



Outtakes from a Marriage: A Novel

By Ann Leary

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"A sparkling debut novel...a bittersweet tale about love, marriage, and the perils of fame." —*People*

Julia and Joe Ferraro are living the good life in Manhattan now that Joe's finally made it; he's the star of a hit TV show and has just been nominated for a Golden Globe. Even better, Julia and Joe are still madly in love.

Or so Julia thinks until the fateful evening when she accidentally hears a voice mail on Joe's phone—a message left by a woman who is clearly more than a friend. Suddenly Julia is in a tailspin, compulsively checking Joe's messages, stalking him in cyberspace, and showing up unannounced on his sets, wondering all along if she should confront him.

Julia's search forces her to consider the possibility that in the long process of helping Joe become something, she has become a bit of a "nothing," as her daughter once described her to her class on career day. When Julia and Joe first met, she was an edgy East Village girl who wrote music reviews for the Village Voice and threw famed parties in a gritty downtown loft with her friends. But after Joe won her heart, she settled into doting motherhood and a new life of comfy clothes and parenting associations.

Now, faced with the looming awards show and the possibility of a destroyed marriage, Julia embarks on an accelerated self-improvement routine of Botox, hair extensions, and erotically charged shrink sessions while dodging the sanctimommies who lie in wait for her at her son's preschool each day.

A unique take on the perennially popular issue of women trying not to lose themselves in matrimony and motherhood, *Outtakes from a Marriage* is expertly and humorously set against the Manhattan preschool mafia, the Hollywood machine, and the ticking clock of a waiting red carpet.

"Sprightly ... you'll keep reading." —*Entertainment Weekly*

"How does a free spirit turned wife and mother cope with her actor husband's infidelity?...With tears, irreverent humor and, ultimately, a reaffirmed sense of self...A witty take on marital survival in Manhattan—with heart." —*Kirkus*

Reviews (starred review)

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Editorial Review

Review

"[A] sparkling debut novel Keenly observant of celeb culture ... Leary pens a bittersweet tale about love, marriage and the perils of fame."

—*People*

"The prose is sprightly ... you'll keep reading."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

"After years as a struggling actor, Joe Ferraro is starring on a hit TV show - and has a Golden Globe nod. But when his stay-at-home mom wife Julia hears a sexy-voice phone-message congratulations from a woman clearly more than a pal, her life is turned upside down. Leary, wife of actor Denis Leary, mines the laughs with her knowing New York-set story. She insists it's all fiction."

—*New York Post*

"Memoirist Leary (*An Innocent, a Broad*) follows in her fiction debut the unraveling of Julia Ferraro after she accidentally discovers a racy message in her Golden Globe–nominee husband's voice mail. As the doubts about her husband, Joe, mount, Julia begins examining other areas of her life with closer scrutiny, and her behavior becomes increasingly erratic as her paranoia grows: she dabbles in Restylane and Botox, attempts to seduce her shrink and plants rumors about her husband on Gawker. In addition to Julia's marital angst, she is also managing a shaky relationship with her entitled, adolescent daughter, Ruby, and is wracked with anxiety over her own lack of a career. Julia is a sharp and self-aware narrator, though there are moments when she seems too much a romantic, particularly for someone with otherwise worldly and wry sensibilities. Leary, the wife of actor Denis Leary, has an eye for the comedy of manners of the rich and idle. As Julia's daughter observes, 'You don't really have to do anything.' Julia responds: 'I know. You have no idea how stressful that is.'"

—*Publishers Weekly*

"[T]he ruefully funny story of the stay-at-home wife of a sexy TV star who inadvertently discov..."

About the Author

ANN LEARY is the author of a memoir, *An Innocent, a Broad*. She and her husband, the actor-comedian Denis Leary, live with their two children in northwestern Connecticut.

Visit the author at www.annleary.com.

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[one]

Joseph Ferraro."

The two words rose above the restaurant din from one of the tables behind me, rose up and out of the dull white drone of late-night chatter and the chink of fork upon china and the distant half-drowned tracks of a forgotten Hindi-jazz CD. Had they been any other two words, they might have become part of the ambient clamor that surrounds each table at Pastis like a protective garment, allowing its occupants to speak of love or desire or deals or just to leisurely gossip, as Karen Metzger and I had been doing for the past five minutes.

It was Wednesday night at Pastis, we were celebrating Joe's Golden Globe nomination with the Metzgers, and the guys had gone outside for a smoke.

"This is amazing, Julia, you have to try it," Karen said. She was hacking away at a mound of hard hazelnut ice cream. "Here. Try it," she said, tapping the plate with the tip of her spoon. Then she carved out one more little bite for herself.

"I just saw him, he's standing outside smoking. Right outside the door." It was the same man's voice behind me, eager and disbelieving.

