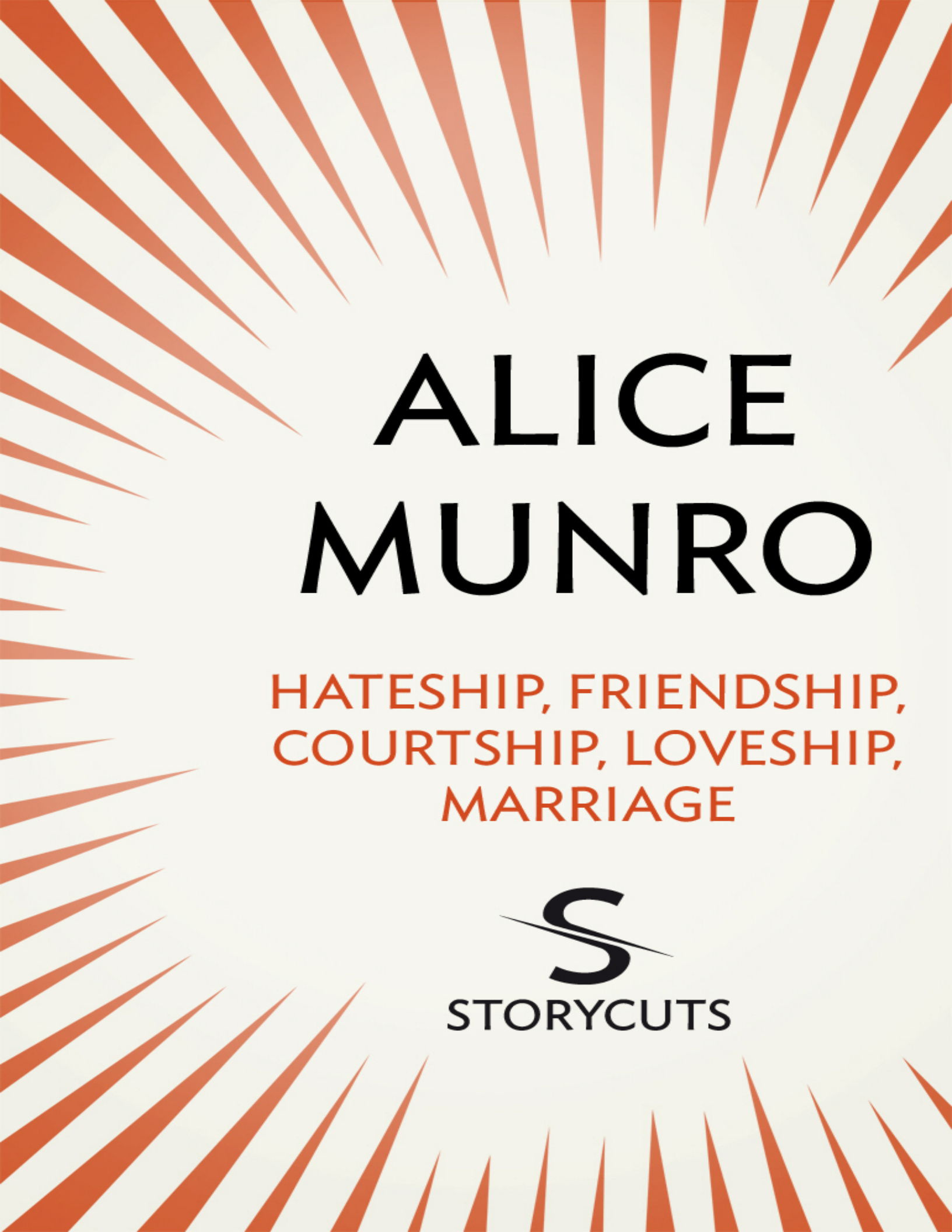


The background of the entire image is a white field with numerous orange, triangular rays radiating outwards from the center, creating a sunburst effect.

ALICE MUNRO

HATESHIP, FRIENDSHIP,
COURTSHIP, LOVESHIP,
MARRIAGE


STORYCUTS

This story was first published in the STORYCUTS series by Vintage Digital 2011

Taken from the collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*.

Copyright © Alice Munro 2001

Alice Munro has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988 to be identified as the author of this work

This ebook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

Contents

Cover

Copyright

**Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship,
Marriage**

Backmatter

Alice Munro

Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage



Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage

YEARS AGO, BEFORE the trains stopped running on so many of the branch lines, a woman with a high, freckled forehead and a frizz of reddish hair came into the railway station and inquired about shipping furniture.

The station agent often tried a little teasing with women, especially the plain ones who seemed to appreciate it.

"Furniture?" he said, as if nobody had ever had such an idea before. "Well. Now. What kind of furniture are we talking about?"

A dining-room table and six chairs. A full bedroom suite, a sofa, a coffee table, end tables, a floor lamp. Also a china cabinet and a buffet.

"Whoa there. You mean a houseful."

"It shouldn't count as that much," she said. "There's no kitchen things and only enough for one bedroom."

Her teeth were crowded to the front of her mouth as if they were ready for an argument.

"You'll be needing the truck," he said.

"No. I want to send it on the train. It's going out west, to Saskatchewan."

She spoke to him in a loud voice as if he was deaf or stupid, and there was something wrong with the way she pronounced her words. An accent. He thought of Dutch—the Dutch were moving in around here—but she didn't have the heft of the Dutch women or the nice pink skin or the fair hair. She might have been under forty, but what did it matter? No beauty queen, ever.

He turned all business.