

# **Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas Study Guide**

**Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas by James Patterson**

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## Plot Summary

Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas by James Patterson is a romance. Suzanne writes a diary of how Nicholas's parents met and most days of Nicholas's life. Katie is the first entry of the Diary. Katie has the diary because Matt, Suzanne's husband and Katie's lover, gives it to her. Katie had thought that Matt had been ready to propose to her. She had had a special dinner ready and had two surprises for him. His volume of poetry was going to the printer with more prints ordered than usual for poetry. Katie has been Matt's editor and they are both pleased with this. Katie had been going to tell him that he would soon be a daddy. When Matt had come, he learned about the poetry book and saw the table and left Katie before she could tell him about the child. The entries go on with Suzanne telling all the romantic and intimate things about Matt's and Suzanne's marriage. The reader isn't sure whether Matt has been cheating or his wife is really dead. Suzanne's entries are long and detailed with romantic bits about Matt and herself. She tells of Nicholas's birth and his daily activities. She describes the wedding and then the christening. It is obvious that this is the perfect marriage. Could Matt be cheating on Suzanne yet act so in love with Katie? Katie's entries involve her hurt and her questions. The reader is given a view of her home life and the support that she has received from her parents all through her life. While the reader knows she is hurt, the reader can also predict that she will go on with life and make the best of it. Katie has friends in the city who support her. Two of them had been to the doctor with her when she was checked for the pregnancy and were the first to hear that she would not abort the baby.

Near the end of the diary, the reader is given one entry by Matt. First he tells us that Suzanne has died from a heart attack. Matt is sitting in his son's room and talking to him. Finally as Matt reaches for the crib, he tells about patting the baby that is not there. Nicholas and Suzanne had died when Suzanne had a heart attack while driving. After reading that entry, Katie goes to find Matt. She visits Martha's Vineyard where Suzanne and Matt have lived. Matt has disappeared from the island. Katie does learn a bit about him from his neighbors. She returns home. Finally, Matt comes to her. They come together to get married and the reader knows that Katie will help him heal.



## Section 1 Katie pp. 3-12.

### Section 1 Katie pp. 3-12. Summary

Katie is sitting in the tub in her New York apartment as Suzanne's Diary to Nicholas begins. She has her cat, Guinevere, and her dog, Merlin, with her. They are watching her as if they are afraid for her. Katie is holding a leather bound diary.

Katie sobs as she remembers her home and her minister father. How could God have let this happen to her? She keeps sobbing as she thinks about Suzanne, the writer of the diary. She can imagine her in her cottage by the ocean. Suzanne and her baby, Nicholas. Suzanne and her husband, Matt. Matt, Katie's former lover. She finally understands bits and pieces of the problem between Matt and her. She slips farther into the tub and continues reading the diary she had received July 19. On that morning, Katie had taken a ferry to retrace a ride with Matt. She thinks about how perfect she had believed their love. She kept remembering perfect moments and the way Matt had been the perfect hero for her. He would make a wonderful and considerate husband. She had been expecting a proposal but instead had watched Matt walk away. She couldn't forget the quiet Sunday afternoons. She would read the paper and he would be stretched out writing his poems. During the month of June, he had sent a red rose each day so she would always have a fresh rose during her birthday month. She cried on her boat ride until people were turning to look at her. She knew she couldn't face the people in her office. She hadn't gone to work. When she had gotten home from her memory trip, she had found a package on her doorstep. She had opened the package to find an antique book with Suzanne's name on the binding. She had known that Suzanne was his wife but she knew nothing about her. There had been a note from Matt inside. He tells her that if she can read the diary, even the hard parts, she might understand. He also tells her that he didn't plan to fall in love with her.

### Section 1 Katie pp. 3-12. Analysis

The first scene in Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas begins with a traditional scene in a romance. A woman in a bathtub. All women know she will be either waiting for a lover or comforting herself because of a fight or break-up with a lover. The reader is told that the big, fluffy cat in the room with her is named Guinevere. There aren't many people who haven't heard of Camelot and many think of Guinevere's and Lancelot's romance. To keep the romance and courtly love in full view of the audience is the Labrador named Merlin. There will be some type of magic. The writer tells us that the cat and dog are watching our heroine as if they are afraid for her. The reader knows that the lady has a broken heart.

Patterson always writes in short chapters. As he changes chapters the reader sees the typical heroine who doesn't know she is drop-dead gorgeous. The reader sees her criticism of herself and knows instantly that she is just the opposite of her own



perceptions. It is as if he spent time with a friend collecting all the triggers that turn women on. Patterson brings the reader to a more modern romance with reference to *The Africa Queen*. Katie thinks of a line that paints a picture of Katie for the reader. Once again he is giving us a picture of Katherine Hepburn. Hepburn was known as Kate and in this book we have our heroine named Katie. The reader can find such "coincidences" throughout the book.

Katie and Matt fit together well; for instance, they like the same TV shows and movies. Romances, of course. Katie and Matt enjoy the same eating places, music, and relaxing time. They even go to church together where Katie teaches Sunday school for preschoolers. Who could be the more all-time, all-American type than Katie?

They had danced together and teased. They talked on the phone when he wasn't in New York. For eleven months their life had been perfect. Even Katie's girlfriends liked Matt. Katie had been ready for the ring. She had had no doubts of their marrying. Of course, now her heart is broken.

When Katie unwraps the package at her door on July 19, she sees the antique, leather bound book. It couldn't be a spiral notebook or just a slick hardback, it has to be antique and leather. A very romantic book. At this point in the story, the reader doesn't know if Matt is a married man and cheating on his wife or not. Matt writes a note that tells Katie that he didn't mean to fall in love which sounds like a married man. The reader still has a mystery to solve but now the perfect man and the perfect love are likely all part of a love triangle.



## Section 2 The Diary pp. 15-44.

### Section 2 The Diary pp. 15-44. Summary

Suzanne, as writer of the diary, writes to her two week old son. She wants him to have a record of his life in writing as well as on video. She tells him that she wants to start the diary before he is born and before she met his daddy. Her story begins with her telling about being a doctor and having a boyfriend. She takes her Golden Retriever, Gus, for a walk one day in Boston. Gus chases one of the ducks from the nearby pond where they have the swan boats. While he is gone, Suzanne has pain in her upper body. It is so severe she falls to the ground and wakes up in the hospital. She is sure she is going to die. She has a coronary bypass and has time to examine her life. She tells Nicky the story of the five balls and keeping them balanced. Four balls are glass and one is rubber. The rubber one can bounce. The rubber one is work. The only part of a person's life that can bounce and not break.

Suzanne had thought she was in love with Dr. Michael Bernstein. They had met at the Kennedy wedding. The two of them breathed the rarified air of the young sophisticates when they took any time from their workaholic lives. After Suzanne recuperated a little, Michael explained why he was leaving her. One of his three reasons was that she probably couldn't have children because of her heart attack. Suzanne decided to change her life. She left the big city and all that went with it. She made a complete change in her life. Suzanne moved to Martha's Vineyard, a place she had spent every summer growing up. She took over another doctor's practice. She was in an old country house with a few other doctors. She loved being a country doctor.

Suzanne met a man she thought might be the true love of her life. Matt Wolfe drove up in a green Jaguar when he saw Suzanne waiting for a tow truck to come change her tire. As they talked, they recognized each other from previous summers. They caught up with each other's lives. Matt asked Suzanne Bedford out on a date. After a date of remembering and admitting to being nervous about being together, they decided to keep on seeing each other. Each had had a crush on the other.

To Suzanne's surprise, she found a bouquet of wild flowers on her porch one day. There was a note from the man she had hired to paint and maintain her new home. The note asked for a date. Suzanne found him working and she nicely refused the date. As Katie stops reading, Suzanne is surprised how her life is progressing. Now she has two men interested but Matt Wolfe is the most important one.

### Section 2 The Diary pp. 15-44. Analysis

Patterson is once again pulling all the emotional strings. Suzanne's heart attack gives her an enemy waiting to attack her life throughout the book. Heart disease can be fought but no one has a say when that heart will quit beating. Here she is a broken



hearted heroine. With heart disease in her family, she has a target on that heart at all times. Next we have betrayal by the man she thought she loved. Betrayal of her body and then betrayal by her man.

Patterson appropriately names him Michael Bernstein. There are few women who don't picture the sophisticated Bernstein in *The Prince of Tides*. That romance ended with the woman losing the man. Does this foreshadow the loss of the new love that will come into Suzanne's life? Patterson has named dropped with the Kennedy wedding. Bernstein is part of the beautiful people. Bringing Kennedy into it serves at least two purposes. The Kennedy wedding was the American Prince and Princess type wedding. The name Kennedy has always been associated to Camelot. When America was like Camelot. This ties Guinevere and Merlin back into our thoughts. Modern love and medieval love. Love always lives through the centuries; however, love doesn't always lead to a happily ever after life.

