closer. Patty and Harry married and worked together briefly on The Patty Duke Show before it was canceled. When it was cancelled, Patty fell into a dark depression that caused problems in her marriage, as Patty tried on multiple occasions to manipulate Harry by taking an overdose of pills. Eventually, Harry fell in love with someone else and they divorced.



Desi Arnaz Jr.

Desi Arnaz Jr. is the son of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Desi Jr. called Patty out of the blue once and asked her to dinner. Thinking it was a business dinner, Patty went. However, Desi soon made his romantic intentions toward her clear. Patty asked Desi how old he was and was told he was nineteen. However, Lucille Ball told her he was only seventeen and accused her of knowing this because Desi Jr.'s birth was practically broadcast on national television via Lucy's show *I Love Lucy*. This relationship continued despite Lucy's threats against her son. However, during this relationship, Patty had an affair with John Astin and married a man named Michael Tell. It was widely believed that Desi Arnaz Jr. was the father of Patty's oldest son, Sean. However, Patty believed John Astin was Sean's father.

Sean Astin

Sean Astin is Patty Duke's oldest son. Sean's birth was surrounded by controversy, because no one knew for sure who his father was. Patty was dating Desi Arnaz Jr. when she got pregnant, but was sure that she had not been with him at the time of conception. Patty believed that her affair with John Astin resulted in the conception of Sean. However, also during this critical time period, Patty was married for thirteen days to a man named Michael Tell. As a result, Sean grew up unsure who his father was, only aware that the man he thought was his biological father was forced to adopt him because Patty was not married to him at the time of Sean's birth. Despite all this, Sean grew up to be a stable, confident young man who began his own acting career as a child alongside his mother in an after-school special movie called, *Please Don't Hit Me, Mom*.

Anne Bancroft

Anne Bancroft is an actress who had a strong, successful career for more than half a century. Anne Bancroft starred with Patty Duke in both the Broadway version and movie version of *The Miracle Worker*. Patty Duke adopted Anne Bancroft as something of a mother figure during the run of the play, turning to her for the unconditional affection a child should receive from a parent, but Patty never really did. Anne was kind and generous with Patty, allowing her into her dressing room during that critical half hour before the performance, sharing with Patty her secrets and advice, and dealing with Patty's fears with the patience only a loving companion can show. Anne Bancroft made a large impact on Patty's life, showing her that we all deserve a little understanding. Unfortunately, when the play ended, Patty had few opportunities to see Anne again. She did, however, turn to Anne Bancroft when Patty married Michael Tell and needed help getting out of the relationship.



Helen Keller

Helen Keller was born healthy, but an illness when she was still an infant left her blind and deaf. For many years Helen was stuck in a silent world with no opportunities to learn how to communicate. Helen's parents hired a woman who was legally blind herself and had just become certified as a teacher to try and teach Helen to interact with the rest of the world. At first it seemed this effort would be fruitless, but Annie Sullivan would eventually be able to break through into Helen's world and teach her to communicate via a type of sign language done against the hand so that Helen could feel the movements. Helen would continue to learn, eventually becoming an accomplished writer. Helen wrote her autobiography and this was used as the basis for the play *The Miracle Worker*. While doing this play on Broadway, portraying Helen, Patty Duke would get the opportunity to meet her.



Objects/Places

Princess Phone

Patty had a princess phone in her bedroom at the Ross's, but it was not hooked up until Frank Sinatra Jr. struck up a friendship with her.

Pills

Patty Duke would often threaten to kill herself with an overdose of pills whenever she was having a manic episode. This happened most frequently in Patty's first marriage to director Harry Falk.

Private Planes

During one particular manic episode, Patty Duke would charter private planes to fly all over the country for no particular reason except to do it.

Dogs

Patty Duke would often buy and keep small dogs around her, but would often go off in the middle of a manic episode and leave them abandoned. Once, after being fired from a play, Ms. Duke left two dogs in a hotel room. Another time, Ms. Duke rented a house with a stewardess she did not know. This woman stole the furniture and abandoned the dogs, causing Ms. Duke to have to pay thousands to the landlord to repair the damage.

Musical Albums

Patty Duke released several musical albums when she was starring in The Patty Duke Show. Patty enjoyed the experience initially, but has bad memories of it and dislikes the pictures used on the covers.

Rosses Apartment

In the first few years Patty Duke lived with the Rosses, she was forced to sleep on a small couch in the foyer of the apartment, because it was a one bedroom apartment. Later, when Patty became successful, the Rosses moved to a larger apartment where Patty had a room of her own, but she was not allowed to close her door or have any real privacy.



Westwood Psychiatric Hospital

Patty Duke spent several weeks in Westwood Psychiatric Hospital during her marriage to Harry Falk because of a deep depression she suffered after the cancellation of The Patty Duke Show.

