

Dumped again, this time by text. She flung her mobile onto the sofa. *Bloody dating lark, I give up, I may as well become a nun!* Of course, it was a flippant remark, the latter a farcical joke, but if Lauran Rowland had known what would become of her ‘dating lark’ then she would have chosen the convent option. Life in a habit would have been far less dangerous than what lay ahead from simply swiping her phone.

Joe McKay; a loyal fiancé to Becky, everyone’s best friend, would give you his last fiver, turned liar and bank robber. It would appear, gentle Joe, is just as good at keeping secrets as a cheating low life Becky Briggs wouldn’t have got engaged to if they had been the last man on this earth. However, everyone makes mistakes. Wrong place, wrong time, wrong situation. For Joe McKay, everything was about to go precariously wrong full stop.

Doing the right thing doesn’t always pay. Rhona Iles would find this out the hard way and with destructive consequences. Doing good would turn devastatingly nasty. Rhona would become a target and this target would be hit where it hurt. A helpful gesture was about to back fire into a deadly ball of flames.

By simply logging on, posting on a blog or joining an online group, Lauran, Rhona and Becky’s lives would become under serious threat. An innocent swipe of a screen could never have been so lethal, question is would they survive or would someone’s social media account be logged off and closed down forever...

The right turn into the medical practice gave Luran that sinking feeling. She felt depressed enough at having been dumped by the latest new man in her life, ‘the one’ (or so she thought and told everyone) ‘her chap,’ or whatever you wanted to call him. She parked her mud splashed Corsa in the staff car park and abruptly yanked up the handbrake. Luran had since thought of a few new names she’d like to call the gut-less git that only two nights ago had the gall to tell her he ‘loved her’. How things had changed and quickly. She restrained her potty mouth knowing it wouldn’t change anything. She was a walking disaster where men were concerned, but nothing would stop her trying to find ‘Mr Right’. Luran Rowland was a woman scorned, and although there was fury inside her, there wasn’t enough to make it last, and it certainly wouldn’t put her off men for long.

‘Luran!’ After briskly whisking her dark hair up into a messy ponytail, Luran turned upon hearing her name being called, she looked through the open car window. She gave Rhona a weak smile as the surgery nurse and friend waved and walked towards Luran’s car. ‘Alright hun?’ Rhona’s perfect dark skin was almost as glistening as her beam, Luran cocked her head to one side admiring her friend who looked good wearing anything, even in her plain unattractive nurse’s scrubs outfit. If Rhona hadn’t been her best friend she would have called her a bitch for being so bloody annoyingly attractive.

‘Uh...no not really...’

‘Why? What’s happened?’

Luran got out of her car and swung her crossbody bag over her head. ‘It’s Neil...’

‘Oh what’s he done now, he’s not-’

‘He dumped me.’

‘What?! The bastard – when did this happen?!’

They slowly wandered towards the medical centre staff entrance as they talked, a part of Luran dying inside with every step towards her place of work – man-less and a tedious day ahead – great! - While Rhona’s blood boiled upon hearing how her friend had been used and cruelly dumped again.

‘...So he just said he didn’t want to commit or something, the usual man thing, said he just wanted a bit of fun and that was it, he left.’ Luran shrugged her shoulders as tears pricked her eyes. Rhona pulled her close. ‘I’m fine honesty,’ Luran made out. ‘He was a waste of space anyway, I just want a nice decent bloke, is that too much to ask?’

‘No, you deserve someone who is gonna treat you right, it’s his loss, dumping a gorgeous girl like you – he is clearly deranged and a complete loser, you were way out of his league anyway!’

The girls laughed through tears and hugs, agreeing to meet in the staff room for lunch. Luran felt marginally better for speaking to Rhona although the thought of a day on reception gave her that sinking feeling once more.

It had been a typical Monday morning at the surgery – hundreds of prescriptions, patients and phone calls. By lunch, Luran felt like walking out of the place, and she might have done if she didn’t need the money or if she had any qualifications to do anything vaguely interesting.

Dumping a urine sample in the nurse’s tray then rubbing her tired eyes, Luran picked up her handbag to go on her break as another patient approached the desk,

‘We’re just swapping over, someone will be with you in a minute.’ *My shift out here is over, there’s no way I’m logging back in now.* Luran forced a smile at the woman, she didn’t

regret her edgy tone, however she did remember hadn't had a complaint against her for over four months now, a record by her standards, and it meant not getting the sack was something she hadn't had to worry about for a while, although at this moment in time she didn't care either way. Maybe being dismissed would give her the push she needed to find a job she actually wanted to do, if there was such a position out there. Jobs, men, life, Christ she was sick of all of it! Surely something had to go her way soon.

