



Reliance, Illinois

Mary Volmer

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Reliance, Illinois

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**"Reliance, Illinois has it all—mystery, politics, war; love, death, and art. Every page is a pleasure."
—Karen Joy Fowler, author of *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves***

Reliance, Illinois tells the story of a young woman faced with choices that will alter the course of her own future, and offers a brilliant window into American life during a period of tumultuous change. Illinois, 1874: With a birthmark covering half her face, thirteen-year-old Madelyn Branch is accustomed to cold and awkward greetings, and expects no less in the struggling town of Reliance. After all, her mother, Rebecca, was careful not to mention a daughter in the *Matrimonial Times* ad that brought them there. When Rebecca weds, Madelyn poses as her mother's younger sister and earns a grudging berth in her new house. Deeply injured by her mother's deceptions, Madelyn soon leaves to enter the service of Miss Rose Werner, prodigal daughter of the town's founder. Miss Rose is a suffragette and purveyor of black market birth control who sees in Madelyn a project and potential acolyte. Madelyn, though, wants to feel beautiful and loved, and she pins her hopes on William Stark, a young photographer and haunted Civil War veteran.

From the Hardcover edition.

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