

Jill Mansell

started writing fiction while working in the NHS, after she read a magazine article that inspired her to join a local creative writing class. She has since written over twenty *Sunday Times* bestsellers, including *Should I Tell You?*, *And Now You're Back*, *It Started With A Secret*, *Maybe This Time*, *This Could Change Everything* and *You And Me, Always*. And her books have sold over 13 million copies around the world.

Jill's hobbies include buying stationery, particularly magical new colours of ink for the fountain pen she uses to write all her books. She lives in Bristol with her family.

Jill keeps in touch with her readers on
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‘We all need a bit of Jill Mansell in our life and this book is so adorable – I loved it! Full of heart and humour and JOY’
Veronica Henry



‘Witty, feel-good romance, ideal for fans of Katie Fforde and Sophie Kinsella’
Candis

‘With wonderful characters, this will warm you on a January day’
Prima





PRAISE FOR

should I tell you?

‘A cornucopia of story threads, wonderful characters and a fabulous setting. This book overflows with the best of everything . . . I didn’t want to leave Lanrock’
Milly Johnson

‘Jill is an expert at creating characters who you can’t help but root for, and this latest bunch are some of her best’
Heat

‘[A] romantic page-turner’
Good Housekeeping

‘What a sparkling, joyful read! Jill is the absolute Queen of creating characters you immediately want to be best friends with! Wonderful escapism’
Phillipa Ashley

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‘Jill Mansell is the queen of feelgood romance . . . This is a witty, heartwarming story of friendship, family and enduring love’

Sunday Express





‘Another romantic read to curl up with that will warm your heart . . . An emotional tale of tangled lives and loves’

New

‘What a gorgeous book! Jill has a great gift for characterisation – nuanced, interesting, believable people but created with a charming lightness of touch. Thanks to Jill’s warmth, wisdom and emotional intelligence, this book was a huge pleasure to read’

Marian Keyes

‘I love this book so much . . . Like a wonderful, warm, writing hug’

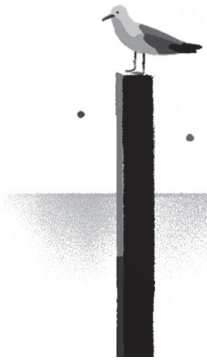
Joanna Cannon

‘A good story like this needs a quiet afternoon, a sofa and a warm blanket. Moving and heartfelt!’

Fern Britton

‘Warm, evocative and full of fun, with brilliant characters who jump off the page – such a moving and heart-warming story’

Fiona Gibson



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By Jill Mansell

Should I Tell You?
And Now You're Back
It Started with a Secret
Maybe This Time
This Could Change Everything
Meet Me At Beachcomber Bay
You And Me, Always
Three Amazing Things About You
The Unpredictable Consequences Of Love
Don't Want To Miss A Thing
A Walk In The Park
To The Moon And Back
Take A Chance On Me
Rumour Has It
An Offer You Can't Refuse
Thinking Of You
Making Your Mind Up
The One You Really Want
Falling For You
Nadia Knows Best
Staying At Daisy's
Millie's Fling
Good At Games
Miranda's Big Mistake
Head Over Heels
Mixed Doubles
Perfect Timing
Fast Friends
Solo
Kiss
Sheer Mischief
Open House
Two's Company

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Jill Mansell

should I tell you?