The staff room was almost empty as Luran puffed her cheeks out and pushed open the double doors to the seating area. She flopped down on one of the comfy chairs feeling sorry for herself but soon rallied enough to apply fresh lipstick and untie her hair so she could brush it through. She decided to wear it down for the afternoon just in case Charlie, the student doctor she had the pleasure of meeting last week, put in another appearance. *Wow, he can examine me any time he likes...* She then scolded herself for forgetting what that bastard had done to her at the weekend and for thinking about men so quickly after – *talk about glutton for punishment! What am I like... but Charlie is hot...*

'Hi hun...' Becky from admin approached Luran with caution and an awkward smile.

'Hiya, you heard then?' Luran put her makeup bag back into her handbag and sighed heavily.

Becky sat beside Luran putting an arm around her shoulders, she squeezed her friend close. 'He's a loser, you can do so much better. I just wish you could meet someone like my Joe.'

'Umm... I seem to attract bad boys Becks, your Joe would be way to nice for me...'

‘No way, you deserved someone who is going to treat you right, you’ll get a nice lad soon enough.’ Their embrace was released as Rhona entered the staff room with a weary look, she rolled her eyes at her friends as she approached them.

‘Christ what a morning,’ she said as she dumped herself down opposite Becky and Lauran. ‘I must have done like a hundred blood tests, a million ECGs, I’m knackered and bloody starving! Has the sandwich man been yet? Your mornings been much better?’

‘Yes to the sandwich man question,’ Lauran replied. ‘And no to the other. Boring and a bit of a piss-take quite frankly!’ The girls giggled.

‘It’s nice to see you haven’t lost your sense of humour, after what that low-life did to you the weekend, glad your smiling babe, you seemed so down earlier.’

‘Well I’m not gonna shed any more tears over him, onwards and up wards I say! Although being stuck in this place has me boo-hooing into my lunch...’

Rhona fumbled in her bag for her phone. ‘We...’ She pulled the mobile out and made a cheeky face. ‘Need to find you a new job and...’ She swiped the screen and tapped away. ‘a new man!’

‘Is that such a good idea? She was only got dumped the weekend...’ Becky said softly.

‘Thanks for reminding me love!’

‘Sorry.’ Becky touched Lauran’s arm. ‘But online dating? Really? You have to be careful with that kind of thing you know...’

Rhona rolled her eyes and tutted in good humour at her friend with a smile. ‘Oh come on Becks, it’s just a bit of fun, it’s all changed nowadays anyway, it’s not all weirdos and lonely hearts, I know loads of people who have found the love of their lives online, they’ve got married, had kids and everything – Lauran? You up for it babes?’

‘I dunno... maybe Becky’s right, it was only a few days ago since I was dumped-’

Lauran replied, watching Becky tucking into her homemade sandwiches, wishing she had the time and patience to prepare her own lunch instead of forking out and waiting on ‘the sandwich man’ every day.

‘I know,’ Rhona replied, face beaming. ‘But you need to get back out there asap! You’re gorgeous, men will be queueing up for you.’ She waved her mobile at Lauran. ‘Or in this case signing up!’

‘You are a bad influence...’ Lauran smirked. ‘Ok. I’m in!’ She shrieked along with an excitable Rhona who mini-bounced on the comfy chair as she frantically tapped on her mobile screen.

Becky watched on, munching away, frowning. ‘Well I think you are making a mistake Lauran, you’ve only been out of relationship five minutes, why don’t you wait a bit, give it time?’

‘Oh Becks lighten up hun!’ Rhona laughed as Lauran moved closer to her friend so they could both see the mobile screen. ‘She’s just looking aren’t you babe? You ain’t buying... Yet!’

‘Well I just hope you know what you’re doing...’ Becky cleaned her glasses with her cardigan, pursing her lips, she shook her head disapprovingly.

Lauran reached across, touching her friend’s knee, she said; ‘I know you’re only looking out for me but I’ll be fine. Let’s face it, I’ve tried every avenue to get a man and it’s not worked, I may as well give this ago!’

Becky smirked playfully. Lauran giggled and gave her friend a wink while Rhona squealed with delight and announced she’d found a ‘total babe’ already for Lauran on findamatch.com.

The front door slammed. Becky entered the second floor flat she and her fiancé Joe rented. The place was tidy, although that wasn't difficult given how small it was, a ten-second whip round with a duster and hover and the squashed little home was cleaned – that was the only thing Becky liked about living there, less time cleaning meant more time with her Joe. Perfect. Well, almost, all they needed now was a home of their own. She'd be happy with a modest terrace, nothing fancy, just a cosy home with enough room to stretch out your arms without a wall getting in the way – something they couldn't do in their current abode. A neat garden, three bedrooms would be nice she dreamed, sloping into the living area to find Joe sat on the sofa, laptop balanced on his knees, she wondered why something so simple was proving so hard to achieve, it wasn't a lot to ask was it?

'Hi babe.' Joe looked up from the screen giving his fiancée one of his winning smiles. It instantly made Becky feel better. His wavy dark gelled hair shone under the ceiling light, his inviting eyes had her flopping down on the sofa cuddling into her man. 'Hay, what's all this about? Something happened at work?'