As Patterson has Suzanne begin her life at Martha's Vineyard, she quickly feels right at home and is happy. While she is working as a doctor again, it is a country doctor and life is not a frantic rat race. On her way home one day she has a flat tire, Patterson has Suzanne discover that she has forgotten to return her spare tire to the trunk after her move. Suzanne is really angry with herself when she has to call a garage. She goes into internal dialogue about how self-sufficient and independent she is. She didn't like standing by the side of the road, looking like a "girl".

The perfect hero arrives. Instead of a white horse, he is driving a Jag. He is handsome and he offers to help. As he waits with her for the garage's truck to arrive, they realize that they know each other. They had dated during the time Suzanne was there in the summer. They decide to date again. This is another fantasy that women have and Patterson admits it. Past, lost loves come back into the present life. All is perfect. Matt does come into her life. They start to date.

In the beginning pages of *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*, Patterson uses more adverbs with -ly as an ending. Editors usually strike the adverbs with a red pencil. It is as if he hasn't gotten into his own flow. He has to be sure that the reader knows that this is "really" a love story. Every feeling must be intensified by adding more adverbs to make it "more than." He wants to be sure we are following him where he wants us to go. Is this the best way?

Patterson does close this reading of the diary with a bouquet of flowers. There has to be a possible threat to the romance with another man. The other man must be romantic and the wild flowers he picked himself is a ploy which is good for a romance. Two new men in her life allows her to recover any self-confidence she felt when Bernstein left her.



## Section 3 Katie pp. 47-51.

### Section 3 Katie pp. 47-51. Summary

Katie takes a break from reading the diary and cuddles Guinevere. She tries to stop sobbing and looks around at her house. She had liked nothing better than to put on work clothes and build cabinets and do other woodworking around her home. She had gathered things from her family around her and made her home cozy. Finally she forces herself to acknowledge her liking for Suzanne. If she had met her without Matt, she and Suzanne would have been good friends.

Katie couldn't believe that she had trusted Matt so much. She is an adulteress. How had that happened? Matt wouldn't talk about his past but he had sworn that he was not married. She would never forget July 18. She had cooked a special dinner. She had the music in the CD. The stage was set for two big surprises. Matt's volume of poetry that Katie had edited was going to print more copies than the publishing house usually printed of poetry. After that celebration, Katie had another surprise.

Matt had told her he should never have allowed their relationship to go so far. He was leaving and wouldn't be back again. Katie never got to tell him her second surprise. She was pregnant.

### Section 3 Katie pp. 47-51. Analysis

Patterson skips back to Katie and the present day. This keeps our heroine of this romance in the reader's attention span. Katie and Suzanne are enough alike that the reader wants to find a way for them both to be happy. Katie had been raised in a family who knows what a family is. She is the Hallmark card commercial. Suzanne's upbringing is a little different but she has found a way to make home and family important in her life again.

For the first time, Patterson has Matt possibly be the villain. Is he married? Has he been cheating on his wife? The situation makes Katie wonder about her standing with God. Katie is truly a good person who would never have an affair. Katie has trusted with complete openness. How could she be so wrong? Could she ever trust again? Once again, Patterson is after the emotions. Trust is a big issue for most wounded heroes or heroines.

Patterson makes Katie's betrayal worse with the news that she is pregnant. Katie has a broken heart but she will always have Matt in her heart for the rest of her life when she looks at her child. Patterson has added one hundred percent more hurt to this situation.





## Section 4 Diary pp. 55-73.

### Section 4 Diary pp. 55-73. Summary

Suzanne describes her new life and how comfortable she is. From a Boston doctor who is part of the rat race, she is now the laid back country doctor. She has a new neighbor, Melanie Bone. Melanie is the perfect neighbor who has anything one needs to borrow and all the information about the town and the people in it. She also has four daughters who are stair steps. Suzanne tells how she calls the girls Number One, Number Two, etc. She can't remember their names.

Suzanne goes to Matt Wolfe's party. It was the usual high society party that Suzanne had attended in her previous life. She knows she has really changed as she realizes how uncomfortable this life makes her.

Next the magic happens. Suzanne has worked late and stops off at a diner for something to eat. As she gets up to leave, she notices her house painter, Picasso, in the diner. She speaks to him and then joins him in the booth. They talk about everything and anything until late. Finally, as she is ready to leave, she asks his real name. He is Matt Harrison, Nicky's father.

The next day Suzanne comes home from the hospital to find Matt Harrison on the roof with his hammer and shingles. She invites him in for a cool drink and then to stay for a meal. As she allows him to use her shower, she runs over to Melanie's for some steaks and all the fixings for a romantic dinner. Matt and she begin taking rides and doing everything together. The Flying Horses is a carousel with beautifully painted horses. They make a beautiful memory that afternoon on the carousel. Matt tells her that good memories are like charms—charms of life.

### Section 4 Diary pp. 55-73. Analysis

Patterson wants the reader to see how happy Suzanne is in her new life. She describes the ease of her life with her walks on the beach with her dog. Suzanne acquires the perfect neighbor. The woman is a mother who does all the stay at home mom does. Melanie, the neighbor, is outgoing and generous. She has four girls who adopt Gus. Patterson doesn't bother to name or even develop real characters for the girls. Suzanne calls them a number instead of a name. This makes the children exist but not take the reader's focus from Nicky. He is the only child of any importance in the book.

Patterson makes sure that Suzanne's new comfortable life is hammered home at the party at Matt's. She sees the name-dropping snobbishness of the group. Patterson does introduce one little boy who is hurt and Suzanne doctors him. The mother appears and isn't grateful for Suzanne's help. The woman snidely asks if Suzanne thinks she is a doctor. Obviously Suzanne doesn't have the right name or isn't dressed sufficiently to impress the woman.



Patterson makes sure the reader doesn't miss the most important entry in the diary to date. He tells the reader that the next part is the magic. Suzanne sees her house painter in a restaurant and ends up sitting in a booth with him to talk. The reader is expecting the magic. The house painter, who calls himself Picasso, is reading the classics. He has Moby Dick on the table beside him. Once he and Suzanne start talking, they don't realize how late it grows. As they leave, Suzanne asks him for his real name and he tells her Matthew Harrison. Suzanne tells Nicky that this is his father.

The courting starts. Matt is on the roof the next time Suzanne sees him. When he comes down they eventually have dinner together. Patterson illustrates Suzanne's excitement when she invites him to dinner and then realizes she doesn't have food. Melanie helps out by furnishing her with all she needs for a romantic supper. Matt and Suzanne begin taking rides and being together.

Patterson has Matt ask Suzanne what she is doing one day. Suzanne is going to give the dog a bath, food shop and pick up a movie. In case the reader missed the Bernstein reference previously, Suzanne suggests *The Prince of Tides*. Matt says he enjoys Pat Conroy and hasn't seen the movie because he didn't think the movie would be as good as the book. Patterson tells the reader that Matt is a polar opposite of the last boyfriend, Bernstein. This automatically makes Matt a good guy.

As Suzanne and Matt fall more and more in love, Patterson takes care of Matt Wolfe. Suzanne tries to call him but only gets his answering machine. She remembers it is a small island and assumes he has heard that she and Matt are together. One paragraph takes care of Matt Wolfe.

This part of the diary ends with horses. A cowboy is another romantic favorite and Suzanne calls him cowboy as they climb onto the carousel horses. This is magic too. Carousels are romantic. The painted horses, called the Flying Horses, are beautifully painted with brilliant jewel colors. A Flying Horse is part of a legend who steals women away until they fall in love with the man who wants them. The women see all their dreams come true. Suzanne and Matt are living a charmed life as this section is put down by Katie.



## Section 5 Katie pp. 77-80.

### Section 5 Katie pp. 77-80. Summary

Katie tells of her meeting with Matt Harrison. He had submitted a volume of poetry about everyday things. The poems were little short stories that Matt had turned into concise poems. Katie had loved the poems and was editing them. The first time Matt walked into her office the world stood still. Matt was tall and put together well like his poems. His hair was a little long and his skin held the tan of an outdoors man. Suzanne and Matt worked on his poetry and then went to dinner. After dinner they went to a jazz club and listened to music. Suzanne didn't arrive home until three in the morning. Suzanne tried to remember whether he was married.

Matt and Suzanne worked together the next day. At noon they slipped away and went museum hopping. Matt was as knowledgeable about art as she was. By evening Matt was visiting Suzanne's apartment. Suzanne couldn't believe she had invited him up. Suzanne was a bit old-fashioned about sex. She had a reputation of not sleeping around. They found their way to bed. Matt was very good in bed. He knew when to move and when to wait, when to touch and where to touch. He was a perfect lover for her. They communicated without saying a word. Suzanne never had felt such intimacy. Suzanne was lonely when he went back to his hotel.