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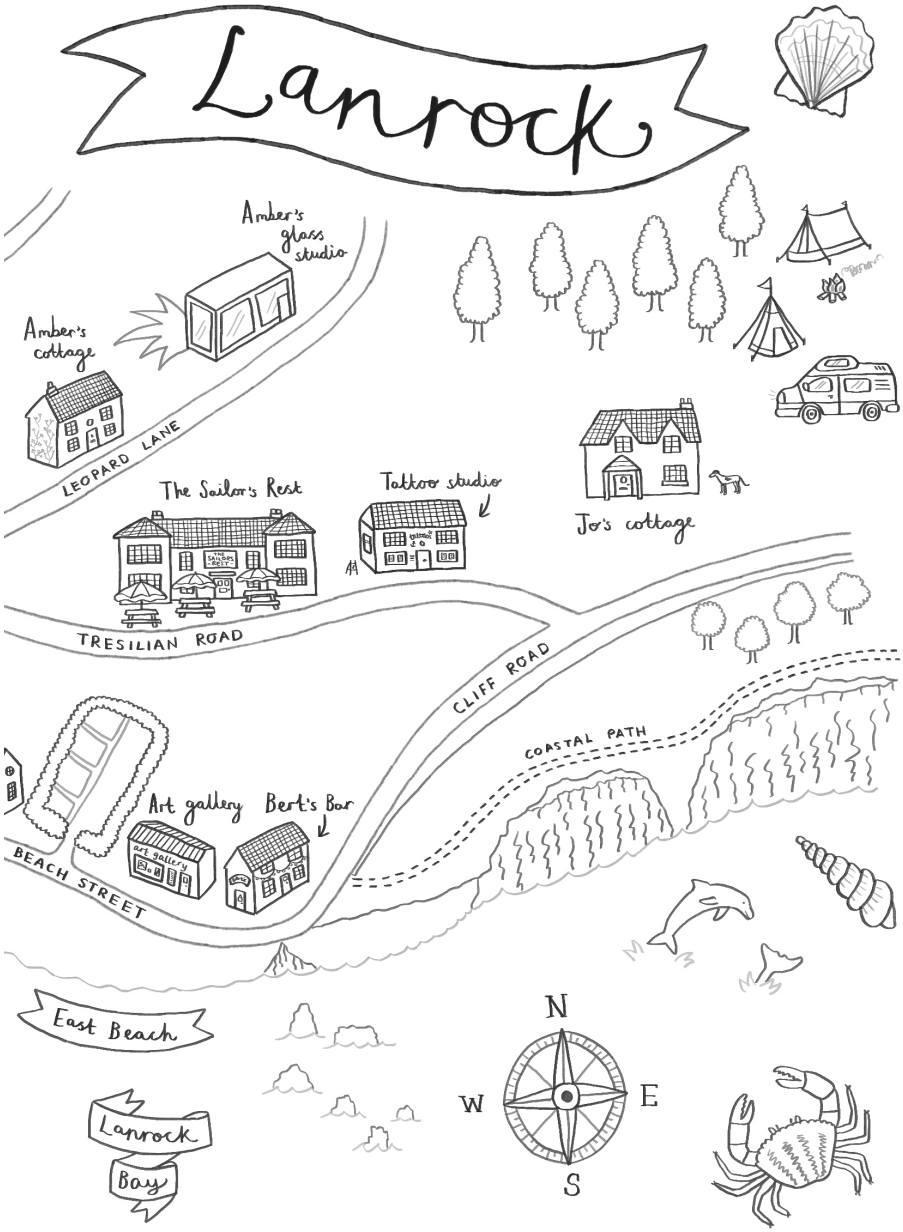
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For Sue Gregson
'I Wanna Be Adored'
Love, as always, Mark xxx

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Golf Club
Lanrock Holiday Park
Teddy's house
WOOD LANE
Raffaele's Hair Salon
LANROCK BRIDGE
Peggy & Benjie's
ANGEL STREET
River Lanrock
LONG STREET
Lachlan's restaurant
The Rupert Hotel
Dolphin Pub
Harbour
West Beach


Lanrock
Amber's glass studio
Amber's cottage
LEOPARD LANE
The Sailor's Rest
Tattoo studio
Jo's cottage
TRESILIAN ROAD
CLIFF ROAD
COASTAL PATH
Art gallery
Bert's Bar
BEACH STREET
East Beach
Lanrock Bay
N
W
E
S

Chapter 1

Chopping, slicing and dicing was Lachlan's favourite thing. He liked it when the flashing blade of the knife became a blur; every time he did it, he tried to go faster and beat his own record.

