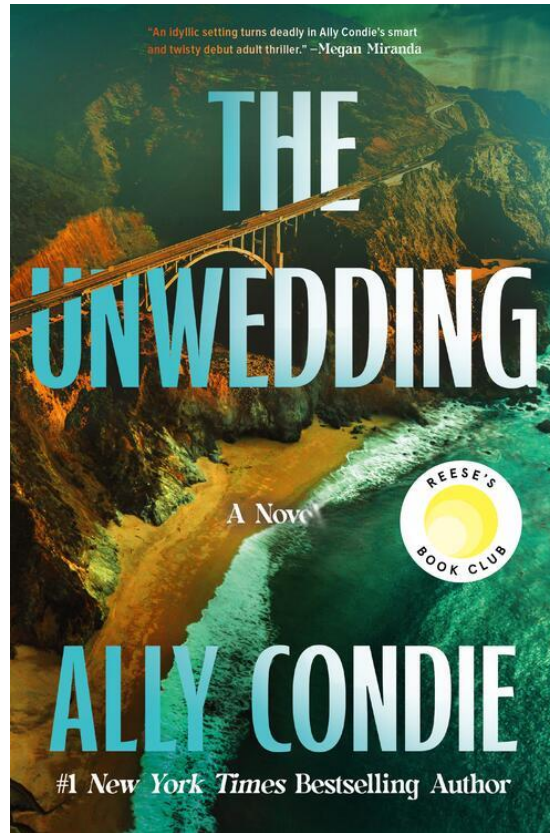


Review of “The Unwedding” by Ally Condie
By Ashley Okelberry

“The Unwedding” by Ally Condie
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Utah author Ally Condie, known for writing the bestselling “Matched” series, came out with her first adult novel in June of this year. This novel, “The Unwedding,” tells the story of Ellery Wainwright, a recently divorced woman who takes a solo vacation to a scenic resort in Big Sur, California that she had intended to visit for her twentieth wedding anniversary.

The novel begins in an intriguing way, with Ellery heading for the resort’s heated pool to go swimming in the rain. When Ellery gets to the pool, instead of finding any sort of relaxation or exercise from a late-night swim, she finds a dead body. After this intense introduction, the book goes back to two days prior, and the story continues from there. We learn that there is a wedding being held at the resort, and it is eventually revealed that the body Ellery finds is that of

the groom. A mudslide traps all of the guests in the resort and prevents the police from coming to investigate the groom's death, so it seems it is up to Ellery to unravel the mystery.

First, "The Unwedding" is an attention-grabbing and riveting story with a compelling protagonist. Descriptions of the setting in the beginning of the book create vivid imagery of Big Sur and the luxurious resort where Ellery and other characters are staying. The reader can clearly imagine the many details of the setting and the weather. Ellery is a relatable character, and the grief and heartbreak she is experiencing due to her divorce feels very real. Nina and Ravi, a pair of friends who travel together, are the first named characters besides Ellery that we meet at the resort. They invite the lonely Ellery to dine with them, and immediately the duo are a great addition to the novel. Nina and Ravi add an element of humor and fun to the novel, with their enticing personalities and witty banter.

While the novel initially seems to be painting an intriguing story of death and deception, mixed with the themes of Ellery's heartbreak and healing, it eventually falls flat. Random side plots popped up, and they felt unnatural and loosely connected to the main storyline. In general, the story moved quite slowly and became boring as it went on. The ending of the novel, which should have been climactic and shocking when all the mysteries were revealed, was lackluster, and a bit confusing. This confusion in part resulted from the fact that Ellery did not seem to have much connection to the characters who were directly involved in the wedding. Ellery was simply an outside observer who happened to be in the same place as the other characters.

The novel in its entirety was not very long, but it certainly felt as though it was. The anticlimactic ending and slow progression of the plot really detract from the beautiful language and idyllic scenery that exist within the novel. While the premise of "The Unwedding" was promising and initially drew me into the world of Ellery and the resort, the execution left much to be desired.