



The Unexpected Consequences of Love: A Perfect, Feel Good Beach Read

By Jill Mansell

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Sophie has no interest in finding love. But what happens when love finds her?

Sophie Wells is a successful photographer with a focus on putting the past firmly behind her. When Josh Strachan returns to the seaside town of Cornwall from the States to run his family's hotel, he can't understand why the fun, sexy girl has zero interest in letting him-or any man for that matter-into her life. He also can't understand how he's been duped into employing Sophie's impulsive friend Tula, whose crush on him is decidedly unrequited. Both girls remain mum about the reasons behind Sophie's indifference to love. But that doesn't mean Josh is going to quit trying...

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #88848 in Books
- Published on: 2015-02-03
- Released on: 2015-02-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x 1.10" w x 5.50" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"There's a lot going on in this book, and the many-layered characters and storylines weave and interconnect with cleverness and elegance. Mansell is at her best in this book, which highlights her charming voice and engaging storytelling and also spotlights her agility with characters, effortlessly twining lightness, anguish and human foible. Moments of grace brush up against unexpected plot and character twists that lead us to the expected happy endings from unexpected directions... A graceful blend of heartbreak, humor and redemptive love." - *Kirkus*

"I never met a Mansell I didn't like! Once again, she absolutely sucks me in and doesn't let me go... Jill Mansell is a master at writing books with interesting characters, great plots that I've never read before, and the perfect flow that make you want to keep reading and reading." - *Book Drunkard*

"There is something truly comforting in the world that Mansell has crafted. Her gentle humor and idyllic small-town setting easily capture the imagination and the endearing relationships that develop between her characters ensure a perfect escape from the mundane details of the real world... Altogether, this is a novel full of the kind of joy that Mansell's readers have come to savor and that new readers will have a hard time resisting." - *RT Book Reviews, 4 Stars*

"Mansell's tale of the stirring of love in spite of various heartbreaks and disappointments is a charming and, at times, madcap romantic comedy." - *Booklist*

"An extremely refreshing and enjoyable read." - *Fic Wishes*

"I have never read a Jill Mansell book that I didn't care for... One of Mansell's strong points is her ability to write with her heart and still inject some (okay, lots) of humor into the situations... I really enjoyed Mansell's book and would highly recommend her to anyone who likes chick-lit, humorous British fiction or contemporary romance. There's something for everyone in her books!" - *Pudgy Penguin Perusals*

"A charming novel for readers who appreciate likable characters, a romantic setting, and a happily-ever-after ending. The story is humorous with delightful surprises and a treat for those who want their romances to feature more mature characters" - *Library Journal*

"I found it a very enjoyable read... the story is well written and had me laughing out loud a few times at situations or from Jill Mansell's way with words." - *The Book Date*

"Whenever I'm in the mood for a delightfully good read I know that a book by Jill Mansell will be the perfect pick... a charming book." - *Peeking Between the Pages*

"What really stands out to me the most is how much I can tell Mansell enjoys writing these stories for readers. Her enthusiasm is apparent in both her plots and in the lives of her characters... Mansell will be your remedy for years to come..." - *Night Owl Reviews, 4 1/2 Stars, Top Pick*

"I've been reading Jill Mansell's novels for almost a decade... She never fails to deliver on a great story. Jill Mansell has this way of writing multiple story arcs into a single cohesive story that never fails to entertain..."

It was like falling in love with Jill Mansell all over again." - *Confessions of a YA & NA Book Addict*

"Romantic entanglements are Jill Mansell's specialty, and in *The Unexpected Consequences of Love*, she cleverly knits together several story threads... Mansell has written another lively, engaging romance... Amid obstacles that challenge happy endings, Mansell introduces poignancy, humor and unexpected grace." - *Shelf Awareness*

"The town Mansell sketches is so real and I could absolutely see the people. The characters were interesting and nuanced. Likable but not always perfect." - *I Wish I Lived in a Library*

"I always find Jill Mansell's books entertaining and love to sink into them - this one was no exception... The author expertly weaves the multiple story lines together - there are just enough connections between these characters to make their story cohesive without seeming contrived." - *Books in the City*

"No one does light-weight romance better than Mansell!" - *The Bookish and the Romantic*

"I really enjoy reading Jill Mansell's books. Sometimes a book can make me feel like I have traveled and left home. It can make me feel brave." - *We Said Go Travel*

About the Author

With over 9 million copies sold, New York Times and USA Today bestselling author Jill Mansell writes irresistible and funny romantic tales for women in the tradition of Marian Keyes and Sophie Kinsella. She worked for many years at the Burden Neurological Hospital, Bristol, and now writes full time. She lives with her partner and their children in Bristol, England.

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Chapter 1

In the high-ceilinged drawing room of the Mariscombe House Hotel, Sophie Wells was putting the finishing touches to the setting for the photo shoot.

The original plan, to photograph the Ropers outside and en famille in a Marks and Spenceresque summer meadow, had been scuppered by the abysmal weather. The rain had been hammering down all morning and there was no way of postponing the event, as two members of the family were flying back to Australia tomorrow.

