



# A Small Madness

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Andrea Reece](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Teenage pregnancy is always compelling YA subject matter and there are a number of fine novels on the theme; very few however have the intensity of Dianne Touchell's book.

Rose and Michael, seventeen years old, are in love and the book begins with descriptions of their first sexual intercourse. It's explicit and honest, a true depiction of intimacy. In contrast to the brutal sexism casually expressed by their school mates, the act is joyful as well as tender. The novel's other pivotal character Liv, Rose's best friend, is much more sexually experienced ? in school parlance she's a ?slag? ? and, to her own shame, is jealous when Rose finally tells her what is happening.

?I never thought I could be just myself with anyone? says Rose as she and Michael lie together in her bed, a particularly telling statement. Rose's mother is loving but distant, and her daughter learned early to hide her emotions. Michael's home life too is complicated and, despite outward appearances, unhappy. His father sets strict rules and has high expectations for his sons, determined not to inflict on his own family the chaos and misery he endured as a child growing up with an alcoholic father. When Rose realises she is pregnant, the first thought of both of them is how to hide this from their respective parents. Despite the evidence of the pregnancy test ? bought by Liv ? Rose goes into denial, convincing herself that there is no baby. Michael, almost paralysed with shock, chooses to go along with this. Months pass, and the strain of denial and secrecy takes an awful toll on both young people, but Rose in particular.

[Touchell](#) [4] describes the consequences of Rose and Michael's union in harrowing detail, and gives events an almost tragic inevitability. Viewpoint switches between the characters, adding layers of insight and understanding. It's a heart-breaking story, told with power and compassion.

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[4] <http://diannetouchell.com.au/>