### Section 5 Katie pp. 77-80. Analysis

Patterson introduces Matt to Suzanne with the romantic meeting in her office. Instantly Suzanne has to say 'down girl' to herself. Matt is described as perfect from the first second of their time together. The first night they go to a jazz club. The reader imagines the darkened, smoky room with the sound wrapping around them as they relaxed and got to know each other. The next day they have to skip the afternoon of work for an afternoon of museum hopping. Since both are interested in the art, they have another activity that they share. The attraction is growing so much that Suzanne takes him to her home. The reader is assured that this is new for Suzanne. She doesn't make love with just anyone. It isn't just fulfilling a need for Suzanne. It is an intimate experience. The same is true for Matt. Of course, Matt is the perfect lover. There is not the first moment of awkwardness between them.

Many women have the fantasy that their true love will know what they want and need without the woman having to tell them. Patterson brings that fantasy into this section of the book. A really perfect man. Katie will never have to say, "Well, you should know," or "If you really loved me, you would understand."

In this section Katie seems to share Suzanne's voice. The characters are interchangeable. The language is so alike that the reader doesn't notice any change in

the telling of the story. If the sections weren't marked, no one could tell who was speaking.



## Section 6 The Diary pp. 83-114.

### Section 6 The Diary pp. 83-114. Summary

Suzanne's next entry in the diary tells of the meeting with Matt's mother, Jean. She is up on the roof working on a TV antenna. It seems his mother has taught Matt to do all the maintenance on the home which is his job. His mother is an artist. His father, a doctor, died when Matt was very young. Matt has a degree in English. The mother and Suzanne get along extremely well.

After leaving his mother they go to a blues club and watch people. Suzanne admits to herself that she has fallen in love. They dance and decide to go to Matt's house to continue dancing. When they arrive, Suzanne sees a home with lots of gingerbread. As they enter the home, she finds a library with thousands of books in floor to ceiling shelving. There are a few tables in the room. There are papers scattered on the table. As Suzanne looks at the papers, she finds *Songs of a Housepainter* and learns that Matt is a poet.

Suzanne talks about their magical perfect night. Matt takes a blanket and heads down to the beach. The stars are so bright and beautiful that Suzanne thinks of the Night of the Falling Stars. The French believe the stars flow out of the sky like cream from a pitcher. After dancing on the beach, they return to his house. When they go up to his bedroom, Suzanne is delighted to see the huge, open room with skylights over the whole ceiling. Matt assures her that he can lie in bed and see falling stars. One night he counted sixteen. Suzanne doesn't describe their sex act.

Suzanne tells Nicky that she hopes that he finds love. She wants him to know that Us is always better than I. Suzanne wants him to know how lucky she feels to have found his daddy and to have him. She wonders what he is thinking as he watches his mobile. His daddy thinks it is girls, tools, and flashy cars. Nicky is all boy. However, Suzanne knows that his very favorite things are his teddy bears. She finds the way he handles them very sweet.

Suzanne takes a couple of entries to talk about friends. Matt Wolfe shows up again. He has been to Thailand for a month and knows nothing of what has happened to Suzanne. She tells him about Matt Harrison. Then she takes a walk on the beach and tells Melanie Bone about Matt Harrison. Melanie says that she is thinking of having her fifth child. Suzanne thinks about a baby for herself and Matt. Even though it will be a high risk pregnancy, she doesn't care.

Suzanne tells Nicky that bad things happen in life. Gus had been crossing the road to go for a romp on the beach. A truck had come around the curve too fast and hit him. The vet was unable to save Gus. Suzanne felt the loss strongly since they had been together for fourteen years. Suzanne tells Nicky that he will have losses in life but he has to hold up his head and move on.



Suzanne includes a poem that she received from Matt the morning after Gus died. Matt tells her all the things she is to him. He ends with his admission of love for her. Suzanne says he is a great writer but doesn't even know it.

Suzanne knows she has to tell Matt about her heart attack. She is frightened of his reaction. She calls him and asks him to come over after work. When he arrives more dressed up than usual, she is surprised. She tells him that she wants to talk. They walk on the beach. As she starts to tell him about the heart attack, he fills in the blanks. He has known it all the time because they live in a small place and everyone knew before she even arrived. Matt says, "Isn't it lucky that Suzanne didn't die or I wouldn't be able to look into her eyes?" There are a lot of "Isn't it lucky's." Matt asks Suzanne to marry him and she accepts.

## Section 6 The Diary pp. 83-114. Analysis

Patterson introduces Matt's mother, Jean. Suzanne and Jean are both very self-sufficient women. They both are very capable of standing on their own two feet. Jean is an artist. While Matt's father was a doctor, Jean hasn't pushed Matt to be anything but his own person. Matt is more like his mother. His art is in the written word. Jean and her son are both comfortable in their own bodies. Jean and Suzanne like each other and aren't afraid of the other taking Matt away.

The reader is shown Matt's total interest in the written word as he takes Suzanne home and she sees his library. Walls of books. She gets her first glimpse of Matt the poet. Patterson keeps the romance going with watching the stars. Outside and inside they see the stars pouring themselves out of the sky. They have a beautiful star burst show. Skylights are a romantic feature. Patterson does stop writing the entry before the actual sex for Nicky's sake. What child, no matter how old, wants to read about their parents' sex life?

Patterson takes the reader away from the sex scene by talking about how perfect Nicky is and how Suzanne wants love and happiness for her son. She talks to him about love being very important in his life. She hopes she can teach him how to accept love.

Patterson continues the break from the passionate scenes with the reappearance of Matt Wolfe. Suzanne tells him about Matt Harrison. What woman wouldn't want to have had two men paying attention to her. Patterson then moves on to Melanie Bone. Melanie wants another baby. Suzanne knows she would like to have a child with Matt. She would have a high risk pregnancy but she doesn't care. While not every woman wants a baby, Suzanne is one of those who do. Patterson is taking us on to a very important woman's dream.

Patterson recognizes that we have to have something bad come into Suzanne's life. Everything can't be happily ever after all the time. Gus, the dog, is hit by a truck and dies. While it is bad, Patterson has another tearjerker moment with Suzanne and her dog's death. Matt holds her while she cries. Patterson shows a moment of weakness.



Before the entry is over, Suzanne moves back into a strength position as she tells Nicky to move on. You lift your head and move on in life.

Patterson gives the reader an example of Matt's poetry. He has included a love poem to Suzanne. Patterson uses clear images through time that make Suzanne important to the world and someone who was made for Matt. Finally Patterson has Suzanne hesitate about telling about her heart attack. The reader has a moment of suspense. Will Matt still want her with her heart disease? Very quickly the suspense is released. Matt has known about it the whole time.



## **Section 7 Katie pp. 117-123.**

### **Section 7 Katie pp. 117-123. Summary**

Katie slams the diary closed as she realizes that she is jealous. She has to talk to someone and the one she wants to talk to is Matt. She can't do that. She tries to take comfort in wrapping herself in a blanket and watching Ally McBeal. Katie notices that she isn't as crazy as Ally but she doesn't like her life being so confused. As she thinks about the baby, she remembers the night that she and Matt made the baby. It was the most perfect loving. There were no barriers between them. She knew they were joined forever.

The next morning she calls her mother early. She tells her everything that has happened with the exception of the fact that she is pregnant. She finds she just can't announce her pregnancy to them. She knows they would support her and understand but she just can't. She sits staring at the phone for a long time before she dials and gets an answering machine. She tells the machine that she is reading the diary. She hangs up.

### **Section 7 Katie pp. 117-123. Analysis**

In this section Patterson shows Katie with her broken heart. Katie discovers that she would like Suzanne if the situation were different and tells her mother. She sees the similarities between herself and Suzanne. Her mother says that Matt has good taste in women.

The section keeps Katie in the reader's mind. Everything is going along happily when Patterson interrupts again with poor Katie who is hurting. Katie brings the reader's questions up again. Is Matt still married? How could he be cheating on this perfect woman? How could they be so happy and yet he has turned to Katie? Has his conscience finally made it impossible for him to continue with Katie? How could both women be fooled? How can Matt be the hero for both women?

Patterson uses these short interludes to stop the happy fairy tale and make the reader see the suffering Katie. Lost love is the last thing that a woman wants.





## Section 8 The Diary pp. 127-151.

### Section 8 The Diary pp. 127-151. Summary

Suzanne wants to tell Nicky all about the wedding. She and Matt are married in the Gay Head Community Church which is the oldest Indian Baptist church in the country. The chapel ceiling corners have carved angels. The church is beautiful and magical for Suzanne. There is standing room only with all Matt's friends as well as doctors from Boston and some of Suzanne's patients.