But Emma Roper knew exactly what she wanted. On the phone earlier she'd said, "Okay, if we can't be outside, we'll have one of those all-white shoots instead. You know, all modern and cool. And we'll all wear white too. It'll be like one of those Ralph Lauren ads." Delighted with herself and her artistic vision, she'd announced, "So that's sorted. We'll see you at the hotel at three. It'll be great!"

Some clients liked to have the style and setting of their photo shoot suggested to them, while others preferred to make the directional decisions themselves. In Emma Roper's case it was evidently the latter scenario, and Sophie was happy to go along with it. Accordingly, she'd brought with her the lighting system, the white muslin backdrop on stands, and more swathes of muslin for the floor. If Ralph Lauren-style was what Emma had set her heart on, Ralph Lauren-style she would have.

She stepped back to survey the end result and adjust the lighting as Dot Strachan popped her elegant head around the door.

"Oh, I say, I need my sunglasses in here!" Blinking at the brightness of the scene, she went on cheerily, "Just wondered if you'd like a coffee, darling?"

Sophie wanted to be like Dot Strachan when she grew up. At seventy-two, Dot was effortlessly stylish, with killer cheekbones and light blue eyes that sparkled, offsetting her perma-tanned complexion and swept-back white-blond hair. Of course she had wrinkles, but they were the good kind that came from smiling so much and living well. She worked tirelessly, made running a hotel look easy, and had never worn anything frumpy in her life.

"Thanks, but I'd better not." Sophie pulled a face and indicated the expanse of pristine whiteness. "Knowing my luck, I'd manage to spill it. Anyway, I'm fine. The Ropers'll be here any minute and we'll be out by four. Thanks again for letting us use the room on short notice."

"No problem. Any time, I told you before. When they turn up," said Dot, "I'll tell Rose to send them through."

When you'd grown accustomed to the surfing beaches of California, a gray rain-swept afternoon on the north coast of Cornwall didn't quite measure up. Weatherwise, it wasn't what you'd call balmy. Josh Strachan had spent childhood summers here in St. Carys, but today he was giving the icy waves a miss, leaving them to the die-hard enthusiasts.

Like Griff, his grandmother's long-haired terrier cross, currently barking his head off and launching himself into the shallow surf as it rolled up the beach. Josh shook his head, marveling at Griff's boundless enthusiasm for taking on the waves. Okay, enough. The torrential rain was coming down even harder. Time to head back. He stuck his fingers in his mouth and let out a piercing whistle to attract the dog's attention.

Griff determinedly ignored him, like a five-year-old on a playground desperate for one more go on the slide.

Well, he'd only been back in the UK for a week. They were just getting to know each other. Cupping his hands around his mouth, Josh called out with authority, "Griff. Here, NOW." Bloody delinquent animal, he was doing it on purpose. And to think he'd believed Dot when she'd told him the outrageous lie that the dog was well trained.

Josh made his way down to the water's edge, kicked off his deck shoes, and, at the third attempt, managed to grab hold of Griff, snapping the leash onto his collar and hauling him up onto the sand. The tail end of a wave caught them, soaking into the leg of his jeans. He gave the dog a stern-as-possible glare, and Griff returned it with a naughty, unrepentant tail wag. God, the sea was freezing.

As they made their way back across Mariscombe beach before heading up the steps carved into the cliff that gave the hotel its unparalleled view of the ocean, Josh conjured up mental images of the Californian ones he'd left behind. Santa Monica...Laguna...Huntington-amazing stretches of sand, world-class waves, year-round perfect weather...

But it hadn't been the UK, had it? It hadn't been home. And most of the time he'd been too busy working with people he didn't even like to take advantage of the surfing opportunities. Which was why he'd made the executive decision to walk away, leave that artificial, stress-filled world behind him, and aim instead for a better quality of life in the company of people he might actually enjoy spending time with.

That was the plan, anyway. After the Go Destry debacle, he never wanted to see another spoiled, whiny

American teenager in his life.

"Right, now you rest your chin on your left hand, and you lean back a bit, and you two tilt your heads up so you can both see your mum..." Honestly, arranging five children and an adult could be as complicated as conducting an orchestra. "And you rest your hands on their shoulders... That's it, that's great. Now all look at each other and say, 'Wow, you're gorgeous!'"

The brothers and sisters yelled it to each other then burst out laughing, and Sophie snapped away, firing off fifteen or twenty shots. "Brilliant, keep going, say it again to someone else, perfect..."

Amid the giggles and laughter and renewed shouts of "Wow, you're gorgeous," the scrabbling noise on the other side of the door went unnoticed. Next moment, the handle was pushed down, the door burst open, and a wildly overexcited Griff launched himself like a hairy torpedo at the immaculate Ralph Lauren group.

A hairy, wet, mud-strewn torpedo at that.

"AAARRGH." The teenage girls shrieked and attempted to push the dog away as he scrambled over the boys, tail wagging furiously and paws leaving muddy prints over...well, everything.

"No! Griff, down," Sophie shouted with predictable lack of effect. Emma was aghast, the boys had creased up laughing, and the white backdrop was spattered with dark spots where the dog had energetically attempted to shake off some of the mud.

