



The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart (Vintage Contemporaries)

By Mathias Malzieu



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The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart (Vintage Contemporaries) By Mathias Malzieu

A wildly original, fantastical adventure—and now an animated movie, *Jack and the Cuckoo-Clock Heart*—this international bestseller will charm readers of all ages.

Edinburgh, 1874. Born with a frozen heart, Jack is near death when his mother abandons him to the care of Dr. Madeleine—witch doctor, midwife, protector of orphans—who saves Jack by placing a cuckoo clock in his chest. And it is in her orphanage that Jack grows up among tear-filled flasks, eggs containing memories, and a man with a musical spine.

As Jack gets older, Dr. Madeleine warns him that his heart is too fragile for strong emotions: he must never, ever fall in love. And, of course, this is exactly what he does: on his tenth birthday and with head-over-heels abandon. The object of his ardor is Miss Acacia—a bespectacled young street performer with a soul-stirring voice. But now Jack's life is doubly at risk—his heart is in danger and so is his safety after he injures the school bully in a fight for the affections of the beautiful singer.

Now begins a journey of escape and pursuit, from Edinburgh to Paris to Miss Acacia's home in Andalusia. Mathias Malzieu's *The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart* is a fantastical, wildly inventive tale of love and heartbreak—by turns poignant and funny—in which Jack finally learns the great joys, and ultimately the greater costs, of owning a fully formed heart.



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The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart (Vintage Contemporaries) By Mathias Malzieu Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #327011 in Books
- Published on: 2011-11-29
- Released on: 2011-11-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.02" h x .55" w x 5.20" l, .43 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set in late-19th-century Europe, this slim, melancholy, and sometimes thin novel affords considerable escapist pleasures. At 14, Jack, a misfit orphan with a cuckoo-clock installed in his chest, treks across Europe in search of Miss Acacia, a little singer... who's always bumping into things, he met four years before. In Paris, he finds a companion in Méliès, a lovesick, quixotic magician, and as their journey unfolds, Malzieu sketches European landscapes and crafts figurative language with irresistible relish: Miss Acacia's laugh, for instance, is as light as beads tumbling over a xylophone. After Jack reaches Spain and finds Miss Acacia, he embarks on a tumultuous relationship with his beloved that will alter his life forever. Despite a few too-cutesy sexual metaphors and coming-of-age tropes, the novel's sentimentality only rarely devolves into treacle. Calling to mind a host of cultural touchstones, from *Pinocchio* to *The Wizard of Oz*, this kaleidoscopic picaresque will enchant many adults and young people alike. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Malzieu opens this phantasmagorical novel (which is already the basis of a rather stirring album by his pop group, Dionysos, and is due for yet another transmutation as an animated film) in Edinburgh in 1874, with the birth of the narrator, Jack. He's ushered into the world with a malfunctioning heart by Dr. Madeleine, a midwife who also specializes in mechanical wizardry, so she fuses a cuckoo-clock to the boy's heart to keep it ticking and tocking. As he grows older, she warns him that the delicate gear work of his heart could never withstand the palpitating bliss and leaden turmoil of falling in love, but, of course, he falls helplessly for a frail songstress, and their passionate affair threatens to literally rip his heart from his chest. While there's a definite flavor of *The Tin Drum* mixed with a heavy dose of Tim Burton, this isn't so much magic realism as it is metaphor realism, which Malzieu milks for all its painfully earnest and overwrought symbolism. For those with a yen for moony French sensualism, though, this book is positively dripping with it. --Ian Chipman

Review

"A fantastic voyage . . . A whimsical fairy-tale of a book—for adults . . . It's like a dark version of *Alice in Wonderland* or *Pinocchio* . . . A quick and entertaining read that people who like fantasy-fiction and folk tales will appreciate." —Jenny Dial, *Houston Chronicle*

"The brilliance of this gothic-punk novella, sparkling with imagery filtered through the prism of French filmmakers Jeunet and Caro, is in the telling: Malzieu's prose is distinctly original, spitting and fizzing with unique similes and striking metaphors, wonderfully translated by Sarah Ardizzone." —Eric Brown, *The Guardian* (London)

"A little literary miracle." —*Glamour* (Paris)

"[A] fantastical European journey of love and discovery." —Billy Heller, *New York Post* "Required Reading"

"Malzieu has a gift for unexpected and strong images." —*Elle* (Paris)

"Malzieu sketches European landscapes and crafts figurative language with irresistible relish . . . Calling to

mind a host of cultural touchstones, from Pinocchio to *The Wizard of Oz*, this kaleidoscopic picaresque will enchant many adults and young people alike." —*Publishers Weekly*

"A dreamlike and spellbinding novel." —*Le Figaro Littéraire* (Paris)

"Malzieu uses vivid metaphors and fantastical inventions to craft a beautifully written tale of love, both maternal and romantic . . . The prose style is simple and fluid, and the setting is not unlike a Tim Burton film—dreamy, dark, and magical—so it's no surprise that this novel is being adapted into an animated film. For fans of magical realism and fairy tales." —*Library Journal*

"A fairy tale *jeu d'esprit*, but charming all the same." —*Metro* (UK)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Velma Stuart:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive at this point, people have to do something to make them survive, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice by means of surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated this for a while is reading. Yes, by reading a reserve your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stand than other is high. For yourself who want to start reading a book, we give you this *The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart* (Vintage Contemporaries) book as basic and daily reading e-book. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

David Robinson:

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Tammy Booker:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book is usually option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing you will ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the guide untitled *The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart* (Vintage Contemporaries) can be good book to read. May be it might be best activity to you.

Cherie Fidler:

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