Suzanne loved the snow that was falling that day. At the end of the ceremony, Matt and Suzanne had an inside blizzard of angels, clouds, and doves. Satin pouches of feathers were opened and feathers came down from the ceiling. They were married just before the year changed. They started the New Year as Mr. and Mrs. Suzanne again says that everything was magical. The whole marriage is magical.

The honeymoon had been magical too. They had gone to Hawaii for the first two weeks and were home for their last week. Matt brought Suzanne a little gift each morning of the three weeks. It hadn't been long before Suzanne recognized morning sickness. She had called Matt to bring an EPT home with him. They would be together while Suzanne took the test.

Suzanne tells of she and Matt preparing for Nicky. They set up the perfect nursery. They choose the room and wallpaper. Mother Goose dances with her characters. They add shelves and toys. Matt makes a rocking horse.

Matt is always the most generous guy. He has to work late and he leaves a present. This time it is an antique necklace. It is a sapphire locket in the shape of a heart. It has to be one hundred and fifty years old. The inside is engraved with the message, Nicholas, Suzanne, and Matt—Forever.

Suzanne wants Nicky to know that romance is not a short term thing. She mentions The Bridges of Madison County and the star-crossed lovers. Happiness isn't for a short term. It can be forever. Matt surprises her again. Suzanne tells of coming downstairs in her pajamas to find a house full of friends. It is her birthday and this is a surprise birthday breakfast. Another magic moment with Matt.

Suzanne writes to Nicky about her emergency crisis. Josh Macdowell had fallen at a construction site and had needed surgery to save him. His young wife, Meg, and their children were in the waiting room. Suzanne took the baby so Meg could go in and see her husband. It was when she held the baby that Suzanne knew she would be a great mom.

Suzanne tells next of being in trouble. She and Nicky almost die. They go to the hospital because Suzanne thinks she is experiencing Braxton-Hicks contractions. By the time they get there, she feels better but her doctor, Constance Cotter, checks her into the



hospital. Her blood pressure is too high and Constance is afraid of a heart attack. Suzanne is monitored for some time when Constance comes in and tells her that she isn't getting a good reading on the baby's heart and that the baby has to come out right then.

Suzanne nearly died. Her cardiologist was there. Her blood pressure was 200/115 and her body was trying to shut down. The baby was in trouble. Suzanne wasn't really aware of anything but her own body acting oddly until she heard the cry. The cry of Nicky, the warrior.

## **Section 8 The Diary pp. 127-151. Analysis**

Patterson uses the first entries in the diary with Suzanne telling Nicky about how perfect things are. The church sounds like it is right out of a fairy tale. The wedding is perfect. The honeymoon is perfect. Their life is perfect. Patterson uses the word perfect and magical throughout this romantic fairy tale. Matt is the perfect hero. He brings little gifts that prove he pays attention to her and each gift proves his love and comes directly from his heart. Patterson knows how to create a hero for women. Romance authors say that you envision the perfect man for you and remember you are writing fiction. Sometimes it is hard to show a flaw in the hero but you must to make him real. Patterson rolls up all the perfect characteristics and gives them to Matt. He doesn't seem to have flaws. He is too good to be true. Patterson has set the reader up to accept this perfect man and situation.

Patterson even has Matt organize and cook for a surprise party. Surprise breakfast at that. What woman can do anything but imagine such a thing? Matt surprises her with a breakfast that he has cooked himself.

Patterson also has an entry where Suzanne holds a baby and becomes aware that she will make a great mom. A reader might question this. Most women who are having a first baby are scared. In their deepest hearts, they know a baby is a big responsibility. Most are praying for the grace of God to make a decent mom for a toddler. As life goes on there is more praying to get the child grown. It is hard to believe that she believes she will be a great mom. She definitely knows she wants to be a mom. Most women are just hoping to be a good mom.

Patterson finally brings a crisis into their lives as Suzanne gets into trouble with her heart and blood pressure. Suzanne as a doctor can describe in the diary the things that are going wrong in her body. The reader knows that she is very close to dying. The danger of her being pregnant is brought to the forefront. Nicky is in danger with a weak heartbeat. Suzanne doesn't get her dream of having him naturally. Patterson has her cardiologist standing by. While Patterson emphasizes the good things, he is now making sure that the reader understands how serious this is. Will Suzanne die? Will the baby be lost? The suspense builds in the operating room.



Patterson gives the reader hope for the family as this selection ends with the baby's cry. Since Nicky is called a warrior, the hope continues. Nicky will live and Suzanne will be fighting to recover too.



## **Section 9 Katie pp. 155-158.**

### **Section 9 Katie pp. 155-158. Summary**

Katie can stand to read only a few pages of the diary. The questions are flooding her mind. Had Suzanne died? Had they divorced? Had something happened to Nicky? Was Matt cheating on Suzanne? Katie thinks about trying to call Suzanne on the island but decides against that. She remembers moments with Matt. One night he had awakened crying. He had promised to put the past behind him. He had never shared what that past was. Katie finally calls her parents. She tells them she is pregnant and they all cry together. She has their support and she knows it.

### **Section 9 Katie pp. 155-158. Analysis**

Once again Patterson breaks the mood of the diary with Katie's feelings. He lists all the questions that Katie is asking about Matt. Half the questions make Matt the villain. The other half make Matt the wounded hero. The reader still doesn't know who Matt is. The reader is hoping that Matt will be the wounded hero.

Katie thinks about calling Suzanne. Patterson has her come close to ending Matt's little affair by hurting the other woman. She could act like a jealous woman. She draws back from the phone. Katie is the most mature one in this picture. She is looking at reality throughout. She finally does what she has known she has to do. She calls her parents and gains their support. She has needed the people who love her to know about this throughout the book.



## Section 10 The Diary pp.161-203.

### Section 10 The Diary pp.161-203. Summary

Suzanne tells Nicky that he is the perfect baby. He sleeps through the night in just a couple of weeks. He goes for a check-up and he can hold his head up when he is lying on his stomach. Suzanne goes on to tell him about his wearing her christening gown for his baptism at Church of Mary Magdalene. Nicky was perfect throughout the baptism. He looked straight at Monsignor Dwyer the whole time. Suzanne tells Nicky about her missing him when she goes back to work. She goes on to tell about him waking in the night crying. He wasn't wet or hungry. Suzanne rocked him back to sleep. As she put him to bed, Matt had joined her in the room. He asked her to dance. Suzanne and Matt danced to the music from the mobile as their son slept. Another perfect memory.

Suzanne tells about having a pregnant woman brought into the ER. She loses the baby. Suzanne tells Nicky to remember how fragile life is and to live each day. Suzanne takes Nicky for a professional picture while Matt is in the city meeting with a publisher about his poems. The photographer has no kid-side manner and the whole session is not good. Suzanne promises to never show the pictures to anyone. She is grateful that Nicky can't talk and tell his dad about it.

Suzanne, Matt, and Nicky go down to the beach for Matt's birthday. After some celebrating and playing on the beach, Matt tells Suzanne that New York isn't ready for his poetry. Matt, then, pulls a letter from his pocket. It is an acceptance of one poem. The Atlantic Monthly has accepted him. It is a poem entitled Nicholas and Suzanne. The poem has good images that add to the romance.

Suzanne takes Nicholas for a physical and decides to have her own check-up with her doctors while she is in Boston. Nicholas is pronounced in perfect health. Suzanne tells her doctor friend how happy she is. Suzanne's check-up is next. Suzanne waits for the doctor to come back and tell her that everything is fine; but, everything isn't fine. Her doctor wants her to see the cardiologist. He doesn't like her stress test. Suzanne is suddenly very afraid. This can't happen when she is so happy and life is so good. After many tests Gail Davis, her cardiologist, comes back to tell her that she has two valves with weaknesses. They would have to do some more tests and then decide how to treat this warning. Suzanne can't believe this could be happening.

On the way home, Suzanne talks to Nicky and decides that for every smile of Nicky's, she and Nicky would have a whole year together. She calls it magical thinking but she convinces herself that she will live a long time. She begins to laugh and Nicky gives her the biggest smile he has ever given her. Four weeks pass and the test results are all in. Suzanne has heart valve disease. They will treat it with radiation. Suzanne has been reminded to live every day.



Suzanne tells Nicky about how he grows so fast. They ride bikes. He has a seat on the back of her bike and they explore the island. Suzanne hates to see him leave his baby stage but loves to see him grow. It is a paradox.

