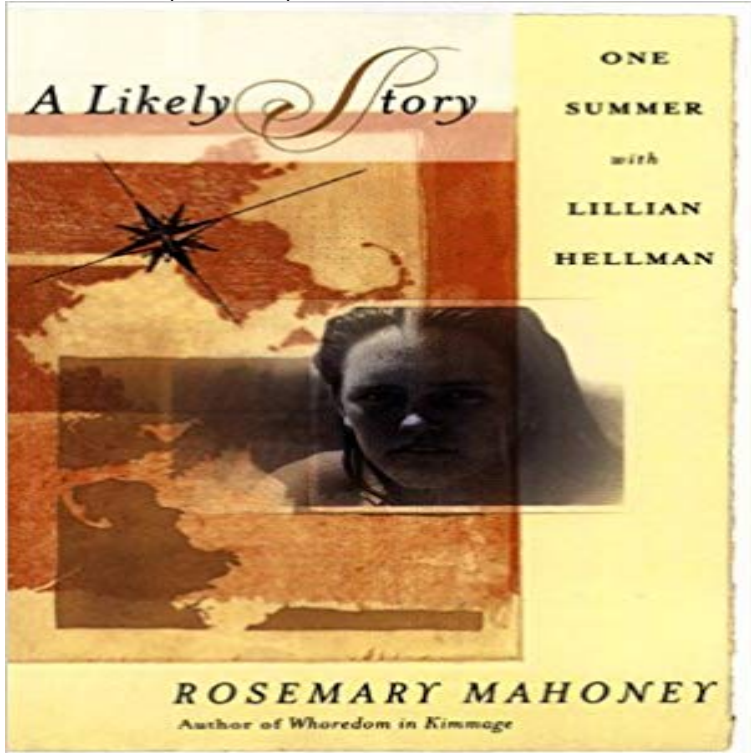


A Likely Story: One Summer with Lillian Hellman



In 1978, Rosemary Mahoney, an aspiring young writer of seventeen, wrote a letter to one of her personal idols, inquiring whether this great lady of American letters might need some domestic help during the summer. When Lillian Hellman responded affirmatively, Mahoney was ecstatic, and wasted no time imagining that the summer in Hellman's employ might cement a friendship with the iconic writer, or that the proximity to greatness might spur her own fledgling literary efforts. In reality, Mahoney was lonesome and anxious, hiding behind a facade of self-confidence at a private New England boarding school, harboring the secrets of her complex Irish family. Mahoney saw in Hellman an escape and a salvation from the rigors of growing up. But once she secured the job, her hopes were swiftly shattered as the summer unfolded into an exquisite and grueling exercise in humiliation at the hands of the famously acerbic Hellman and her retinue of celebrated friends. Contrasting the vanity of a seventeen-year-old with that of a seventy-three-year-old, this book is ultimately about the limitations of age, the complexities of literary ambition, and our need for heroes. By turns heartbreaking and uproariously funny, *A Likely Story* portrays the painful coming of age of a brilliant young writer and, by extension, the universal story of innocence lost.

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