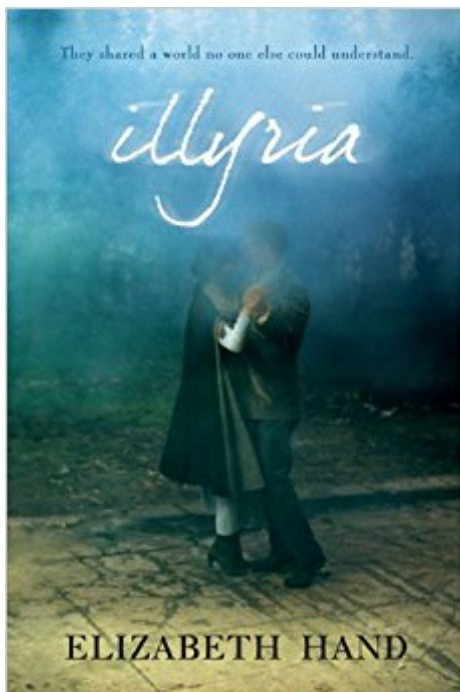


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# Illyria



## 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

**\*Starred Review\*** Growing up in 1970s Yonkers, Maddy and Rogan were called the "kissing cousins" of the Tierney clan. In a secret attic space, they find a toy theater, complete with lighting and stage effects that appear like magic, but no actors or audience. As their discovery stirs within them the desire to create, Aunt Kate, mysterious and unnaturally beautiful, brings their abilities to a boil. Determined to restore the family's long-abandoned theatrical heritage, Kate pushes Maddy and Rogan to nurture their gifts in the school's production of *Twelfth Night*. However, Rogan's wild nature is ever at odds with his haunting, melodious singing voice, and Maddy's glamour, no doubt the gift of their great-grandmother, an ingénue of the stage, shines dimly in the brilliance of Rogan's fey charms. Winner of the World Fantasy Award, Hand's slim novella is sublime and daring; she makes no mystery about the nature of the 15-year-old cousins' relationship. It's as sweet, sexual, obsessive, and devastating as any other first love. YA readers are entrusted with a

narrative of burgeoning and squandered talent, unapologetic incest, familial decline on par with that of Faulkner's Compson family, and a hard-won ending that's, at best, tenuously hopeful. The subtlety and raw ache of the prose, and the realistic portrayal of artistic lives, triumphantly heralds Hand's arrival into youth fiction. Grades 10-12. --Courtney Jones

"Stunning.... The evocations of the play, of first love, of intense desire, are pitch-perfect." -- Jeff Vandermeer

Madeleine and Rogan are first cousins born from twin brothers. The two live with their extended families in a compound of homes. The pair are drawn together through their differences from the rest of the family, and their mysterious Aunt Kate draws them into the arts, a talent that they both have inherited from their famous actress ancestor, but for which the rest of the family has no interest. Kate manages to get their parents to allow them to accompany her to plays and participate in the school production of *Twelfth Night*. The two grow unnaturally close and become obsessed with each other. There are many glimmers of magical realism, from Aunt Kate, their ancestor's velvet cloak that seems to transform Maddy, and the strange theater that they discover in the attic with lights and staging that changes each time they visit it. As Rogan begins to self-destruct, their parents take it upon themselves to irrevocably split the pair and we then see the consequences that this split takes on their lives. If you can see past the taboo relationship, this is an interesting tale of the tumultuous time of the teenage years.

This novella was a magical read. The writing is beautiful. I purchased it because I had read another book by Elizabeth Hand, *Waking the Moon*, which I love. *Illyria* is just as good.

I am a big fan of Elizabeth Hand and was thrilled to read about her newest book. I was not disappointed. It is funny, tragic, magical, and wove its way into me like colored smoke...

I adored this novella by Elizabeth Hand about 'kissing cousins', Madeleine and Rogan. Bite size novel, but a whole lot of story with heart. It's definitely what I would dub as hauntingly beautiful.

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.

Though the supposedly YA orientation of this novella doesn't precisely play to Hand's hallucinogenic style, there's enough mystery, romance, and glamour on hand to make this a fun read. Though length and structure-wise it feels more like a novella than a short novel, the length is well-suited to the parlor romance feel of the material. And though this is pitched as YA, and Hand crops her style accordingly, in the end the overall vibe is more a middle-aged memory piece than YA romancer. That's not a criticism, just an observation.

I don't usually read teen books but this is about a high school production of "Twelfth Night". I read it for the young people in my life but can't really recommend it to them.

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.

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Illyria

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