He always wanted to do better, *be* better . . . and he might have succeeded if at that moment the restaurant phone hadn't sprung to life.

Lachlan grabbed it and said, 'McCarthy's.'

'Hi!' said a voice he didn't instantly recognise. 'I left three messages on your phone and you didn't get back to me, so I thought I'd try this number instead. And here you are!'

That narrowed it down. 'Hi, Nell. Sorry, rushed off my feet. What was it you wanted?'

'Well, *I* wouldn't say no to rushing you off your feet! OK, remember back in March you took me to your friend Amber's stained-glass studio and I bought that suncatcher? Well, I accidentally broke it, so I wondered if she'd make me another one because I loved it so much.'

'I'm sure she would. You can ask her yourself,' said Lachlan. 'The number's on her website.'

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'I know, but I couldn't remember the name of the studio, you know what I'm like . . .'

'It's Lanrock Glass.'

'OK, I'll give her a call. Anyway, how are *you*? It's been ages!'

There was a reason for that. Nell had always used a lot of exclamation marks. Her enthusiasm was exhausting. She'd also worked hard to turn their brief fling into an actual relationship. 'Busy,' Lachlan said as he put her on speaker and got on with the food prep.

'But you don't work on Mondays. I thought maybe I could come down and see you then?'

'I'm not sure. I might have something else on.'

'Lachlan, I'm not asking you to marry me. I just thought it might be fun.'

He stopped chopping the onions. It wasn't like him to say no. And it *would* be fun . . .

Tinggg went his phone, and a text from Amber flashed up on the screen:

On my way.

Into the phone, he said, 'Look, I'll see how the next few days go. I'll give you a call.'

'Make sure you don't forget to do that.' There was an edge to Nell's voice now.

'Call Amber about the window thingy. Lanrock Glass,' he reminded her. 'I'm sure she'll make you another.'

'Oh, I'm not bothered. It was just an excuse to speak to you.' With a burst of honesty, Nell added, 'I only bought the first one because I thought it'd make you like me more.'

He laughed. 'It did make me like you more.'

'But not enough to want to see me again.' Her pride was wounded; she'd called him up and he'd turned her down.

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'Look, I'm sorry, I've been kind of seeing someone. I'd feel bad going behind her back.'

'Fine, I get it. No worries, you have a nice time with her. Maybe I'll bump into you sometime.'

'It's been good talking to you.'

'I think you're just saying that, aren't you? Bye, Lachlan.'

The call ended. Lachlan smiled to himself, carried on chop-chop-chopping potatoes into tiny dice, and thought how impressed Amber would have been if she could have heard him.

Maybe it meant he was becoming a better person at last.

Reaching for the next potato, he glanced up at the clock on the wall. Amber would be here soon.

★

Amber's mum had always maintained that anyone with a scintilla of natural instinct was capable of applying lipstick by feel alone. It was a life skill worth honing, she'd said. Even on the day she'd died in the hospice, her body might have faded away but her lipstick had been perfect.

The brunette in front of Amber today clearly wasn't taking any such chances. Pausing at the entrance to McCarthy's restaurant, she peered into a small mirror and pouted as she touched up her own lipstick.

Rather than attempt to squeeze past, Amber hung back on the sunny pavement and idly admired the woman's city-smart black pencil skirt. You didn't see many of them down here in Lanrock, on the south Cornish coast.

A fresh layer of crimson duly applied, the woman smoothed her hair and unfastened one more button on her shirt before pushing open the door and disappearing inside.

Thirty minutes later, seated in a quiet corner of the restaurant with her laptop open in front of her, Amber finished the design

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she'd been working on for a stained-glass mirror surround and began eavesdropping on the conversation taking place three tables away between Lachlan and lipstick woman, who was evidently a journalist.

'So you've achieved a great deal, career-wise.' Lipstick woman leaned closer, her tone confidential. 'How about your personal life?'

