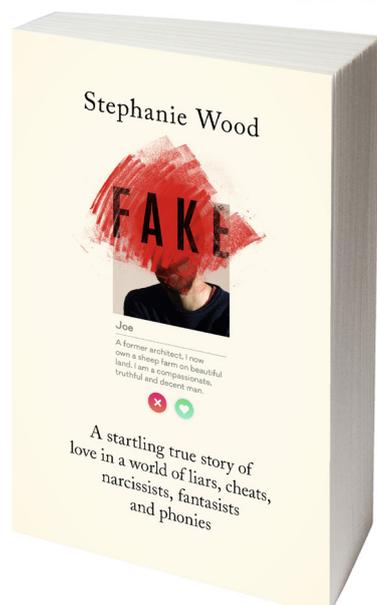


FAKE

A startling true story of love in a world of liars, cheats, narcissists, fantasists and phonies

STEPHANIE WOOD

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In this brilliantly acute and broad-ranging book, award-winning writer and journalist Stephanie Wood bravely recounts a deeply personal story of love and deception, derived from her hugely popular *Good Weekend* article.

When Stephanie meets Joe, a man who seems sweet, compassionate, truthful and loving, she embarks on an exhilarating romance with him. They talk about a future together; she falls in love. However Joe's odd stories and frequent cancellations and no-shows bring Stephanie to the realisation that something isn't right. And, with each strange event, she falls into a deeper state of anxiety. She starts to ask: who is this man she had hoped she might spend the rest of her life with?

After Stephanie finally finds the courage to dump Joe, she reboots her journalistic skills to uncover the truth — Joe had woven an astonishing web of lies. The man she thought she was in love with doesn't exist. As she processes the heartbreaking truth, she discovers that she is one of countless people to have fallen for manipulative and deceitful con artists who leave a trail of financial and/or psychological damage in their wake.

In an era increasingly defined by con artists and grifters, Stephanie's story sheds new light on a phenomenon which is also making its mark on the culture.

A range of examples, including the blockbuster podcast and TV series *Dirty John*, the MTV program *Catfish*, and saturation media coverage of exposed con artists such as the fake German heiress Anna Delvey and Silicon Valley blood-testing 'entrepreneur' Elizabeth Holmes, have shown that we have an insatiable appetite for stories about people without conscience whose capacity for deception has no limits.

Fake is a powerful story of love and a cautionary tale about holding too firmly to a belief in 'happily ever after'. Featuring extensive research into the state of contemporary love, interviews with psychologists, love experts and other women who've suffered similar experiences – including 'the other woman' in Stephanie's relationship with Joe – *Fake* is also a story of the resilience of those who have witnessed the dark side of humanity and managed to come out the other side.



Stephanie Wood is an award-winning long-form features writer, known for her ability to tell substantial, compelling stories across a range of subjects. She is a former senior staff writer at Fairfax Media's *Good Weekend* magazine. She is a former editor of *The Age Good Food Guide* and an experienced food writer and restaurant reviewer, loves writing about the history of Australian cities and society, and her powerful personal essays on subjects including loneliness, childlessness and her brush with a romantic conman have drawn huge audiences and touched the lives of many readers.

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