Suzanne wakes up one day and things don't seem right. She ends up taking a nap with Nicky. When Matt gets home, he is excited because there is some interest in his poetry. Finally as they are sitting on the swing, Suzanne tells him that she is pregnant. Matt tells her he loves her and says they have to be careful. Suzanne drives into the doctor's one afternoon without telling Matt. The doctor wants her to terminate the

pregnancy. Suzanne can't bring herself to do that. When she gets home and tells Matt, he agrees with the doctor. Suzanne goes running out to the beach and cries for the baby. She still can't agree to terminate the baby. Even knowing the risk, she can't accept the reality before her. Matt tells her that he doesn't want to live without her but she still tries to get him to agree with her.

Suzanne has a bad day and goes to bed to rest. When Matt gets home, he takes her to the doctor. Once again the doctor suggests an abortion. Suzanne's blood pressure is up and Suzanne is barely doing anything. The doctor insists that Suzanne stop seeing any patients. The doctor also points out that Suzanne has put herself into grave danger. But Suzanne is adamant that the baby is a gift and she will keep it.

A month later, Suzanne gets a phone call from Dr. Cotter. The doctor has results of more tests and Suzanne has entered the danger zone. The Doctor wants Suzanne in the hospital immediately. Suzanne puts Nicholas in his crib and heads for the phone to call her mother-in-law. Everything goes black. Matt finds her at the bottom of the staircase and rushes her to the ER. Dr. Cotter tells Suzanne when she comes to that she has toxemia. It is too early in the pregnancy for that. Suzanne's blood is poisoning her and her baby. They surround Suzanne with people working on her as she takes a turn for the worse. Suzanne is aware that she is dying.

Matt stays with her all the time. Many friends come by and see her. One afternoon Matt insists on bringing Nicky. He asks for the priest to come. Suzanne can hear what is going on around her but she can't wake up and be part of it. As Nicky calls mama to her during the afternoon, Suzanne fights to wake up and join him. Finally the darkness is behind her and she is rising toward the light of day. The impossible happens and she opens her eyes. Matt whispers to her and Thanks God that she is back to them. Suzanne knows she lost the baby.

## **Section 10 The Diary pp.161-203. Analysis**

Patterson continues the fairy tale. Few babies sleep through the night in two weeks' time. The perfect baby has arrived. Suzanne has Nicky baptized in an heirloom christening gown. Of course the gown has been handed down in the family and it is an elaborate lacy thing. Nicky behaves extremely well during baptism. He doesn't cry but stares at the priest. Nicky doesn't have just a normal priest but a monsignor. The reader



can imagine the old fashioned church and the fancy dress of the monsignor and the christening gown that is antique and beautiful. The baptism is as beautiful as the wedding.

Patterson draws one of his romantic scenes of the book as Nicky does awaken in the night when nothing is wrong. He seems to just want company. Suzanne rocks her baby. A woman rocking a baby that she loves pulls the heart strings of the hardest heart. Once Nicky is ready to go to bed, Matt joins the family in Nicky's room and Suzanne and Matt dance. The reader imagines the baby asleep in the nursery with teddy bears and dreams while his mother and father dance because they are so in love with each other and with him. This scene gives a secure feeling. It is like this family is in a loving cocoon that will never be threatened.

Patterson gives the reader a push out of fantasy land as he tells of Suzanne's ER patient who loses a baby. The woman survives the infant. She tells Nicky to live for the present. Patterson has given the reader a little shake. A healthy woman has gotten into medical trouble and lost a baby. What is ahead for Suzanne and Matt?

Patterson pushes the reader back to the love and romance as he tells of the birthday party for Matt. Nicky and Matt play in the sand. When they come back to the blanket, Matt tells of the acceptance of a poem by the Atlantic Monthly. The publishing company isn't ready to publish his poems but he still has hope. Patterson is teasing us with the possibility of Katie meeting Matt while he is still married. How could he be so in love with his wife and cheat on her? Matt's poetry is being noticed but he hasn't made it to the publishing company yet.

A real threat to the perfect life presents itself as Suzanne takes Nicky for a check-up and then has one herself. She learns that she has heart valve disease. Suzanne has to take better care of herself and face the disease. She is in real danger. However, as usual Suzanne is looking for magic. She makes a deal with Nicky on the way home from Boston that for every smile he gives her she will live another year. For a doctor, she falls into magical thinking quickly. After the heart attack that she had at the beginning of the book, one would think that she would live in reality. Perhaps even with scientific knowledge that she could share with a patient, she can't really believe it for herself.

Women understand the desire for a child. Some women can't accept themselves as women unless they have children. While there is a part of every woman who understands Suzanne's desire for another child, it is accepted as a heart string puller because Patterson has been keeping emotion high. If one stops and looks at this situation, this is a very stupid move for a doctor who understands the score. If Suzanne is so in love with Nicky and wants to see him grow up, why take this chance? Suzanne nearly died with Nicky. She has had more heart trouble since the birth. If she really wants Nicky to have a mom, why did she let herself get pregnant? Patterson is giving the reader another crisis to live through with Suzanne and Matt. The diary is still there and she is still writing in it; could she live through all the heart trouble and the pregnancy? Will this turn into a magical book after all?



Suzanne's doctor wants her to abort this child. Matt wants her to live, so he agrees with Dr. Cotter. Suzanne cries on the beach and goes against all her training and her doctor's advice and decides to have the baby. She isn't taking Matt's feelings into account. Patterson barely mentions Matt's feelings. Patterson keeps the reader concentrated on Suzanne. The woman wants the next baby so she should have it.

Suzanne goes a few weeks not feeling well enough to write in the diary. She tells the reader that she had a bad day when Dr. Cotter called and ordered her into the hospital. Suzanne collapses before she can call anyone to help her. The reader knows that the baby will be lost but will Suzanne? Suzanne comes as close to dying as anyone can. All her friends come by. Matt stays with her. Patterson continues Suzanne's point of view and we know that she is floating in some place away from physical life. Finally when Matt brings Nicky to the hospital, Patterson has Suzanne wake up. Matt is still married after all for now.

One finds it hard to believe that someone could have a major heart attack and not realize just how dangerous having babies can be. When that someone is a doctor, it gets harder to understand. This book is really a fairy tale and Patterson's way of bringing in the woman's market for himself.





## Section 11 Katie pp. 207-213.

### Section 11 Katie pp. 207-213. Summary

Katie shuts the diary again and looks for something normal. She thinks of her friends the Browns. Phil and Lynn and their four children. They seem like a sane and happy family. There can be happy endings. Katie gives the grown-ups a night out while she stays with the kids. She enjoys the kids and does everything they want to do. For Katie, it is Lynn who says she will be a great mom. Before Katie leaves the Brown's, she tells them about the pregnancy. On her way home on the train, she pulls out the diary.

Katie is learning things from the diary. The glass balls are a big thing. Work is the rubber ball. She has been taking too much care of work. Now she has a new glass ball in her life, the baby. Her life had been too full of work. She had been standing still for nine years. Editing one manuscript after another. She needs more in her life just for her own balance.

Katie's friends Laurie and Susan go with her to the doctor. Katie is not quite aware of her surroundings. She is thinking about seeing the doctor again, Dr. Sassoon. What could she say? When she gets into the office, she tells him she is pregnant and then begins to cry. Dr. Sassoon pats her shoulder and assures her that things are okay. She tells Dr. Sassoon that she is going to keep her baby.

### Section 11 Katie pp. 207-213. Analysis

Even though Patterson has Katie mention learning from Suzanne's diary and being in her reality, he has Katie go to her friends whom she says are sane and happy. This is just a hint about that magical thinking in the diary. Sometimes love and happily ever after are just as addictive as alcohol or drugs. Katie is well enough to know that Suzanne's reality is really denial. Suzanne believed she could have the second baby and live through the birth.

If Katie has an addiction, it is work. The five ball story is repeated again. Katie knows that she has given too much of her life to work and needs to be ready to give more to her baby.

Patterson finally tells us what Katie is going to do. She is keeping the baby. She has never suggested otherwise but it is a choice that she could have made. Her father is a minister and probably has deep feelings about abortion but Katie makes her choice on her own. Katie has never thought about abortion in her sections of the book. She has been too overwhelmed and confused about Matt and his actions.

Patterson tells the reader that Suzanne has friends but they don't seem to be really close. She depends almost exclusively on Matt and Nicky for the close relationships in her life. Katie has family and several good friends with whom she can share her secrets.



## **Section 12 The Diary pp. 217-229.**

### **Section 12 The Diary pp. 217-229. Summary**

Suzanne gets home from the hospital and Matt takes care of her better than a nurse. Matt can really cook. As the days pass Suzanne knows she is growing stronger. She takes Nicky to the beach and they both love the waves. Nicky is big enough now to try to help. He loves to clean and has his own little vacuum cleaner. He takes paper towels after messes. Suzanne treasures every moment.

