

Brilliantly paced, lit with sparks of danger and underlying menace, these are dazzling, provocative stories about Svengali men, and radical women who outmanoeuvre them, about destructive marriages and curdled friendships, about mothers and sons, about moments which change or haunt a life. Alice Munro takes on complex, even harrowing emotions and events, and renders them into stories that surprise, amaze and shed light on the unpredictable ways we accommodate to what happens in our lives.

A young wife and mother, whose spirit has been crushed, finds release from her extraordinary pain in the most unlikely place. The student victim of a humiliating seduction (which involves reading Housman in the nude) finds an unusual way to get her own back and move on. An older woman, dying of cancer, weaves a poisonous story to save her life. Other stories uncover the 'deep holes' in marriage and their consequences, the dangerous intimacy of girls and the cruelty of children.

The long title story follows Sophia Kovalevsky, a late-nineteenth-century Russian émigrée and mathematical genius, as she takes a fateful winter journey that begins with a visit to her lover on the Riviera, and ends in Sweden, where she is a professor at the only university willing to hire a woman to teach her subject.

Munro's unsettling stories turn lives into art, expand our world and our understanding of the strange workings of the human heart.

Alice Munro is the author of eleven collections of stories, most recently *The View from Castle Rock*, and a novel, *Lives of Girls and Women*. She has received many awards and prizes, including three of Canada's Governor General's Literary Awards and two Giller Prizes, the Rea Award for the Short Story, the Lannan Literary Award, the WHSmith Book Award in the UK, the National Book Critics Circle Award in the US, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for *The Beggar Maid*, and has been awarded the Man Booker International Prize 2009 for her overall contribution to fiction on the world stage. Her stories have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Paris Review*, and other publications, and her collections have been translated into thirteen languages. She lives with her husband in Clinton, Ontario, near Lake Huron in Canada.