



## A Real Life

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Munro creates sly pockets of humor in “A Real Life” as she introduces Dorrie Beck, the descendant of a pioneer Ontario family who is currently in reduced circumstances. In spite of a brief social education at Whitby Ladies College, where she developed beautiful handwriting, Dorrie has evolved into a strong, competent countrywoman. She does a man's work, can trap and shoot with the best, and is oblivious to the social graces.

Her friend Millicent has settled into a prosaic marriage with a man nearly twenty years older than she, who owns three farms, including the Beck family farm, where Dorrie still lives alone. When Millicent gives an evening supper for the Anglican minister and his visitor Mr. Speirs, she invites Dorrie and Muriel Snow, a single, thirtyish music teacher who is desperately seeking a husband. Even though Muriel instantly sets her cap for Mr. Speirs, he is more impressed by Dorrie, who arrives late because she has to shoot a feral cat that may be rabid. Speirs corresponds with Dorrie from his home in Australia, and they decide to marry, after which she will live there with him.

The two friends sew Dorrie's wedding dress while she stands about miserably in her woolen underwear. While Dorrie has second thoughts about the wedding, Millicent convinces her that she cannot bow out because only marriage can give her “a real life.”

Self-reliant Dorrie reluctantly submits to the prison of marriage because it is expected of her, but fortunately it offers her even more freedom. She continues an active outdoor life in Australia, growing fat and rich. Ironically, the flirtatious Muriel willingly marries a widowed minister and loses all of her former independence, while Millicent ends her days alone.

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