One morning, before it is even light Matt brings Nicky to Suzanne's bed and wakes her. He has declared a three day outing. They pack and leave the phone behind. They go to many of the old places that Matt and Suzanne had visited when they courted. They start with the Flying Horses Carousel which delights Nicky. They visit beaches and eat in nice restaurants. They go to a playhouse to see a fairy story acted out. Nicky loves everything they do.

When they arrive home, Suzanne sees Matt's coworkers and friends. They had moved the driveway and added onto the house. She has a new office facing the beach. It is all a surprise. Things go well for some time. It is Nicky's first birthday. He has gone through the normal things that babies go through during that year. Matt and Suzanne don't go to bed until after midnight. At midnight they have to go into Nicky's room and blow kisses to him. They just watch him sleep. Suzanne turns on his music box and Matt and Suzanne sway together as they watch him.

### **Section 12 The Diary pp. 217-229. Analysis**

Patterson continues showing Matt as the perfect white knight. A man who can cook. He takes care of Suzanne. Nicky is the perfect little guy. He is always laughing. I don't think this baby has cried except at the moment of birth.

The weekend together as a family is perfect. It is rather hard to believe that a child who is less than one year old enjoys all that weekend so happily. Children away from home and off their schedules often aren't quite as happy as this baby for a whole weekend. Does any woman who has children really believe that he sat through a play and a story hour? However, it is a fantasy. Who wouldn't love a child like this one? Smiling all the time.

As usual Matt is thinking of Suzanne; while they have been away, a new office has been added for Suzanne. One more thing to prove what a wonderful hero Matt is. Besides being a mind reader, he does one thing after another to help Suzanne. It is definitely fiction.



## Section 13 Matthew pp. 233-241.

### Section 13 Matthew pp. 233-241. Summary

Matt tells Nicky that his mommy has had a heart attack. Matt had watched her get into her jeep to go pick up Nicky's birthday present. Matt wishes he had kissed her. She had her hands full and had blown him a kiss. He wishes he had stopped what he was doing and gone to her. He wishes he could hold her just one more time. Matt tells Nicky that the accident wasn't Suzanne's fault. She was always a careful driver. Dr. Cotter told Matt that she had died instantly. The Jeep had swerved into the guard rail and gone into the creek below. Matt had gone to Abel's Hill to choose a spot for mommy.

Matt had sat in the nursery and looked at all his son's toys and room décor. He sees the rocking horse he made and it reminds him of the Flying Horses. He had held Nicky in front of him as they chased after Suzanne who was on National Velvet in front of them. Matt can hardly bear to face the next day.

Matt remembers special things about Suzanne. He remembers the first phone call when he had to explain that Suzanne had died. It was the man at the frame shop. Matt had gotten the pictures Suzanne had framed for Nicky that afternoon. Matt stared at it. Matt, Suzanne, and Nicky—Forever One. They were at the Flying Horses and having a loving time together.

Matt talks to Nicky to tell him how his own father died. He had gone to work and never came home. Matt is afraid of someone leaving him that way again. That is a secret he shares with his son. He starts the music box on the crib and puts his hand on Nicky. He is cheek to cheek and nose to nose. He loves his son. Matt hears Nicky's beautiful laugh. But Nicky isn't there. Nicky had been in the Jeep with Suzanne. Suzanne had wanted Nicky to see his pictures first so she had taken him to town with her. Matt regrets that he hadn't been in the Jeep with them. Perhaps he could have saved Nicky.

Matt is shattered because he can never hold his son again and tell him how much he loves him, He will always miss his baby son. Matt is grateful that he had Nicky for a year. He says, "Isn't it lucky that I got to know you, sweet little boy, my darling, darling son? "

### Section 13 Matthew pp. 233-241. Analysis

Patterson lets the reader hear from Matt for the first time. As Patterson opens this entry the reader does not realize that Suzanne has died. Matt is talking to Nicky and he tells him that he has something hard to say. Matt talks about Suzanne and how much she loved them both and how much fun she was. He tells Nicky that it wasn't Suzanne's fault. She was a very careful driver.



The reader is so caught up in this fast paced love story that they don't wonder why a woman with such a heart condition is driving at all. Matt says she wasn't at fault. Suzanne has almost died three times in this book. Matt knows that each day is basically borrowed time for them. Why was she driving? Driving slow doesn't keep other people on the road safe if another driver has a heart attack. Since Suzanne has died, Matt would be too angry if he thought about her being in no position to drive. He can't face it so he tells Nicky and the reader that it isn't her fault.

Patterson pulls at our heart strings again as Matt tells about his father going to work and not coming home. Suzanne has gone to town and never come back. Two major losses which have happened in the same way.

Finally Patterson brings down the next blow. Nicky had been in the car with her. He doesn't go into Nicky's not feeling a thing because Nicky probably drowned. Matt can mourn in front of us. It is heart breaking that he lost his whole family. Once again, why would a woman with her heart condition put her son in the car with her? If she has to drive, why take a chance with her precious baby? Her magical thinking is telling her that nothing can happen. Matt is left hurting and the reader hurts for him. Suzanne was obviously able to draw Matt into her magical thinking too.



## Section 14 Katie pp. 245-266.

### Section 14 Katie pp. 245-266. Summary

Katie finishes the diary. The tears flow and won't stop. Her dog, Merlin, watches her and whines trying to comfort her. The pain in her chest because of her aching for Matt won't stop. She sees the letter with her name on it taped to the last page of the diary. Matt tells her of his mourning and that he couldn't be comforted. He doesn't say much more but Katie knows she has to find him and talk to him.

Since Katie never believed in quitting, she goes to the Vineyard the next day. She rides the ferry, the Islander. When she realizes she doesn't have a manuscript to read, she relaxes and enjoys the trip. She thinks about Matt being a glass ball and wonders if he is damaged or shattered.

Katie gets to the island and goes to the bar that Matt had mentioned. She is relieved to discover that he isn't an all-day patron there. She goes to Abel Hill Cemetery next. She finds Suzanne's grave and then Nicky's. She begins to sob and grieves for the family. She can't stop crying for some time.

Next Katie goes to Matt's home. She waits for a while then crosses the road to the beach. She remembers the things that are mentioned in the diary. Finally someone comes toward her. It is Melanie Bone. She learns that no one has seen Matt and all his friends are worried about him. Melanie tells Katie that she believes that Matt is in love with Katie and to hold on. Katie goes back to the city without seeing Matt.

The next week is still bad for Katie. She has about decided to go home to have her baby. She needs the people who love her around her. Then the morning comes when her assistant yells at her to come. Katie goes into her office to the window and sees Matt down below on the sidewalk. She rushes down to him. Matt is on his knees before her. She gets down on one knee herself. Matt tells her he loves her and would never leave her again.

In October Matt and Katie are married under the blue sky. The wedding is nothing like Matt's first. There are friends and family there and everyone gets along famously. There is a comfortable blend between the two families. Katie feels as if she had learned the best lesson when she thought of the five balls.

### Section 14 Katie pp. 245-266. Analysis

Patterson shows us a straightforward young woman who faces life as it comes to her. She knows she must see Matt. She needs to talk to him about the diary and what has happened between them. She also knows she will tell him about the baby. Patterson has Katie go looking for Matt. She doesn't find Matt but she finds some hope. Melanie Bone believes that Matt loves her and that he just needs a little time to adjust.



Matt shows up in New York. Matt has worked through his lengthy mourning and can admit that he is in love with Katie. The scene with Matt on his knees to ask forgiveness is the perfect ending for the book. Matt can admit his love and acknowledge how much his leaving has hurt Katie. Patterson plays with patterns. The reader sees the heroine on her knees in the diary and then it is talked about in the diary the second time. Patterson must have really liked the forgiveness scene for it to have come up again between Matt and Katie. This last forgiveness scene is between both parties and not just one part of a pair.

The wedding of Matt and Suzanne is not elaborate. These are sane people who have some real relationships among them. The family blends beautifully. It is just a plain wholesome wedding. The bride is beautiful. It is not the magic that Suzanne kept telling the reader about throughout the diary. One imagines that the new baby might even cry a little bit.



# Characters

## Katie Wilkinson

Katie is the reader of the diary and the woman in love with Matt. She is an attractive young woman who edits for a New York publisher. She meets Matt by editing his poetry. The more she is with Matt the greater her love. For eleven months they seem to be made for each other. Something goes wrong and Matt gives Katie Suzanne's Diary.

