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Writter Android Devices Microsoft Windows Wearables and Fitness technology Computer Hardware A magazine writer specializing in technology for over fifteen years.A columnist covering tech for Family Circle, PC World, PC Magazine, CIO Magazine, Yahoo Tech, IT World, InfoWorld, Greatschools.org, USA Weekend, and other national publications.Her “Family Tech” column in Family Circle won a Min Award (in 2013) for best advice column.She has covered technology for many other media properties, including Better Homes and Gardens, Popular Science, This Old House Magazine, NASDAQ International, Working Woman, Discovery, Greatschools.org, Jaguar Magazine, and JeanKnowsCars.com. Author of How to Be a Geek Goddess (No Starch Press, 2009). Her novel, Vice Report, is available on Amazon. Christina Wood (aka Christina Tynan-Wood) is a freelance writer, covering consumer electronics, the Web, IoT, parenting, education, science, automotive technology, IT, careers in IT, and security.She has edited everything from complete magazine packages to academic research papers for educational consortiums and PhD candidates, as well as consulted with private corporate clients on technology buying and content development.She covered the first, second, and current bubbles in technology and, in the process, has taken meetings with everyone from Sergey Brin to Melinda Gates and a cast of characters just as interesting who also changed the world but didn’t get so famous. It has been a wild ride. Education Christina Wood has a B.A. in literature from U.C. Berkeley. A Message from Christina Wood When I was 13, my father—a brilliant, lunatic Irishman who was, at the time, crunching numbers for NASA—brought home a CPM computer. It was already obsolete and something of an experiment even then. I was reading Dostoyevsky. He dropped it on the table in front of me and said, “Figure that out and then show me how it works.” I did. And I have been doing the same thing—with the benefit of a lot more education and an ever increasing selection of technologies—ever since. Lifewire and Dotteddash Meredith Lifewire, a Dotteddash Meredith brand, is a Top 10 technology information website, as rated by Comscore, a leading internet measurement company. We provide trusted, clear, and actionable answers to your most pressing technology questions vetted by certified experts, as well as trustworthy product recommendations so you can make the most informed purchasing decisions. Learn more about us and our editorial process. The Hazel Wood (The Hazel Wood, #1) by Melissa Albert Published by Flatiron Books on January 30th 2018 Pages: 359 Buy on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, The Book Depository Goodreads Seventeen-year-old Alice and her mother have spent most of Alice’s life on the road, always a step ahead of the uncanny bad luck biting at their heels. But when Alice’s grandmother, the reclusive author of a cult-classic book of pitch-dark fairy tales, dies alone on her estate, the Hazel Wood, Alice learns how bad her luck can really get: her mother is stolen away-by a figure who claims to come from the Hinterland, the cruel supernatural world where her grandmother’s stories are set. Alice’s only lead is the message her mother left behind: “Stay away from the Hazel Wood.” Alice has long steered clear of her grandmother’s cultish fans. But now she has no choice but to ally with classmate Ellery Finch, a Hinterland superfan who may have his own reasons for wanting to help her. To retrieve her mother, Alice must venture first to the Hazel Wood, then into the world where her grandmother’s tales began—and where she might find out how her own story went so wrong. The Hazel Wood is a book that has a lot of promise, especially in its beginning. The novel paints a grim picture of main character Alice’s life with her mom on the run, hinting at something darker than just bad luck chasing at their heels. I was immediately gripped by this hint of something dark and something more and the mystery surrounding Alice’s grandmother, who penned a very rare and gruesome collection of fairy tales, known as Tales from the Hinterland. Unfortunately, the novel doesn’t hold onto this mysterious, foreboding feeling for long, and quickly becomes just another YA fantasy novel about a girl who isn’t like the others. On her journey to reunite with her missing mother, Ella, Alice learns that she bears the name of one of her Grandmother’s fairy tales, “Three-Times-Alice.” Though “Three-Times-Alice” is the villain in her story, I really felt that modern day Alice was the real villain in The Hazel Wood. Alice is unkind, angry, and only attached to her mother, whom she practically worships. But what’s worse than her actual behavior, is that there’s really no reason for her anger! Yes, she and her mother move constantly, uprooting themselves to stay ahead of whatever curse plagues them, but as she only likes her mother, has no friends or desires of her own, these constant moves don’t seem to be a good reason for her rage issues. Sadly, Alice is a completely flat character, with only one two main personality traits, worshipping her mother, and being angry at everything and everyone. Likewise, the