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# Illyria



## Synopsis

Madeleine and Rogan are first cousins, best friends, twinned souls, each other's first love. Even within their large, disorderly family—all descendants of a famous actress—their intensity and passion for theater sets them apart. It makes them a little dangerous. When they are cast in their school's production of *Twelfth Night*, they are forced to face their separate talents and futures, and their future together. This masterful short novel, winner of the World Fantasy Award, is magic on paper.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Madeleine and Rogan Tierney are first cousins and descendants of the great stage actress Madeleine Armin Tierney. They live with their many relatives at Arden Terrace, a gated community with large, rambling houses in Yonkers, and as the youngest cousins they are the closest--so close that they share a connection no one else could ever comprehend, and ultimately fall in love. Encouraged by their glamorous Aunt Kate to pursue their legacy in theater, the two participate in their school's production of *Twelfth Night*, which causes all sorts of feelings and emotions to swell, and forces Madeleine and Rogan to face the uncertainty of their future together. Illyria's setting is rich and lush, from the depictions of how Madeleine and Rogan spent their childhoods to the details in the sprawling, decaying homes that their families inhabit. Hand's writing is indeed intense, and the relationship she builds between the cousins is full of tension and passion, especially when they share private moments in the attic of Rogan's house, watching the tiny, magical toy theater they found. It is evident through their roles in *Twelfth Night* that both Madeleine and Rogan possess

talent for the stage, but while one of them wastes it, the other embraces it, cleaving the two and showing them each very different futures. Though more practical-minded readers may have a hard time grasping the point of this short novel, Hand's writing is beautiful and her imagery vivid. Like any great tragedy, *Illyria* is haunting and gorgeous.

Maddy and Rogan are first cousins; actually their fathers are identical twins so genetically they're half-siblings. They share the same birthday, are each the youngest of six children and grew up together on the same street. They are also passionately and hopelessly in love with each other. They steal time together hidden away in Rogan's attic where they find an enchanted toy theater. Maddy and Rogan's great-grandmother was a famous stage actress. When Maddy and Rogan are both cast in their school's production of *Twelfth Night*, they realize the extent of their own talents for acting and must decide what that means for their futures, both together and separately. Okay, I'll just be honest here. After reading the other reviews of this book, I'm feeling pretty dumb. It's gotten rave reviews all over the place and won the World Fantasy Award for Best Novella. I enjoyed it but I feel like I must have missed something. I wanted more. I wanted to know why the theater was in the attic and why it was enchanted and who put it there. I kept waiting for it to have more of a role in the story and it never did. The reviewer who wrote: "Though more practical-minded readers may have a hard time grasping the point of this short novel, Hand's writing is beautiful and her imagery vivid." sums it up nicely. I am too practical (and maybe not smart enough) for this book.

~3/5 This book is extremely short, which is part of why I picked it up. It's short and very thoughtful, kind of slow, but also a little sad. It's about these two cousins, the same age, who are in love with each other. They're part of a large family that live on the same street, some of whom get along, their parents are strict and they don't really get along with their siblings. Their relationship is interesting, and I was actually kind of okay with it. Maybe because I knew ahead of time, though. They clearly are the only ones there for each other, with the same interests. They're both interested in theatre, and him in singing. But while she wants to be an actor, he starts going down a bad path. I liked the writing, for sure. It's very pretty and thoughtful, and the image of the tiny theatre will probably stay in my head because it's so pretty. But it's also sad. The ending for both of the characters, but especially for him and their family, is kind of depressing. She has a better time, but only marginally. It doesn't seem like anyone was really happy to me. It was a worthwhile, pretty read, but sad. [More of my

reviews are available on my blog, Geeky Reading, to which there's a link on my profile.]

I don't know how to write eloquent reviews. I read so much but rarely ever even leave a comment. And this is not even my usual choice of reading material. But WOW! I could see everything, feel it all, and just sat back and absorbed Maddy and Rogan's world. The story is told by Maddy. It is about first love. It's also about theater. It's about growing up and about changing. It's magical at times and has a firm footing in the real world. Not Fantasy, but wishful. Or maybe wistful? I read this story in one sitting. I didn't want to wait. Were they going to have a happy ending? Was something painful and dramatic going to happen? Would I laugh, or cry? I think the storyline kept the perfect pace. Nothing earth shattering but no bumps in the road. It felt Real. And regarding the toy theater, such a focused topic in many of the other reviews. I personally think it wasn't meant to be a door into some magical place. I think it was a symbol of Maddy and Rogan's escape from the daily expectations and perceptions. I enjoyed the time I spent with Maddie and Rogan. I hope you will too.

There's a reason Illyria won the World Fantasy Award. Great characterization, plot, and storyline. Strongly recommend: it crosses so many genres that it is best described as modern literature, with components that will appeal to a very wide audience. No spoilers, it's a short (as is 'The Old Man and the Sea'), concise and tightly written.

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