Lunchtime service was over but Lachlan was still wearing his chef's whites. He reached for his bottle of iced water and said, 'My personal life's fine, thanks. But it's not my number one priority right now. This place is.'

'And that's completely understandable. But no girlfriend at all? That seems like such a shame!'

Oh here we go. From across the restaurant, Amber cringed on the journalist's behalf because she was shifting into flirt mode now, her eyes sparkling as she studied Lachlan's face, gauging his reaction and the likelihood that he might fancy her.

'No girlfriend,' said Lachlan. 'But I get by.'

'I'm sure you do.' She was smiling, twirling the stem of her empty wine glass. On the table between them, her phone recorded a couple of seconds of deliberate silence.

'Actually,' Lachlan glanced at his watch, 'I need to get back to the kitchen pretty soon.'

'Really? But you don't open again until seven.'

'I need to prep, though. Unlike some places, we don't just take bags of chips out of the freezer and dump them in vats of oil.'

'Hahahahaha.' The woman ran her tongue over her upper lip, clearly excited by the mention of chip-gate. 'I believe another chef wasn't too happy when you said he used frozen chips. Have you heard from his lawyers yet?'

'Of course not,' said Lachlan. 'It was true.'

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She adopted a conspiratorial tone. 'I've also heard some gossip about you refusing a request from a TV company to co-star in a show with a certain well-known Michelin-starred chef.'

'Have you?'

'And is that true as well?'

'Might be.' He took a swig of water.

'Why would you turn down an offer like that?'

'Because the certain well-known Michelin-starred chef is a dick.'

Oh, he went there. Across the restaurant Amber was tempted to give a coughing-major-type warning. But really, what would be the point? Lachlan would only ignore her; keeping his thoughts to himself had never been his forte.

The journalist gave a trill of laughter. 'I can't say I'd disagree with you there! You mean Gerry Walsh, am I right?'

'You might think that. I couldn't possibly comment.'

'But wouldn't you like to have your own series on TV?'

'It's not the be-all and end-all. I'd rather my customers came here to eat having heard the food's fantastic than because they've seen my face on some crappy show.' Lachlan spoke with an air of finality. He checked his watch once more. 'Look, I'm really sorry, but there's a ton of prep I need to be getting on with in the kitchen.'

'You want to be the best,' said the woman.

'Of course. And I'm on my way there.'

'It's wonderful that you're so passionate about what you do.'

Lachlan said, 'Well, I'm glad you think so.'

Keeping her head down and tapping busily away on her laptop, Amber heard the sound of chairs being pushed back and guessed what would happen next.

'Actually, I was going to head back to London this afternoon but I'm thinking now that it seems a shame to come all this

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way and not try your delicious food.' The woman was visibly checking out Lachlan's body now that they were both standing. 'I'd love to book a table for this evening . . .'

And then we'll share a few drinks afterwards whilst I tell you how amazing you are, then I'll miss the last train home and end up having to spend the night with you.

Amber hid a smile, because it was so predictable. Honestly, every time.

'What a shame.' Lachlan looked regretful. 'If only I'd known a week ago, I could have held a table for you. But we're fully booked.'

'Oh.' The journalist's face fell. 'And there's no way . . .?'

'I'm sorry. It's been fantastic to meet you, though. Next time you're in the area, you must let me know.'

'I shall.' She switched off the voice recorder on her phone. 'Could we have a photo together?'

'Of course. Amber, will you do the honours?'

She'd guessed this would happen, too. The journalist handed over her phone and Amber took several snaps of the two of them, with Lachlan's tanned arm around the woman's shoulders. She looked pink-cheeked and excited, whilst Lachlan was . . . well, as effortlessly charismatic as ever, with that gypsy-dark glitter in his eyes, his glossy black hair and his deceptively angelic smile.

When the photos had been taken, the woman murmured, 'And who is she?'