## Suzanne Bedford Harrison

Suzanne is the writer of the diary. Suzanne is a doctor who has a heart condition. She leaves the big city and the big hospital for Martha's Vineyard. She feels she is a country doctor. She loves the ocean and the small community atmosphere. She meets Matt Harrison on the Island. They marry and have Nicky. Suzanne continues to have major heart problems. She seems to be in denial about her condition. She almost dies several times before she has a massive heart attack.

## Matt Wolfe

Matt Wolfe is someone Suzanne had met on the island years ago when she visited the island. They seem to pick up an old crush and begin to date. Suzanne attends a party and recognizes her old life at the party. She is very uncomfortable. She doesn't ever want to go back to the big city. Matt Wolfe goes away on business for three months. When he returns, Suzanne has met another Matt.

## Merlin

Merlin is a black Labrador that belongs to Katie. The name is important because of Camelot and a story of medieval courtly love. The dog loves Katie.

## Guinevere

Guinevere is a gray Persian cat that belongs to Katie. Again Patterson is reminding the reader of Camelot and courtly love. Guinevere loses her love and a kingdom.

## Matthew Harrison

Matt is Suzanne's husband and Nicky's father. He is presented as the perfect male. He is very considerate of the women in his life—Suzanne and Katie. He does things for Suzanne before she has a chance to ask for them. He is the man who understands a



woman without her having to tell him a thing. Matt is a poet and a house painter as well as handy man. Matt has a degree in English and is happy on the island. Suzanne, Matt, and Nicky enjoy their unity. Matt has time for his son.

## **Melanie Bone**

Melanie Bone is Suzanne's next door neighbor. She has four little girls and is considering having another baby. Melanie is friendly and helpful. She knows everyone on the island and fills Suzanne in about them. She always has a full cupboard and is willing to share. At the end of the book, Melanie tells Katie to be patient. Melanie is sure that Matt loves Katie.

## **Jean Harrison**

Jean is Matt's mother. She is an artist. She can also do anything in a house and is the one who taught Matt to be a handy man. She is a strong, independent woman who lost her husband when Matt was very young. She likes Suzanne immediately and they grow close. Jean knows herself well enough to not be jealous of Matt's and Suzanne's relationship. They have a perfect in-law situation.

## **Dr. Constance Cotter**

Dr. Cotter is the doctor who takes care of Suzanne on the island. She brings in specialists as necessary. Constance decides that Nicky has to be born early. While both almost die, Dr. Cotter helps Nicky into the world. Dr. Cotter is the attending physician when Suzanne gets into trouble with the second baby. Suzanne survives but the baby is lost. Constance seems to be a very caring doctor.

## **Dr. Gail Davis**

Dr. Davis is Suzanne's cardiologist. She even comes to the island when Suzanne gets into trouble with the second baby. Dr. Davis gives Suzanne the bad news that Suzanne has heart valve disease. Dr. Davis works with Suzanne to help her live each day. Dr. Davis is more worried about Suzanne than Suzanne is.

## **Dr. Albert Sassoon**

Dr. Sassoon is Katie's gynecologist. He is another caring doctor who doesn't judge Katie. Katie tells the reader and Dr. Sassoon that she will keep her baby. Dr. Sassoon is a prop to use to tell the reader that Katie won't abort the baby. Other than telling us that Dr. Sassoon has been Katie's doctor for a long time and she likes him, Dr. Sassoon isn't described.





## **Susan Kingsolver**

Susan is a grade school teacher whom Katie met in the Hamptons one summer. They have been best buddies ever since. Susan knew about the pregnancy and insisted on accompanying Katie to the doctor's. Susan was ready to support her no matter what her decision. Katie had been maid of honor at Susan's wedding.

## **Laurie Raleigh**

Laurie goes to the doctor with Katie and Susan. Laurie isn't described. She is a good friend and Katie had served as a bridesmaid at her wedding. Laurie is a character to show Katie's support system.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Boston**

Suzanne works in a hospital in Boston. She has a fiancée there before the first heart attack.

### **Martha's Vineyard**

Suzanne goes to Martha's Vineyard to start over.

### **Suzanne's house**

Suzanne finds a boat house and makes it into her home.

### **Harry's Hamburgers**

Harry's Hamburgers is the diner where Suzanne talks to Matt Harrison for the first time.

### **Museums**

The New York Art Museums are where Katie and Matt go for an afternoon.

### **Jazz club**

Katie and Matt relax together at a jazz club after their first dinner together.

### **Flying Horses Carousel**

Suzanne and Matt visit the Flying Horses carousel for a date before they are married. They take Nicky to the Flying Horses after they are married and have Nicky. One of the pictures of the three of them is framed for his birthday. Matt has only the picture to look at after the deaths.

### **Matt's Victorian House**

Matt's upstairs bedroom in his house has skylights as the best part of the decor. They can lie in his bed and watch the stars.



## **Songs of a Housepainter**

Matt's volume of poetry that Katie edits is titled Songs of a Housepainter.

## **ER and hospital on the Island**

Suzanne is taken to the Island hospital for Nicky's birth and again when she loses the baby.

## **Beach**

Suzanne's house is across from the beach. Suzanne spends time there alone. She spends time with Matt on the beach and also Nicky. The three of them share the beach at times.

## **Nicky's room**

Nicky's room is fixed up like a perfect nursery. He has Mother Goose figures on the wall paper. He likes cars. He has a rocking horse that Matt made. He has teddy bears.

## **Suzanne's Jeep**

Suzanne was driving her Jeep when she had her final heart attack.

## **Five Balls**

Suzanne tells the story of the five balls. Four balls are made of glass and one is made of rubber. Work is the only ball that bounces. The other four glass balls can be broken. If you don't take care of the four glass balls, your life is out of balance. Glass balls break.



# Themes

## Work Is Not the Most Important Thing in Life

Katie and Suzanne both learn that work isn't the most important thing in life. The story of the five balls is emphasized throughout this book. Four of the balls are glass. A person has to be very careful with the glass balls. They represent the things in life that are fragile and their being broken or cracked can ruin a life and a family. Work is the fifth ball and it is rubber. A job can be lost and it doesn't have to ruin lives if the glass balls are not shattered. The work ball will eventually bounce back and life will continue in a good way. There may be a hard time if one does lose a job while he finds another.

Suzanne had been working too hard at being a doctor. She practically lived at the hospital and when she did socialize it was to further a career rather than to relax. Suzanne wanted to be a good doctor but expected to make a name as well.

Katie has also made work the focus of her life. She had left college and been hired in New York as an editor for a big name publisher. She has moved up the ladder. She works all the time. She is never without a manuscript. It isn't until she is faced with a pregnancy and a broken heart that she stops to look at her life. She reads the five ball story in the diary and knows that something in her life has to give and it would have to be work. Because of the story and the lesson it taught, she knows she has to find a way to make the most time for her baby. Her focus is wrong and it has to change. She considers going back to her home town where she has family and friends for support. Katie has a good grasp on reality. She knows she can't be a superwoman and manage a baby by herself. She faces the facts and lets go of work as the most important thing in her life. She can still work and will work but the work will never be more important than her baby.

Integrity is one of the glass balls. Katie knows whether Matt is married or not that she has to tell him about the baby. A father has a right to know about a baby no matter what he has done. A woman of integrity doesn't keep such a thing a secret. A man of integrity meets his responsibilities toward the child. No matter what the other person does, each person has to decide if he or she has integrity.

## Living in Denial Doesn't Stop Bad Things from Happening

While Suzanne starts her diary with a heart attack, she soon forgets it. She tells about her life as if it is perfect all the time. Everything is good. Some would say that she is a positive thinker. Positive thinkers still see the facts and acknowledge them. When Suzanne describes Matt and their courtship, the man is the perfect man. Many women expect a man to know what they are thinking and what they want without their telling the man in question. No one reads minds. No one is that close to always know what



another person wants. In Suzanne's diary, Matt is the mind reader. Not only does he know, he does whatever the woman wants and expects. When Suzanne has a heart attack, she has no warning. She couldn't put a baby down before she fell. She passes out and doesn't know what is happening. She ignores the normal outcome of a heart disease like this. If she is feeling okay, she acts as if she won't die in the next moment. She doesn't face her immortality. When Suzanne is told that she has heart valve disease, she makes a deal with Nicky who is riding in the car with her that for every smile he gives her she will live another year. She doesn't let herself know that she doesn't live in her magic world. She uses the word magic often. Everything is magic. Meeting Matt was magic. The wedding was magic. Nicky's birth, even though they both almost died, was magic. Nicky's christening was magic. She arranges the wedding and the christening in ways that look like they are living a fairy tale. The descriptions make one think of a fairy tale wedding and christening. Color and pomp.

