



The Double: (And Other Stories)

Maria Takolander

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Finalist, Best Writing Award, Melbourne Prize for Literature, 2015

A brilliant collection of short stories by a new voice in Australian fiction.

A student travels to Estonia to investigate his violent father's upbringing.

A woman is possessed by visions of her brother's brutal death at a lake in Finland.

A bride plumbs the depths of her loathing for her husband on a journey across Africa.

A lonely boy is haunted by nightmares of a new classmate who has an affair with their teacher.

Each of the stories in *The Double* is unnerving, and unforgettable. Ranging from rural Australia to Northern Europe and beyond, from the dark past of the Soviet era to a terrifying vision of the near future, this collection marks the arrival of a unique and bewitching talent.

Maria Takolander is a senior lecturer in literature at Deakin University in Geelong. She is the author of a work of literary criticism and two poetry collections. Her poems have featured in annual best-of anthologies for the past seven years. This is her first book of fiction.

'Maria Takolander's stories are written in a bewitching minor key. Haunting and mysterious, this is a collection that you will want to savour, then read all over again.' Danielle Wood

'A captivating and slightly uncomfortable series of tales that are in turns frightening, amusing, haunting and reassuring...The settings alternate between the familiar scenes of rural Australia and the more unknown background of Northern Europe, but it is the characters that really shine in this collection...Takolander's stories are...undeniably powerful.' *Australian Bookseller and Publisher*

'Fiercely intelligent and idiosyncratic, sometimes shot through with black humour, sometimes pressing down on the reader with the full weight of human horror...Individually, Takolander's stories can be bleak. But collectively they are thrilling. Slender as this collection may be, it announces the arrival of a considerable talent.' *Australian*

'An intriguing collection of short stories, *The Double* comprises an unsettling journey into the lives of Takolander's peculiarly distant and troubled protagonists as they explore the dark recesses of the human condition.' *Melbourne Review*

'Incisive, economic, imbued with simple depth and glittering with hard truth, *The Double* is a literary force. Poetic in its brevity, the stories are none the less substantial, speaking of the nature of courage, the damage done by ignoring the past, and human beings' ability to torture themselves.' *West Australian*

'[Maria Takolander's] stories seem like wordscapes that offer panoramic views without shunning fine, sometimes devastating, details. They reverberate with the passage of time, especially those stories that link Australia to northern Europe, to Stalinism...Takolander's prose has a quite gorgeous directness, a desert-like sparseness, even when - no, especially when - the topic is melancholy or fearsome.' *Australian Book Review*

'This debut short-story collection...is eerily beautiful and not for the faint of heart...It's the kind of book that

will unnerve you and keep you up at night.' *Readings*

'An intriguing collection of short stories...The esoteric tales explore themes of passion, death, desire and redemption.' *Sunday Life/Sun Herald*

'shot through...brilliantly with humour and satire.' *Otago Daily Times*

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