



Sometimes there's
a good reason for
behaving badly



My Sweet
Revenge

Jane Fallon

THE TOP TEN BESTSELLER

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JANE FALLON



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I

Paula

I want to make my husband fall back in love with me.

Let me explain. This isn't an exercise in fifties wifey-dom. I haven't been reading articles in old women's magazines. 'Twenty ways to keep your man'. That couldn't be further from the truth.

I want him to fall back in love with me so that when I tell him to fuck off out of my life he'll care. Or at least it'll register. He won't just think, 'Oh good.'

I want it to hurt.

Robert is sitting at the breakfast bar in the kitchen while I cook. Oblivious. Nose in his phone. Thumbs tapping away at the keyboard like a teenager. Probably texting *her*. He has no idea that I know. He looks like the same person. The person who, yesterday, was just my husband, the man I've been married to for eighteen years. Today he's someone who is cheating on his wife. I find myself staring at him, trying to look for tell-tale signs. How could I not have known? He looks up and smiles.

'What? What have I done?'

As he talks he tilts the screen of his mobile away from me slightly. He probably doesn't even realize he's doing it.

I try to mirror his smile. 'Nothing. I was just thinking.'

He picks up the bottle and refills my glass and then his. This has always been our ritual whenever he's home in the evenings. I potter around making dinner while he perches on a stool and fills me in on the goings-on at work. Although these days he's more likely to keep one eye on his phone and only give me half his attention. At least now I know why.

'Dangerous,' he says now. 'Too much thinking never did anyone any good.'

I force a laugh. 'Well, lucky I don't do it too often then. Actually, I was trying to decide whether to do rice or mash, so it really was life-altering stuff.'

'Surprise me. Want any help?'

I shake my head no. The last thing I can face doing is playing happy families. It's too soon.

He hops down from his stool, glass in one hand, phone in the other. 'Then I'm going to have a shower.'

'Don't be too long,' I say. 'I promised Georgia we'd eat early. She's meant to be meeting Eliza at half seven.'

'Ten minutes,' he says, and I have to stop myself asking why he needs his mobile if all he's doing is having a quick hose-down.

It was his phone that gave him away, by the way. That old cliché. I wasn't snooping. It never would have occurred to me to snoop. I've never even bothered to ask him for his password because he never uses it, he just wafts his finger over the button so it can read his print. So it's complete chance that I saw what I saw. This morning before he left for the studio – befuddled from the early start – he left it on the counter when he went off to get dressed. I always get up with him on studio days, even though he has to leave the

house at six and I am pretty sure I hadn't even realized there was a five fifteen in the morning until my alarm started announcing it one day. I like to keep him company while he eats breakfast. Kiss him goodbye when he leaves. Neither of us is a completely functioning human at that hour so I can only assume it slipped his mind that he really shouldn't be letting his phone out of his sight these days.

I didn't even notice it. But then it buzzed to say a message had arrived and I glanced down without thinking. The words 'Love you' happened to catch my eye and the name at the top. *Saskia*. Without thinking what I was doing, I snatched it up quickly, before the message faded away, never to be accessible to me again.

'Jesus! That was too close for comfort last night! WAY too risky! Hope Paula bought it!!! Didn't feel comfortable having to lie to her face! Love you xxx'

I stared at the screen in shock, pressed a few keys, hoping I could magically access the whole conversation but knowing it was hopeless. I heard Robert moving around in the bedroom, knew he would be back at any moment. I committed the message to memory and threw the phone back down on the counter as his footsteps thumped along the corridor, pretended to be preoccupied with something fascinating in the cutlery drawer.

He clocked his mobile lying on the counter. Did I imagine it or did the slightest flash of fear sweep across his face? I tried to look casual, I didn't want to give away the fact that I'd noticed it. He picked it up and shoved it in his pocket, not even looking at the screen.

A huge part of me wanted to throw accusations at him the second he walked through the door. Or punches. Actually, yes, punches would have been good. But thankfully, I stopped myself. I knew that I needed to mull over what I'd seen. I had to make sure that there was no innocent explanation before I went down a path I couldn't retreat from.

Now he saunters back into the kitchen, freshly showered, smelling of some kind of chemical fruit and wearing the old track pants and T-shirt that he likes to slob around in. I plaster a smile on my face.

'Will you give Georgia a shout? Five minutes.'

'Sure. Something smells amazing.'

I turn my fake smile up to ecstatic. Thank God for my drama-school training. Although we never actually did a class called 'How to convince your husband everything's fine when in actual fact you want to stab him with a fork'. Remind me. If I ever become a drama tutor, that'll be my first assignment.

'It's only chilli.'

Robert moseys on out again and I hear him shout to Georgia that dinner's ready. I know that above all else I mustn't give away that anything is wrong in front of our daughter so I try to steady my breathing, hypnotize myself into thinking that all is right with the world.

I fight the urge to cry. Unscrew the bottle of red wine and pour myself another small glass. When Georgia comes hurtling through the door, bag bulging with the books she needs for an evening of revision at her best friend's house, I'm sitting at the counter sipping it as if I don't have a care in the world.

‘Want a glass?’ I say, knowing what the answer will be. Georgia pulls a face that says I might as well have offered her some cat’s pee.

‘Yuk. Why can’t you ever have white wine? Or vodka?’

‘Because then you’d say yes when I offered you a drink.’

She laughs. ‘That’s OK. They’re doing cheap Jäger-bombs at Vogue tonight. I can get legless later.’

‘George . . .’ I say, and she interrupts me before I can continue.

‘I’m joking!’

‘You’d better be.’

‘I am . . . it’s absinthe, actually.’

‘Very funny.’

She leans over my back and plants a kiss on my head just as Robert comes back in, not a care in the world.

‘Uh oh. What have you done?’ he says. His old joke that any affection from our teenager must be an apology.

Georgia laughs and ruffles his hair as he sits down. I lean over and fill his glass.

We’re the picture of a happy family.