



The Madness of Love: A Novel

Katharine Davies

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With a sophistication and mischievousness remarkable for a first-time novelist, Katharine Davies takes inspiration from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and raises the curtain on the interconnecting lives and loves of an unforgettable cast of characters. By turns comic and moving, *The Madness of Love* is a deftly woven tale of mistaken identity, bold moves, and unrequited desires.

Valentina, a clerk in a London bookstore, is still reeling after her twin brother broke a childhood promise and ran off without her to exotic lands. When she cuts her hair, masquerades as a gardener to the melancholic Leo, and moves to the remote seaside town of Illerwick, she perplexes even herself.

Leo dreams of restoring his estate's gardens to their former glory as a romantically naïve gesture toward the woman he's loved all his life: Melody, an English teacher whose beauty bewitches many others. Melody rejects any attempt at capture; she is locked in a state of mourning over the suicide of her dear brother.

As Valentina struggles with the decades-old neglect of flowers, plants, and weeds, her affection for her eccentric employer grows, even as she helps him plot his overture to Melody. The gardens must be made ready for a grand late-summer party. But between now and then, Illerwick will stir with old longings and new desires. As people fall dangerously for those incapable of reciprocating, we see, enchantingly, how our misguided pursuit of passion often distracts us from finding real love.

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