'Not especially.' Her voice was as deflated as a cake without added self-raising flour.

Joe shut the lap top lid, he placed it on the neat little coffee table in front of him. Turning to Becky, he lifted her chin, kissed her gently, then as if reading her mind he spoke softly; 'We will get a place of our own you know, I promise you.' Becky could see the anxious look in his eye, one that said he didn't believe his own words.

'I know, you're so good to me.' She playfully waggled his chin with her slender fingers, the nails painted lilac. They both smiled, burrowing into each other on the sofa

'Let's get a takeaway, treat ourselves, what do you fancy?' Joe said.

‘As lovely as that sounds, we shouldn’t, we need every penny we can save if we are ever going to move out of this shoebox.’

‘Ah come on.’ Joe released her, he lent over to a sideboard, fishing out a selection of menus in the top drawer. ‘It’s a one off, twenty quid on a takeout isn’t going to make much difference on a two hundred grand house is it?’ He grinned, winning her over, *who am I trying to kid?!* But he needed a decent meal inside him, all the stress, it had made his ravenous, he was beginning to feel faint.

‘Go on then, besides I’m flamin’ starving after the day I’ve had.’

‘Great, Chinese then?’ Joe was already dialling the number on his mobile.

Becky nodded her approval, yawning she lent back into the sofa as Joe waiting for the takeaway to answer. ‘What’ve you been doing on the laptop? You seemed caught up in whatever it was when I got in?’ She closed her eyes, relaxing her head on a cushion, not to bothered either way if her fiancé answered her, it was just conversation.

‘Oh uh, not much, just checking emails, browsing...’ He was glad Becky’s eyes were closed as he wasn’t sure if he could have looked her in the eye had she been fully awake. Lying didn’t come easy to him. ‘...Hi there, I’d like to place an order for collection please...’ The Chinese takeaway came to his rescue. Becky mouthed she was going to take a shower before the food arrived then dragged herself off the sofa.

Joe watched her go. By the time he’d ordered four dishes, prawn crackers, extra spring rolls and had hung up, his mouth was drier than the Sahara. Just one simple question from Becky had him panicking. He heard the shower running and with a trembling finger, powered off the laptop.

Rhona was soaked. She stuck her arm out to flag down the number 47 bus. Fed up after a long day of numerous patient treatments and caring for a man who had fainted, she was glad to see the back of the surgery.

The steamed up musty smelling bus pulled into Rhona's stop. She was first in the queue, paying her fair, she made her way to the top deck. The bottom deck was almost full, but the top was less busy. Rhona sat down in the middle of the deck. A man in his twenties was listening to music through head phones sat two seats down, an older woman behind was reading her book, another lady was remonstrating with her toddler towards the back while a group of teenage lads larked about at the front of the bus. The racket they were making was the last thing Rhona needed. Removing her wet coat, she was relieved her nurse's uniform had stayed dry. Rummaging in her handbag as the group of lads laughed loudly, she retrieved her mobile in the hope she could block them out with a surf of the net and a catch up on her social media sites. She swiped the screen, then sat back, trying to lose herself for half an hour.

The toddler being told off by her mum was now playing with a mobile phone, quiet, occupied, unlike the group of lads who were getting louder by the second, hanging over the seats, larking around, it was a mixture of hoodies and yobs that were irritating Rhona with every wise-crack made and swear word spoken.

'Let's get this party started early lads – who wants a can?' One of the teenagers scoffed while delving into a plastic bag of goodies. He produced two beers, the others jeering, all up for 'a can.' Beers handed out, Rhona had had enough.

'Could you keep the noise down please? Should you be drinking on here?' She said looking at the lad with the cans in his bag.

Swigging his beer, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then ran his palm over his shaven head, staring hard at Rhona.

‘Soz darlin’, we’re just having a laugh alright?’ The rest of the gang sniggered, slurping loudly from their cans, one belched before ‘can lad’ carried on playing the big man. ‘Why don’t you and me get to know each other better?’ He was hanging over the seat in front of Rhona now, his half-cut eyes boring into her face, his beer breath stinging her nostrils. ‘If you fancy me that is, and who don’t ‘ay lads?!’ He turned to his mates who jeered, agreed, and laughed again.

‘Please will you just-’ Rhona tried to hold firm but he interrupted her.

‘Eight o’clock, tomorrow night, Lord Rodney off the high street. See you then babe!’ He winked at Rhona, then turned away and carried on a loud drunken conversation with the other lads. Rhona was disgusted but she didn’t bite, she said a firm ‘good God, no thank you, I’m not that desperate,’ under her breath as the stupid youth held his can up to her and gave her a daft grin from the other side of the bus. In return she scowled at him, slammed her eyes down and continued on her phone.

The larking and joking around carried on close to Rhona, she attempted to block it out until an unsavoury conversation broke out which caught her attention.