Suzanne is very much in denial when she refuses to abort the second baby. Why had they gotten pregnant when it was such a danger to her and the baby? If Suzanne wants another baby, she is insistent that she have it. She denies that she would probably leave Nicky without a mother and Matt without a wife. She won't believe that she won't live forever. She does live through the rebellion by her body. The baby does not. Suzanne can come back from a brush with death and still not believe that her magic little world will ever end. Like all people she will die. She will die sooner than most. Instead of taking the attacks more seriously, she seems to take them as signs that she will live through them all. She too is magic.

She has to be in very deep denial to put her son in a car and drive it. The worst thing that could happen does. She has her final heart attack and takes her son with her. She has killed her son.

## Love Can Lead to a Broken Heart

While Suzanne has a heart that explodes, she is the one with the physical broken heart. Her love leads to Matt's broken heart. Suzanne has another heart attack and takes Matt's son away from him. She leaves him and his son leaves him. Katie falls in love and she gets her heart broken because Matt leaves her. Love is associated with the heart. Usually the broken heart in a story does not have an actual, physical broken heart as well. This story starts with a broken heart and just continues to be about more broken hearts. The broken hearts are like ripples. Suzanne's first heart attack is like the big rock landing in the water. The ripples come from Suzanne and her association with the others who have their hearts broken. As the story progresses, the ripples move farther away from Suzanne. As Suzanne's diary is finally finished and Matt ends the story, Suzanne is like the big rock that has settled in the bottom of the water. The ripples are less and ending as well. The rock is still there but it is no longer having the effect on everyone. Suzanne's story is basically over. Matt and Katie can start their own story. The broken hearts can be mended just as the water settles back into the peace it possessed before the big rock landed in it. The rock is still there but it is quiet. Suzanne will always be in Matt's heart and Katie's consciousness but she will no longer have the

impact that she once had. Katie faces facts so she can accept Matt's history and understand him. Loving Katie must be something of a relief. Matt no longer has to be the magic man. He must feel that he is lucky to find Katie and live in a real world again.

# Style

## Point of View

There are three points of view in the book. When Katie is the section title, the story is from Katie's point of view. When The Diary is the section heading, we have Suzanne's point of view. Matt's point of view happens only once. Matt has one section in the diary which is entitled Matthew. Matt tells of Nicky's death. The whole book is basically the story of two women. Matt's new love and Matt's first love.

## Setting

There are three settings. The first setting is Boston where Suzanne is practicing medicine. Suzanne has her first heart attack in a Boston park near the Swan Boats. The second setting is Martha's Vineyard where Suzanne goes after the heart attack to put her life back together. Suzanne becomes the country doctor here and meets Matt here. New York is the third setting where Katie works as an editor and she meets Matt when she edits his book of poetry.

## Language and Meaning

The language is very contemporary. It reads as if someone is talking to the reader. There are times the author uses too many adverbs to make the situation bigger and more overblown. Patterson wants the reader to understand what a huge love affair there is between Suzanne and Matt. The word "magical" is used throughout The Diary sections in the same manner that the 12 step programs use the example of magical thinking. Suzanne doesn't believe she will ever die just as the alcoholic believes he can drink one more and not be drunk.

Patterson uses certain words or certain names to help the reader to think of other romantic references. The cat's name is Guinevere which makes the reader think of Camelot. Patterson adds a touch of the modern too as he gives the reader's names to make one think of The Prince of Tides and The Bridges of Madison County. Patterson uses language to keep stars in the reader's eyes. One doesn't think too much. Patterson plays with the reader's emotional strings.

## Structure

Suzanne's Diary to Nicholas has several sections. Some of the sections are the diary itself. There is almost always a section of Katie's as she reads the diary. Katie brings us back to the present and the reader sees her suffering and adds some mystery to the piece. Patterson uses one section entitled Matthew to wrap up any questions that are left for the reader. Patterson keeps the pages turning at a fast pace. Patterson takes



hold of the reader's emotional strings and drives the book just like someone driving a buggy. As the fast clip keeps the reader either crying or hoping for different outcomes than he is afraid is happening, he doesn't have time to look too hard at the book. Since Katie claims that she would like Suzanne if they met under different circumstances, the reader is set up to like Suzanne. One can see the book as if it were on Broadway with bright lights spelling out "Patterson's Greatest Love Story." Patterson is aiming for a love story and he takes us for the ride he directs to get us there. The love lost story inside the happily ever after story. The reader has it all. Patterson delivers.





## Quotes

"Katie slipped down farther into the water, and found herself thinking back to the day she had received the diary—July 19."

Section 1, Katie, p. 4

"Sitting there on the top deck, she remembered a favorite line from the movie *The African Queen*: 'Head up, chin out, hair blowing in the wind, the living picture of the hero-eyne,' Bogart had teased Hepburn."

Section 1, Katie, p. 6

"Katie had never been so hurt in her life. Nothing came close to this. She had lost the only man she had ever loved; God, how she loved Matt."

Section 1, Katie, p. 9

"Everything was a blur. I couldn't actually be sure of what was happening to me, but something told me heart."

Section 2, Suzanne, p. 18

"Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls. The balls are called work, family, health, friends, and integrity. And you're keeping all of them in the air."

Section 2, Suzanne, p. 20

"She liked her. Damn it, she liked Suzanne. She hadn't wanted to—but there it was."

Section 3, Katie, p. 48

"Had she been a fool to trust someone she thought she loved?"

Section 3, Katie, p. 49

"Nick\_\_listen, watch closely now, this next part is magic. There is such a thing. Believe me."

Section 4, Suzanne, p. 61

"Dozens of brightly painted stallions stood in a circle beneath the most dazzling jigsaw ceiling I'd ever seen. Hand-carved horses with flared red nostrils and black glass eyes galloped in their tireless tracks in a circle of joy."

Section 4, Suzanne, p. 71

"When she got to her office that morning, he was already there, waiting for her. Her heart nearly stopped."

Section 5, Katie, p. 80

"I am by my own admission a slow and careful driver. Matt had found my first flaw."

Section 6, Suzanne, p. 83



"I hope when you grow up that everything you want comes your way, but especially love."

Section 6, Suzanne, p. 96

"'You had a heart attack,' he said in the softest voice. 'You almost died in the Public Garden, but you didn't, Thank God.'"

Section 6, Suzanne, p. 112

"His eyes said, I love you, Katie. She couldn't have been wrong about that."

Section 7, Katie, p. 118

"Silvery white feathers were released from dozen of satin pouches that had been carefully strung from the ceiling. Matt and I were in a blizzard of angels and clouds and doves."

Section 8, Suzanne, p. 129

"Would you pick up an EPT kit? I want to be absolutely sure, but, Matt, we're pregnant."

Section 8, Suzanne, p. 133

"I could read it in the tightness of her jaw. She was worrying about my heart. Was it strong enough? She was worrying about you, Nicky."

Section 8, Suzanne, p. 145

"She sighed loudly. 'Well...I'm pregrant,' Katie finally said."

Section 9, Katie, p. 158

"Monsignor Dwyer was completely taken with you. During the baptism, you kept reaching for the service book and touching his hand. You were looking right at him, attentive as could be."

Section 10, Suzanne, p. 162

"I was crying, sobbing terribly, still shaking badly. 'Don't give up on this baby, Matt.'"

Section 12, p. 191

"The music plays, but you aren't in your crib."

Section 13, p. 241



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss your first reaction to the book. Were you pulled into the fast-paced love story so that you had no critical thoughts? Did your opinion change as you heard the book discussed or read the comments in this guide? Did you agree or disagree with the analysis? How did you agree or disagree?

Describe Suzanne's character. Was she a sympathetic character? What did you like or dislike about her?

Did you believe that Matt was so perfect? Was he a hero? While he was in love with Suzanne, did you see any fatal flaws? Do heroes have fatal flaws in commercial literature?

What makes a book a classic? Would you consider Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas a piece that would achieve classic status? Why? Why not?

Describe Katie. Did she make a good heroine? What characteristics did you particularly like or dislike about her?

Did you believe that Matt was cheating on Suzanne? Why or why not?

Discuss the five ball story. Do you agree with the work ball being able to bounce? Discuss each ball. Can any of the four glass balls be more important than the others?

How did you react to the pretentiousness in the book? The Kennedy Wedding... The oldest carousel in America... The antique heirloom christening gown.. Did you notice that even after Suzanne left Boston, she still had the biggest and the best and was luckiest in everything she did? Did she really change her whole life? Her whole thinking?

List the romantic titles or names that Patterson added to the book that you recognized as you were reading the first time? Did you immediately associate the name/titles with romance? Did you see it as a writer's ploy to take the reader where the writer wanted him to go?

Do you believe that love and broken hearts go together? Why or why not? Does a broken heart make a person stronger as they face the problem?

With Suzanne's knowledge as a doctor, did you question her insisting on the second baby? or driving a car? having Nicky with her?