"My dress," Emma wailed. "My beautiful white dress!"

"Naughty boy." Putting down her Nikon, Sophie managed to catch Griff and scoop him up into her arms. Although it hadn't been his fault. Shaking her head apologetically at Emma, she said, "I'll be back in a minute."

Outside the living room, she saw at once what had happened. At the far end of the hallway, by the entrance, a tall figure stood with his back to her. His dark hair was slicked back and wet from the rain; he was wearing a sodden gray and white shirt and jeans and talking rapidly into the phone he was holding in his right hand. From his left dangled a thin leather leash with no dog on the end of it.

As Sophie made her approach, she heard him say, "...Okay, no problem, I'll get that sorted. Bye." Then he hung up and slid the phone into the back pocket of his jeans.

She tapped him on the shoulder. "Excuse me, I think you've lost something."

He turned, eyebrows raised in inquiry, and saw who she was holding against her chest.

"Oh, right. Thanks."

Honestly, talk about unbothered.

"You can't just let Griff off the leash, you know, and leave him to cause havoc."

"I didn't." Clearly taken aback at her tone, he said, "I put him in his basket in the back office."

"He's all wet and muddy!"

"I was about to fetch a towel to dry him off when my phone rang. It was an urgent call."

"Come with me. Let me show you what he's done."

"Oh God." The eyebrows flattened out and he exhaled, following her across the hallway. When they reached the closed door to the drawing room he said defensively, "Hang on, you can't blame me for whatever's in here. I did check the doors on my way through. They were all shut."

Sophie knew who he was; of course she did. They might not have met before, but it was no secret that Josh Strachan had just moved back to St. Carys and into the hotel he'd bought along with his grandmother three years ago.

Goodness, though, he was attractive. It was actually quite fascinating to discover you could be this mad with someone yet simultaneously so hyperaware of their looks.

"And are you going to tell me Dot didn't warn you about his party trick?" As she said it, she put Griff down and lightly touched the brass door handle. Like lightning, Griff sprang up and grabbed the end of the handle in his teeth, swinging in midair for a moment and furiously twisting his body like a Cirque du Soleil gymnast in order to pull it down. As the door burst open, Sophie grabbed him and said, "Et voilà."

She saw Josh Strachan mouth the words Oh shit as he took in the scene of devastation. To his credit, he held up his hands at once and said to the assembled group, "I'm really sorry. It's my fault; I didn't know he could open doors."

Most of the assembled group ignored him; they were all far too busy shrieking with laughter and taking photos of each other on their cell phones. Only Emma, their mother, fixed Josh with a baleful eye and said, "It's all ruined. Our beautiful photo shoot..."

"I know and I'm sorry, but can we rebook it for another day? I'll pay for everything, obviously..."

"The twins are leaving for Australia tomorrow morning. So no, we can't. But thanks for wrecking something so important." Emma's voice had begun to wobble; her eyes filling with tears, she said in a brittle voice, "I can't believe this is happening..."

"Okay, let me sort this out." Sophie dumped Griff in Josh's arms. "Here you are. Take him away and get him dried off. Give us five minutes, then bring him back in."

"Back?" Josh looked at her as if she'd gone mad.

"Why would you want that creature back in here after he's done this?" Emma's voice was shrill.

"Just do it." Sophie signaled to Josh to leave the room with Griff. Then she turned her attention to Emma. "It's okay, please don't cry."

"B-but everything's ruined."

"Listen, of course you're upset. But isn't part of all this because your boys are off to Australia tomorrow?"

Emma took a deep, shuddery breath and carefully dabbed at her eyes with a tissue. She nodded and said, "Of course it is. I can't bear it. They're only eighteen... They're my babies... How am I going to cope without them?"

"I know, but it'll be an adventure."

The older woman's shoulders sagged. "An adventure for them, maybe. Nonstop anxiety for me. I kept thinking they'd change their minds and stay at home." Her voice began to wobble again. "But it hasn't happened. And goodness knows how they're going to cope... If I don't leave clean socks out for them every morning, they just put on yesterday's dirty old ones!"

"Ah, it'll be hard for you," Sophie sympathized. "But it'll end up being the making of them, just you wait and see."

"Is she crying again?" One of the boys grinned and shook his head. "Come on, Mum, just chill out. It's all good."

Emma managed a watery smile at her son. "I know, darling. I'm doing my best."

Sophie collected the Nikon, then drew Emma across the room and sat her down in the window seat. "Now, take a look at these." She showed her the initial photos, then the few frames she'd captured when Griff had first burst in on them. The element of surprise had worked brilliantly; formerly stilted and ill at ease, the children's faces had been transformed by laughter and delight. "Aren't they more themselves? Less self-conscious?"

"And that's why you want the dog back? So we can take more photos like this?" Emma sniffed. "It's not going to be very Ralph Lauren."

"I know, but it'll be more informal and relaxed. They'll be the kind of photos that make people smile. Honestly," Sophie reassured her. "They'll be great. Just in a different way. And you won't have to pay for them, either."

Users Review

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