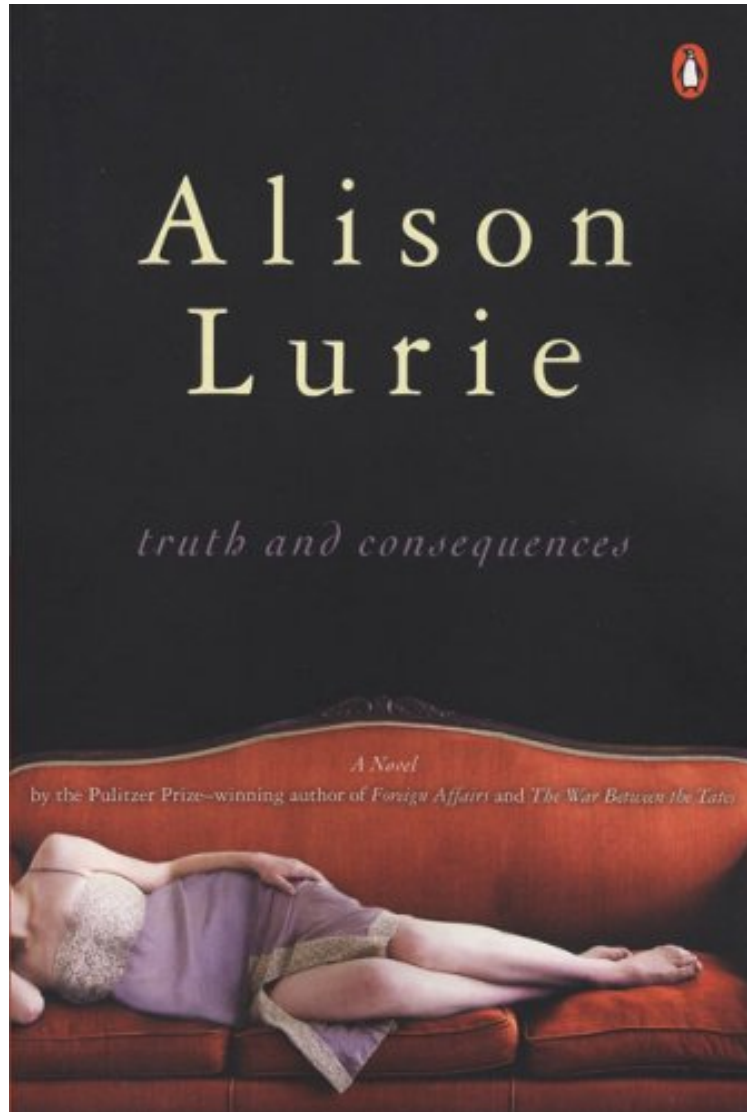


## Truth and Consequences: A Novel

Alison Lurie

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**Alison Lurie : Truth and Consequences: A Novel** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Truth and Consequences: A Novel:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Low-key look at relationships for academics (3.5 \*s)By J. GrattanOne might expect that a book with a mix of characters affected by one or all of marital strife and infidelity, constant debilitating pain from illness or injury, and the blockage or erosion of academic or creative energy would be explosive or tragic. But there are few fireworks here. The author almost suggests that working through such difficulties is just part of academic life. The arrival of eccentric, egotistic, arresting, and cultish poet Delia Delaney as a