Lachlan grinned. 'Amber? She's . . . Let's just say we're close.'

He thought it was funny. Amber waited while they finished exchanging cheek kisses and saying their goodbyes. As he opened the door to let the woman out, she belatedly called out, 'Not *that* kind of close.'

When the door had swung shut and it was just the two of

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them, she said, 'You have to stop doing that, using me as an excuse. I hate it.' She especially wished it didn't make her blush.

Lachlan grinned. 'That's why it's fun. How are you, anyway? All right?'

'Not too bad, considering you asked me to come over here and then kept me waiting for an hour.'

'I know, sorry about that. Forgot about the interview.'

'She was angling for more than dinner tonight.'

'I know that, too. But I didn't go along with it. Aren't you proud of me?'

'Very proud. You're learning. Well done,' said Amber, because last year he'd slept with a journalist who'd taken umbrage when he'd neglected to call her afterwards and had subsequently got her revenge in print. It hadn't been pretty, put it that way.

'How d'you think this one went?' As if he ever took a blind bit of notice of anything she said.

'You shouldn't have called Gerry Walsh a dick.'

'I didn't. I didn't utter his name.'

'But we all know who you were talking about.'

He spread his hands. 'Because we all know he's a dick.'

'It makes you sound arrogant.'

'Is it arrogant to know you're a better chef than someone else? Because I *am* better than him,' said Lachlan. 'And I'm less of a dick.'

'So modest, too.'

His dark eyes danced. 'I prefer honest.'

'Whatever you say.' She hopped up onto one of the high stools by the bar. 'Anyway, tell me why I'm here.'

Lachlan pushed his fingers through his hair, raking it back from his tanned forehead. 'It's Teddy.'

'What?' If it was terrible news he'd have said it right away. 'He's OK, isn't he?'

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'Oh, *he's* OK, he's having a whale of a time. Something's bothering me, though.'

'What kind of something?' She couldn't begin to guess. Teddy was currently sailing off the coast of Greece, over halfway through a twenty-four-day cruise. It was three years now since May had died, and he'd finally been persuaded to take a holiday. They'd all encouraged him to go, and cruise ships were friendly places, geared up to the needs of solo travellers.

'I wouldn't enjoy it.' Teddy had been adamant when Amber had first presented him with the glossy, enticing brochure. 'Where's the fun in going away on my own?'

But she'd persisted, showing him online reviews and explaining that there were daily get-togethers for those travelling singly, big shared tables at dinner, organised trips ashore, quizzes and competitions and as much company as anyone could wish for, should they want it.

Then, when he had finally been persuaded, there'd always been a chance it could all go horribly wrong. Thankfully, that hadn't happened. Two days after departing on the ship from Southampton, Amber's phone had rung and for the next twenty minutes she'd had to abandon work in order to listen to Teddy extolling the joys of every single aspect of cruising. He was with his group of new friends, having a drink at a sunny harbourside bar before they all set out together to explore the shiny delights of La Coruña.

'Remember how much you love it when it turns out you knew best after all?' he'd said happily. 'Well, you were right.'

'I'm always right.' The relief was enormous. 'You should know that by now.'

'The food's incredible, everyone's so friendly, and there's nothing better in the world than sitting up on deck with a cocktail watching the sun go down over the sea.'

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'Oh my God, you're drinking cocktails now?' Teddy had been a pint-of-cider man his whole life.

'I know, can you believe it? They're amazing! They have umbrellas in them and they don't even taste alcoholic. But they definitely are.'

She laughed. 'Which one's your favourite?'

'Well, here on the ship it's called Fun on the Beach, although in real life it has a naughtier name than that. I won't tell you what it is.'

Amber's heart gave a squeeze of love for the kindest man she'd ever known; she might be twenty-nine years old but Teddy still wanted to cocoon her from hearing about a cocktail called Sex on the Beach.