The Patty Duke Show

The Patty Duke Show is a television series that ran from 1963-1966, starring Patty Duke as cousins who looked exactly alike but were very different. Patty Duke confesses to disliking this show and growing bored with the characters. However, the set of this show is where Patty Duke met her first husband, Harry Falk.

The Miracle Worker

The Miracle Worker began as a Broadway play written about Helen Keller and based on her autobiography. Patty Duke starred as Helen Keller in the original play and the first movie made based on the play. More than ten years later, Patty Duke would take the role as Annie Sullivan in a made-for-television version of the film with Melissa Gilbert as Helen Keller.

Manic Depression

In 1982, Patty Duke was diagnosed with Manic Depression, a mental illness marked by severe mood swings that is now called Bipolar Disease. Patty Duke's diagnoses came after a routine shot of cortisone for laryngitis set off a severe manic episode.

New York City

Patty Duke was born Anna Marie Duke in New York City and lived there until the age of seventeen. Patty, however, did not live with her mother on a continuous basis once she became a working actress. Patty resided with her managers in order to make scheduling easier.

Los Angeles

Patty Duke moved to Los Angeles in the mid sixties because the Rosses had filming for The Patty Duke Show moved there in an attempt to stop Patty from dating Harry Falk. This move not only did not break up the couple, but it led to the eventual split between Patty Duke and her managers.



Palm Springs

Patty Duke spent several weeks in Palm Springs with famous singer, Frank Sinatra. Despite the rumors, however, Patty and Frank were only companions, not lovers.

Las Vegas

Patty Duke flew to Las Vegas in a private plane and married Michael Tell, a man who had sublet her apartment for a few weeks, but not someone she knew well. Patty claims she spent the first few hours of her marriage to Mr. Tell paying off his gambling debts.



Themes

Mental Illness

All throughout her childhood, Patty Duke suffers from bouts of irrational fears, such as a deep fear of death, that she cannot understand or shake. Patty reaches out to the adults in her life for help, but they mock her fears and instruct her to act more like an adult. Patty often lies in bed telling herself there must be a pill that will help rid her of these fears, but one never comes along. As Patty grows older and breaks from the relationships that shaped her childhood, she finds herself facing even more fears. Patty cannot be alone, she has never learned to be alone. Patty cannot sleep, sometimes she cannot eat, and quite often Patty cannot control her tongue or her spending habits.

Patty marries and believes this will make everything in her life all better. However, shortly after this marriage begins, Patty suffers a depression that is so overwhelming that she often goes days without speaking. Patty sleeps for hours at a time, not waking at the hours in which other people might. Patty does not eat or drink, nor can she make herself go to the store or read a book to share with her husband. This depression leads Patty to half-heartedly attempt suicide. Her husband at the time, Harry Falk, takes Patty to the hospital, where she is admitted to Westwood for observation. Patty suddenly comes out of her depression as though a door were opened. Shortly afterward, Patty is allowed to return home.

On the flip side of these debilitating depressions, Patty begins to suffer wild, uncontrollable behavior. Patty spends money recklessly, allows a strange man to live in her apartment, and even marries this strange man without first knowing more than his name. Patty rambles at the Emmy's, throws things, makes trouble on movie sets, and simply acts in inappropriate and unmanageable ways. Still, Patty believes there must be a pill somewhere, an answer to this wild behavior, but she remains unable to find it. Finally, in 1982, Patty is given cortisone for laryngitis and this sets off one of the worst manic episodes she has ever suffered. This episode leaves Patty unable to sleep, unable to eat, and unable to enjoy the life she has built for herself. A visit to her psychiatrist leads to a diagnosis of manic depression.

Patty has always known there was a pill that would fix her and finally she has found it. Lithium is a natural salt that exists in the human body normally. However, in manic depressives, this salt is not at a normal level, causing wild mood swings and other physical symptoms in the sufferer. With the pill, Patty is able to normalize her moods, helping her to control the behaviors that at one time she felt were out of control. It is this that makes mental illness a major theme of the book.



Childhood Trauma

Patty Duke was born to John and Frances Duke, the youngest child of three. However, when Patty was still a small child, her father, an alcoholic, leaves the home. Patty's mother, who herself suffers from unipolar depression, is left with three children to support and little income with which to do it. When Patty's brother, Ray, begins acting and this becomes a source of income, Patty's mother comes to rely on it. Therefore, when the Rosses, Ray's managers, suggest Patty might also become an actress, she jumps at the opportunity.