"I know. We saw that guy, but we don't think it's him. He looks too small." This was a girl. A tipsy girl. And young, that was clear. She divided the word small into two syllables and then dropped the second syllable an octave, just the way my daughter, Ruby, and her friends did when they spoke to one another.

"Everybody looks smaller in real life," said the guy. "Ever seen Tom Cruise? Guy's a dwarf. Ever seen Al Pacino, Sean Penn? Pygmies!"

I shot Karen a look of startled amusement but she hadn't heard him. She was shaving tawny ice-cream crescents onto her spoon and reexamining, in a tone that was rising with shrill indignation, the "perfect storm" that had swept her husband Brian's just-released film to the bottom of the box-office charts, where it clung, battered by reviewers, looking for a dignified and timely route to next season's DVD releases.

"The studio was out to lunch on this one," Karen said. "And Sophie Wilkes just can't act. A director can only do so much."

"I don't know, I think she's all right," I said. "Everybody liked her in that movie about the teacher. Didn't she win the Oscar?"

"That was a fluke. She's awful. Why aren't you eating this?" Karen pushed the ice-cream plate to my side of the table and then she stared at it, wistfully.

"Go ahead," I said. "I like it when it's a little melted." I slid the plate back to her. "Can I use your phone?" My phone was in my purse, dead.

Karen took one last swipe at the ice cream and then she plunged her arm up to her elbow into the oversized Balenciaga tote that hung from the back of her chair. She probed the depths of that three-thousand-dollar handbag, biting her lip and staring straight ahead, and I was reminded of a young English veterinarian I had recently seen on a television show, struggling to extract an unborn calf from the womb of its desperate mother.

"I can use Joe's phone when he comes back," I offered.

Karen frowned for a moment, thrusting her arm slightly deeper, and I could see the bulge of her knuckles as they rolled along the supple leather walls of the bag. There was the muffled tumbling of keys and coins and then she extracted the phone triumphantly.

"And I told Brian not to cast John Gregory Mason. He's just too gay. Nobody believes him when he plays a romantic lead." Karen held the phone at arm's length and squinted at the screen. Then she handed it to me.

“John Mason’s gay?”

“Julia . . . yes. Everybody knows this.”

“Wait. I know somebody who dated him. A girl.”

“Nonetheless. Giant fag.”

“No . . .” I said, laughing helplessly, but Karen interrupted me. “When they were shooting the scenes in Thailand, John had a parade of local working boys wandering in and out of his trailer every day. Ask Brian!” she said when I gave her a look. “And listen to this. We invited him out to Southampton one weekend and he brought tasteful gifts for me, the kids . . . even the dog.” Karen was whispering now because Joe and Brian were heading back to the table.

“What straight man is that thoughtful?” she murmured as I began to punch out my phone number.

“Well, I hear Tim Robbins is thoughtful. . . .”

“Julia . . . John Gregory Mason brought an Hermès collar for Waffles.”

My thumb gleefully hit the last four numbers. An Hermès collar for poor old Waffles!

The Nextel recording prompted me to enter my security code, and as I tapped it in, I watched Brian and Joe make their way through the crowded room. I recall, now, that Joe wore his “Yes, it’s me” expression—a shy half-smile, his gaze fixed just above the nudges and hungry glances that carried him along like a gentle wave. From behind me the man said, “I toldja! Joe Ferraro,” and then Joe Ferraro himself, grinning broadly now, slid into the chair beside me.

“Jesus Christ, we could hear you girls cackling all the way outside.”

“I love it,” said Karen. “We were cackling, Julia, like a pair of witches.”

“A pair of well-toned witches,” said Brian.

“I prefer sorceress,” I said, kissing Joe on his lips. “Somehow it sounds so much more attractive than witch.”

“They both sound evil. And sexy,” said Joe. “Who are you calling?”

“My voice mail. I just want to see if Ruby or Catalina called. . . .” I stopped talking then because the first message was playing.

“Hi, babe,” said a woman’s voice.

Who? The voice was Southern, I knew that at once. Just from those two words I knew.

“Thanks for the message. I can’t believe you had to ask if I’m happy, baby, you know I am. Where are you, Joey?”

Who?

I leaned away from Joe and he raised an eyebrow. “Everything all right?”

I nodded slowly, listening.

“I want to see you, babe.”

“Is it Catalina?” Joe asked, and I nodded again, still listening.

Joe turned to Karen and Brian. “You know, the first night Catalina babysat for us we thought she stole Ruby?”

“I’m horny as a motherfucker,” said my mysterious confessor.

My face burned. I felt waves of what must have been blood and adrenaline surging across my chest, shooting upward and then pounding against the top of my head. I was vaguely aware that Joe had launched into his “how we thought Catalina stole Ruby” anecdote. It’s one of his favorites.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gerald Stewart:

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Evelyn Spencer:

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our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Wm Dunlap:

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