other main character of the novel, Ellery Finch, is similarly flat. We know he’s from a rich family, despised by his stepmother, but all of this is directly told to Alice in conversation instead of shown. I find it hard to believe that two characters who have barely interacted would share their pasts with each other, but Finch seems happy to divulge to Alice that his father cheated on his mother with his secretary, who is now his stepmother, and that his mother killed herself in the aftermath. I didn’t for a second believe these characters had enough of a connection to share this type of information with one another after a few hours of a road trip together, but that’s exactly what happens, even though Alice is constantly rude, dismissive, and ungrateful to Finch. But apparently that’s the perfect person to confide in about the dark family history. Much more interesting than Alice is the story for which she is named, and all the other fairy tales from her grandmother’s book that are in the story. These fairy tales were more gripping than anything that happened in the real main story of the novel, and I couldn’t help but to wish that the author had just written an actual collection of fairy tales instead of this actual novel. “...a girl doing nothing in a fairy tale ends up dead or worse, but a girl who makes decisions usually gets rewarded.” I was especially disappointed when I learned the actual reason for all of the strange things happening in Alice’s life. It meant that her very few character traits were explained away as View Spoiler » “because she’s part of a Story,” so every part of her was predetermined. What’s worse is that Alice doesn’t really seem to have any mental breakdown over this, she never wonders if she’s real or human, or if her relationships are real, she just single-mindedly focuses on getting back to her mom. It’s a shame that there’s really nothing more to her, and that the glimpse of “Story” Alice is more dimensional. < Hide Spoiler It’s obvious the author wants her character to be the special heroine who breaks out of the mold, even telling readers that girls in fairy tales have to make choices, but it falls resoundingly flat. I just couldn’t care about Alice, or any of the other characters. “My memory of that night is tattered, a movie screen, clawed to strings. The glint of the ring lodged in my eye like a shard of demon glass, and the anger overwhelmed me.” I also really didn’t care for the references to Harry Potter and The Hunger Games, etc.. These references were really jarring and felt completely out of place among the purple prose and references to Alice’s grandmother’s own stories. I almost felt like I had whiplash between the darker atmosphere, odd metaphors, and then the blithe references to other works or pop culture. I really didn’t see the purpose for these mentions, as it wasn’t a big part of Alice’s life, and seemed to cheapen the importance of the Hinterland stories by tossing around these references in passing so haphazardly. Another thing that I found odd was how hard The Hazel Wood pushed the narrative that Alice’s grandmother’s book of fairy tales, the infamous Tales from the Hinterland, was different than all the other fairy tales. Finch tells Alice: “Then I got my hands on Althea’s book. And it was perfect. There are no lessons in it. there’s just this harsh, horrible world touched with beautiful magic, where shitty things happen. And they don’t happen for a reason, or in threes, or in a way that looks like justice, they’re set in a place that has no rules and doesn’t want any.” But when Alice reaches the Hinterland herself, it follows all of the rules of fairy tales! She encounters a fairy godmother type figure disguised as a haggard old lady and is rewarded for helping her, despite her disguised appearance. She is gifted a beat up old comb from a stranger, which magically transforms into the perfect gift to give to a greedy and murderous sea creature. And she’s quite obviously named for the story “Three-Times-Alice,” which at bare minimum refutes Finch’s bald claims that the Hinterland doesn’t have things happen in threes, and the novel’s propaganda that the Hinterland is different. Quite simply, the Hinterland is so much like the worlds of other fairy tales, it’s embarrassing that The Hazel Wood spends so much time trying to differentiate them. And though they are supposed to be more gruesome than regular fairy tales, nothing I read in The Hazel Wood was even on the level of Grimm’s fairy tales or that of Hans Christian Anderson’s. These disconnects are just two of the many things throughout the entirety of The Hazel Wood that made me feel like the book couldn’t really decide if it exactly it wanted to be, a book with an edgy main character along the lines of Holden Caulfield, a relatable young adult book filled with references a la Gilmore Girls, or a creepy story with horror themes and far reaching ramifications for its characters. Though I enjoyed creepy atmosphere in the beginning of the novel, along with the mystery of Alice’s grandmother, and the two fairy tales within The Hazel Wood, they weren’t enough to make up for the mess of the rest of the novel, and I won’t be reading future entries of the series.