Frances Duke is a weak woman who does not know how to handle situations that appear out of her control. Frances allows the Rosses to take advantage of her. The Rosses take complete control over Patty, changing her name, creating a career for her in acting, and moving her into their own home. Frances, in the meantime, is getting paid to stay out of the way. Frances is allowed to accompany Patty to auditions and to sit with her on sets, but she is not allowed to take her child home and let her do something as normal as playing outside. Frances spends all the time she has with her daughter, which is often too short, worrying what the Rosses might say. Not only this, but Frances Duke becomes a maid to the Rosses, often washing their clothing for them and receiving nothing but criticism for her hard work.

At the same time her mother has become ineffectual in her life and her father has disappeared, Patty Duke finds herself locked in the house all day long, studying lines and learning how to do whatever a role might call for, from speaking in a foreign accent to learning how to walk through a room as though she were blind. Childhood was far from normal for Patty Duke. In fact, childhood bordered on abusive for Patty Duke. For this reason, childhood trauma is a theme of the book.

Troubled Marriages

By the end of the book, the reader learns that Patty Duke has been married four times. Patty Duke's first marriage is to an assistant director on her show, *The Patty Duke Show*. Harry Falk is older than Patty, already married when she meets him. However, there is a charm and a shyness about him that Patty cannot resist. Patty sets her eyes on Harry Falk the moment she sees him and refuses to back down. Even moving the show to Los Angeles does not stop Patty from seeing Harry. In the end, however, Patty's uncontrollable behavior forces a wedge between her and Harry. This wedge is widened when Harry begins an affair that will end the marriage.

In the turmoil of Harry's infidelity, Patty throws herself into work. However, her depression leads to an affair with a boy much younger than herself and a manic episode that causes her to be fired from a play she thought would turn her fortunes around. Reeling from all this, Patty marries Michael Tell, a young entrepreneur who was subletting her apartment from her. This marriage only lasts thirteen days, and Patty claims it is never consummated, another example of the wild behavior that is in part a product of her undiagnosed manic depression.



During her affair with Desi Arnaz Jr. and her marriage to Michael Tell, Patty Duke met John Astin, a fellow actor who also has a deep fear of death. This affair ended when John returned to his wife, but rekindled after the birth of Patty Duke's son, Sean, whom she believes is John's child. This rekindled affair turned into a marriage that lasted more than ten years. However, the relationship was always volatile. Patty Duke claims that she and John often fought in their marriage. The end finally came when John Astin turned to Buddhism after the death of his father, whom he was very close to. Patty could not support John Astin in his new spiritual beliefs after he failed to support her in her own spiritual event.

Finally, during the preparation for a role in which Patty Duke was to play a woman who joins the army to support her husband and children, she met Michael Pearce, an Army drill sergeant. Patty and Michael began an affair after their few weeks of training together that blossomed into a marriage that still continues today.

Style

Perspective

In this book, Patty Duke is writing about her own life. Patty Duke's perspective is highly personal because the subject matter is very personal. Patty Duke once promised her mother in light of all the bad publicity that appeared about her during her career that she would someday set the record straight. This book is Patty Duke's attempt to do just that. Patty Duke has written this book so that the public and her fans will know that she never took drugs, that she was not a prima dona, that she had a difficult childhood filled with lies told not by her, but by her managers.

The perspective of this book is important because this book is presented as an autobiography. The fact that Patty Duke wrote this book, along with a ghost writer, in the first person point of view and told her life story as she recalls it tells the reader that the subject is highly personal. Ms. Duke is using this book not only as an attempt to set the record straight, but as a way of dealing with a difficult past. With this book, Ms. Duke is also able to share her journey to self discovery and recovery in the face of mental illness. For this reason, the perspective of this book works well for the reader and for the themes that fill its pages.

Tone

This book is a highly personal one that deals with the events in one life that created a whole person who is now moderately successful in her career and dealing with a newly diagnosed illness that offers an explanation for irrational behaviors in her past. This book's tone moves back and forth from a dark place filled with depression and misconceptions toward a more mature, optimistic look at the world. The book begins with Patty's childhood, a time that was filled with trauma and therefore begins with a dark tone. From there, Patty learns to be an adult in a world she does not know and is not prepared for. The tone continues to be dark until finally Patty not only finds her way in the world, but she finds an explanation for the bad behaviors that have plagued her life. This causes the tone to become optimistic, almost happy.

The tone of this book works because it shows the reader how seriously Patty Duke takes the things she is telling the reader. Patty Duke really believes that her father abandoned her, her mother let her down over and over again, and the Rosses abused their power over her. This belief flows through the pages to the reader not only in Patty's choice of words, but the tone she uses to express her opinions. Patty is hurt, she is angry, and she is grieving for that little girl, Anna Marie Duke, whom she feels was murdered the day Ethel Ross told her she no longer existed. The reader not only sees this in her words, but feels it in her tone. For this reason, the tone of this book works well.

