



I Can't Explain Why I Did These Things

by Marion Umney

Dear Julie

I know I was distracted when we met, so I'm just writing to apologise and to explain, if I can. You are my oldest friend, so I am hoping you will understand.

You spoke of my holiday, as of course you would, and I know you were confused, by my confusion over the very simple question of whether I had a good time. The truth is, that something happened to me which coloured my thinking and my actions. I still don't understand it, but I found myself in the grip of something powerful over which I seemed to have no control.

To put it simply, although it isn't simple, I met a man and fell in love, or thought I did. I can imagine you gasping with, pleasure, concern, disbelief, I don't know what. You, of all people, know my marriage has been somewhat sterile, for want of a better word, for a long time. Giles is a good man, I know, and he loves me in his own way, but it's been a long time since there was any passion or excitement in our relationship. It's stale. Perhaps that's why I was so susceptible to this craziness.

Maybe not so crazy then, but I can still feel myself blushing as I remember what I was like on that holiday. I'm nearly 60 for goodness sake and he was 45. Almost young enough to be my son and I was like a lovesick cow, following him around, although I tried not to; then, when I was with him, tongue tied and embarrassed. I just didn't know what to do. I even invited him to my room in a mad moment, then had no idea how to act. I can't explain why I did these things. It was as if I was a different person. This normal, sensible, married mother of three grown children suddenly turned into a gauche, mooning teenager or some kind of ageing vamp.

I know I'm being hard on myself, but now I'm home I feel so embarrassed. I love these painting holidays, but I'm not sure I want to go again. Part of the fun is that it's usually the same crowd and I feel people will just know.

So, Julie, Now you know my guilty secret, and confess I find myself smiling as, knowing you, I imagine you're saying "What a load of tosh – of course you can go", or waving your ageist and feminist banner while you convince me that if men can have affairs with younger women why can't women have affairs with younger men?" I know you're right of course. I could do with some of your sanity, I confess and sooner rather than later would be good.

In the meantime

Love as ever

Fran