visiting scholar at Corinth U brings out issues that Alan MacKenzie, an architectural historian, and his wife Jane have been having over the last year. Jane, the administrator of the center for humanities that invited Delia, has seen her planned, idyllic marriage turn sour as she has had to wait hand-and-foot on Alan after he suffered an unremitting back injury. Jane, ever practical, immediately perceives that Delia is a user of people and, in fact, is unlikely to fulfill her obligations to the center. But at this point, Delia shares more with Alan than does Jane. She suffers from excruciating pain when her weekly migraines hit, but more importantly she sees and encourages Alan's creativity. The limited sexual entanglement of Delia and Alan merely hastens a rearrangement of affairs. The book is brief; there is not much plot; and the characters are minimally drawn. It just seems to be a low-key look at the possibilities of long-term relationships for eccentrics and academics as they proceed through life.<sup>2 of 2</sup> people found the following review helpful. Simple style, complex characters, and a very good story By Michael K. Smith Lurie is a first-rate storyteller, and has been for fifty years now, though her oeuvre isn't huge. You take a stroll with her around a college campus in upstate New York, and she tells you things about the academics she knows, and their families, and before you know it, you're caught up in their lives and relationships. Jane Mackenzie has always tried to be a good person and has nearly always succeeded. She administers the university's Humanities Center, housed in a bequeathed Victorian home, and which sponsors fellows in literature and the arts every year. She's good at her job and everyone likes her. She has also considered herself fortunate in her marriage to Alan, an architectural historian of note -- he's tall, handsome, athletic, and has had several books published. But more than a year ago, he fell awkwardly during a backyard volleyball game with his grad students and slipped a disk, and has been in continuous pain ever since. No matter what drugs or therapy he tries, even a spinal operation, it's only getting worse. He can barely walk, he can't drive, he can't even sit for more than fifteen minutes. Jane has to do all the things around the house that he used to do, as well as looking after his needs. And he's gaining weight and becoming seriously depressed. And Jane, though she hates herself for it, is becoming resentful. Then Delia Delaney comes into the picture as one of this year's fellows -- famous for her Southern folklore-ish short stories and a pre-Raphaelite beauty with a style that causes everyone with whom she comes in contact to worship her and hurry to do her bidding, including men and women of every sexual orientation. Or almost everyone, because Jane can't stand her. And Alan -- also chosen as a fellow -- has an office right across the hall from hers in the Humanities Center. Nothing good can come from that. But at least Jane can talk to Delia's husband, Henry Hull, who sort of lurks in the background and handles things for his wife. And he seems to be interested in Jane, too. You can guess where this archetypal plot is going and you would be right, but only in a general way. And the journey to the end (and beginning) of things is very much worth the effort. Even Delia, while never really sympathetic, becomes at least understandable in her manipulations. And Lurie does it all effortlessly.<sup>1 of 1</sup> people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable Narrative about People with Problems By Pamela D. Byrd What if you had an injury that did not heal but instead left you experiencing constant and almost unbearable pain. This is the plight of the main character in this novel, an esteemed professor at an institution that sounds like Cornell University. How his life is changed and that of the people around him as a result of his plight is the basic plot twist of this novel. At first professor Alan Mackenzie's life falls apart, but then he begins to reconnect with creative parts of himself that refuse to die. The novel is realistic yet extremely funny and, as a result, very enjoyable. When a close friend of mine died three years ago, I read this book three times, and it helped me to deal with my grief. I highly recommend it.

Over the years, Alison Lurie has earned a devoted readership for her satiric wit and storytelling acumen. With *Truth and Consequences*, described by the *New Yorker* as "a comedy of adultery with a comedy of academia thrown in," Lurie returns with a modern social satire that recalls the best of David Lodge and Mary McCarthy as well as her own popular university novels *The War Between the Tates* and *Foreign Affairs*. **BACKCOVER:** "A wily, shapely tale of love's labors lost." -Elle "A wry, insightful, thoroughly enjoyable tale about how men and women choose their demons and their lovers, and the sacrifices they're willing to make for both." -The Atlanta Journal-Constitution "Delightful . . . Her characters are, as always, wonderfully imperfect." -The New York Review of Books

From Publishers Weekly Lurie's various academic romances, set against the backdrop of a thinly veiled Cornell University, point in a straight line to tragicomic double-think relationship writers like Lorrie Moore. This latest foray begins promisingly: Jane MacKenzie fails to recognize her own husband, Alan, as he approaches their house from a distance, so bent and changed is he by his aching back. He's an architecture professor (expert on Victoriana); she's a university administrator. When visiting poet Delia Delaney takes up residence, it's Jane who has to attend to her diva-like demands, while simultaneously trying to cope with an incapacitated Alan. Once he's up and around, though, sexy and selfish Delia toys with, then seduces him. The affair gives Alan a midlife lift, and, on discovery, gives Jane a reason to leave him, perhaps for Henry, Delia's ombudsman husband and Jane's highly organized mirror-image. The problem is that Lurie, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning *Foreign Affairs* is everything this isn't, doesn't seem much interested in fleshing out her characters' romps. Remedial repetitions of basic facts, character descriptions and plot points throughout give the proceedings a strangely clinical feel, as if her characters' reactions were too base to engage with fully: they are reported almost dutifully, though not without offhand flashes of crackly brilliance. Copyright ©

Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From The New Yorker Like Lurie's "The War Between the Tates," this is a comedy of adultery with a comedy of academia thrown in. Alan, a professor of architectural history at a college that sounds like Cornell (where Lurie teaches), married Jane because she reminded him of a classical building—"order, harmony, and tradition"—but, when his life is yanked askew by a back injury, he can't stand her orderliness anymore. Enter a femme fatale, in the form of a visiting fellow—a poet, all Pre-Raphaelite hair and vatic utterance. The inevitable happens, and, thanks to Lurie's psychological acuity, so does much that wasn't inevitable. Jane leaves Alan, but she comes by every day, depositing a microwavable meal, to his fury and his relief. (Otherwise, what would he eat?) Alan is the most likable character, but, as in the best comedies, everyone gets justice, and no one escapes it. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker From Bookmarks Magazine The Miami Herald sums up critical reception best: "Truth and Consequences isn't art. It isn't even vintage Lurie. It's a good copy, but for an author this deliciously sly and nimble, that's not quite good enough." The Pulitzer Prize-winning author seems to be repeating herself here, and not always in a fresh or exciting way. Worse, a few critics accuse her of not caring about her central couple, making it doubly hard for readers to care who ends up with whom. Still, you can't miss flashes of Lurie's brilliance. And a case could be made for her spot-on skewering of the tension between artistic egos and their bossy caregivers. Copyright © 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.