Structure

The novel is divided into thirty-six chapters, beginning with an introduction. The introduction talks about a meeting with a studio executive with whom Patty once had a confrontation when she walked off the set of a television show and then invited over a hundred mentally unstable military enlistees for lunch. Patty uses this as an example to show the reader that there was once a time when her behavior was out of control, but that a diagnosis of manic depression has change all that. With the first chapter, Patty moves to the beginning of her story with a description of her early life with her parents and moves on through the next forty years until her diagnosis. In the middle of the book is a group of pictures that represent some of the most important events in Patty's life.

The book is told in a basically linear fashion. The author, Patty Duke, begins with her childhood and works her way through adolescence into adulthood. However, Patty often makes comments about things that have yet to happen or groups events together that are related, even when they do not happen in a linear way. For example, Patty Duke does not introduce her relationship with John Astin until after she has reached the conclusion of her discussion of her relationship with Desi Arnaz Jr., even though the two relationships overlap. This makes it somewhat difficult for the reader to keep track of a time line, but does not interfere with the reader's ability to comprehend and enjoy the story of Patty Duke's life.



Quotes

"Though I've been a professional actress since I was seven or eight, acting was never a dream of mine."

Chap. 1, p. 5

"'Okay, we've finally decided, we're gonna change your name. Anna Marie is dead. You're Patty now.' Just like that."

Chap. 4, p. 23

"When I first started acting, my main motivation was fear, a feeling that if I didn't do what I was supposed to do, something horrible was going to happen."

Chap. 7, p. 49

"Easily the most memorable visit to result from The Miracle Worker took place outside of the theater, and that was my meeting with Helen Keller in the spring of 1960."

Chap. 10, p. 83

"After the Rosses took control of my life, they told me in so many words that my father just didn't exist."

Chap. 11, p. 90

"But the trauma was the same; I was about as molested as I ever want a little girl to get."

Chap. 13, p. 102

"Not only don't I know how much money I made while I was a minor, I don't have more than a clue about what happened to most of it."

Chap. 14, p. 121

"I never returned to the Rosses again."

Chap. 16, p. 146

"I kept thinking if I didn't take anything, he would see how much I loved him and he'd take me back."

Chap. 21, p. 192

"There is one thing that is truly and permanently awful about even having attempted suicide, and that has to do with the people who love you."

Chap. 22, p. 199

"From the moment my pregnancy became public knowledge, the question of who the father was was on everyone's lips."

Chap. 27, p. 224

"I've survived. I've beaten my own bad system and one some days, on most days, that feels like a miracle."
Chap. 36, p. 298



Topics for Discussion

Why is Patty Duke's name changed from Anna Marie to Patty? What was the object of this change in name? How does this change come about? How does Patty Duke feel about it at the time? How does this name change overshadow Patty's mental growth as she reaches adulthood? How does Patty deal with this situation? How does she feel about it as an adult?

Who are John and Ethel Ross? How do they come into Patty's life? Why does Patty's mother allow her to live with the Rosses? How does Patty feel about this situation? What is abusive about this situation? Is it abusive? Could this situation have been handled better? How did this situation impact Patty as a child? How does it continue to impact her as an adult? Why?

Who is Harry Falk? Why was Patty attracted to him? Why does she begin dating him? What is the age difference between them? What does this say about Patty's need to fill the empty spot her father's abandonment left? Why does Harry have Patty committed to a mental hospital early in their marriage? What is the result of this hospitalization? Why does Harry cheat on Patty? Why does he leave her? How much responsibility for the end of this marriage lies with Patty and her mental disease? How much responsibility for the end of this marriage lies with Harry?

Who is Desi Arnaz Jr.? What was his childhood like? Why did everyone believe Patty should know his age based on his famous birth? What is famous about his birth? Who is Desi's mother? Why was she upset about his relationship with Patty? What was their age difference? Why did Patty think Desi was the father of her son? Was he? How did their relationship end?

Who is John Astin? Why does he have a fear of death? Why did this fear bring him and Patty together? Was John a good husband to Patty? Why did they spend so many years on the road, touring with different plays? What did this situation do for their marriage? For their relationship with their kids? Why did John turn to Buddhism after his father's death? How did this hurt his relationship with Patty? Why did Patty divorce him without warning? How did John react to this?

Why did Patty separate from the Rosses as soon as she was an adult? Why did she have trouble living on her own? How did Patty deal with this situation? Did Patty ever learn to live on her own? How does this reader reach this conclusion? What is different about Patty's relationship with Michael Pearce as compared to her relationships with her three other husbands and multiple lovers? Does Patty's medication have something to do with this?

What is manic depression? How has this illness impacted Patty's life? How has it impacted her children's lives? How much of Patty's erratic behavior can be blamed on the illness? How much of this behavior is simply Patty's personality? How can the

reader tell the difference? Is there a difference? Does Patty see a difference? Why has Patty written about her struggle with this illness?