'And you won't believe this,' he went on, 'but out of all the people in our group, only a couple of us have never cruised before. The rest of them are mad for it, do it as often as they can. And now I can see why!'

'That's brilliant,' she told him. 'So d'you think you might book another one?'

'There's a travel agency right here on the ship,' Teddy said. 'I definitely will.'

That phone call had taken place a fortnight ago. The group of friends he'd made on board was still going strong and the photos he'd been sending her showed him growing steadily browner and – if it was possible – even happier as the days went by.

'Tell me,' Amber prompted now.

Lachlan was busy scrolling on his phone. 'Hang on, signal's dodgy . . .'

'Hello? This is me,' she chided. 'That's the excuse you give girls when they want to know why you haven't called them.'

'Just be patient. OK, got it now.' He raised his head, looked

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at her. 'Remember when you were at school and had a massive crush on Lee Cope, and you were always levering him into conversations?'

'What . . .?'

'Like, if someone said their favourite colour was green, you'd say your favourite colour was purple and guess what, purple was Lee's favourite too?'

'I didn't say that!' Amber was indignant. Lee had been her fantasy boyfriend in Year 11. What was more, his favourite colour had been black.

'OK, I'm just paraphrasing, but you were obsessed with him and couldn't stop talking about him. Like, *all* the time.'

Belatedly, she did the maths. 'Hang on, you weren't even there, you'd left by then.'

'I know, but I heard all about it from Raffaele. He said it was hilarious, they used to lay bets on how many times you'd casually mention his name.'

Of course it had been Raffaele; the pair of them had loved to tease her.

'Fine,' said Amber. 'But you still haven't told me why you've got me over here now.'

'Take a look at this.' Lachlan passed her his phone. Talk about a massive let-down. She glanced at the photo of Teddy and his group of new friends on the cruise ship, around twenty of them gathered out on the top deck at sunset, beaming as they raised their glasses for the camera.

'I've already seen it. He sent me this one last week.'

'I called him this morning while they were docked in Mykonos. We had a good chat. Obviously he's still loving it.'

'And?'

'And in the first five minutes, he casually mentioned someone three times.'

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'Oh!' Finally the penny dropped. Now this was more interesting. She expanded the photo. 'And it's one of these women? Which one? Tell me, tell me!'

'What makes you think it's a woman?' said Lachlan.

Amber's head jerked up. '*What?*'

'Joking. Ha, your face.'

She returned her attention to the happy group on the screen, checking out each of the likely candidates in turn until she came to a smiley one in a peach dress and matching pashmina. She had plump cheeks, a sweet smile and neatly styled short brown hair.

'Got it.' She tilted the screen to show Lachlan. 'She even looks a bit like May. Oh, this is good news, she looks perfect!' For the last year or so, they'd been attempting to gently persuade Teddy to at least consider the idea of moving on, but he couldn't have been less interested. May had been the great love of his life, he'd explained; what would she say if she knew he was dating another woman?

And when Amber had said, 'But she'd want you to be happy again,' Teddy had shaken his head, dismissing the idea out of hand.

'I'm fine as I am, love. If I can't have May back, I'm not bothered about being happy again.'

But now, fingers crossed, there was a chance that it could be happening anyway. The thought of love creeping up on Teddy and catching him by surprise made the backs of Amber's eyes prickle with emotion, because if anyone deserved to be happy, it was him.

She didn't cry, of course. That would give Lachlan too much of an opportunity to take the mickey.

'She does look perfect, doesn't she?' he said. 'Just right for Ted. Except it's not her.'

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'Oh.'

'I know.'

'Why not? She's so obviously the best match.' Amber snatched the phone back and took another look. 'So . . . it's the one with the Dame Edna glasses?'

'Nope.'

'The flowery cardigan?'

'Not even warm.'

'Show me, then.'

Lachlan pointed. Amber peered and did a double-take, then gave him an accusing look, because it was surely another of his jokes.

Reading her mind, he shook his head. 'This time I'm serious. Her name's Olga.'

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