

The Wife

Harper Paperbacks

By Alafair Burke

ISBN: 9780062390523

Introduction

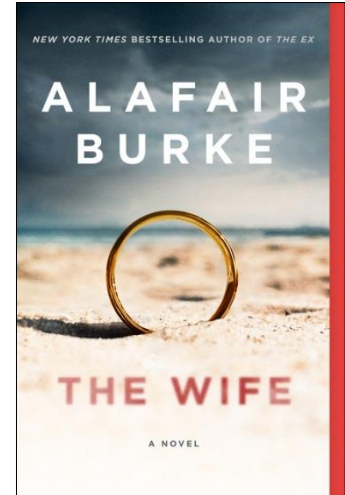
When Angela met Jason Powell while catering a dinner party in East Hampton, she assumed their romance would be a short-lived fling, like so many relationships between locals and summer visitors. To her surprise, Jason, a brilliant economics professor at NYU, had other plans, and they married the following summer. For Angela, the marriage turned out to be a chance to reboot her life.

She and her son were finally able to move out of her mother's home to Manhattan, where no one knew about her tragic past.

Six years later, thanks to a best-selling book and a growing media career, Jason has become a cultural lightning rod, placing Angela near the spotlight she worked so carefully to avoid. When a college intern makes an accusation against Jason, and another woman, Kerry Lynch, comes forward with an even more troubling allegation, their perfect life begins to unravel. Jason insists he is innocent, and Angela believes him. But when Kerry disappears, Angela is forced to take a closer look at the man she married. And when she is asked to defend Jason in court, she realizes that her loyalty to her husband could unearth old secrets.

Questions for Discussion

1. The novel begins with Angela lying to Detective Corrine Duncan regarding the whereabouts of her husband Jason. What explains her willingness to break the law to try to protect him? In what ways is this a healthy part of a committed relationship or not? What should be the limits of loyalty to a spouse in trouble?
2. Considering Rachel Sutton's claim of sexual harassment against Jason, what's the best way to ensure fairness and accuracy in such a situation? What does Detective Duncan understand about Rachel's position that the initial, male investigating officer does not?
3. Jason refers to Rachel and all millennials as "ridiculous" in their awareness of and possible sensitivity to men's inappropriate behavior toward women. In what ways is such a heightened awareness valuable? What is the best way to determine and define appropriate speech and action between men and women in public and professional situations?
4. How is it that Jason can be so concerned with equality and social responsibility in corporate endeavors but so much less sensitive to it in interpersonal relationships with women?
5. Is it possible for corporations to value and even mandate equality and fairness and still make a profit? If so, why is there so much corporate malfeasance? If not, what effects does



this have on a democracy society? Who is responsible for establishing these essential values in society?

6. Angela admits to needing “predictability” in her life. What does she mean? Why might it be important to her? What’s a healthy balance between calm predictability and risk and growth?
7. In what ways does social media help or hurt claims of sexual harassment?
8. In what ways are Kerry Lynch’s accusations against Jason similar to or different from those of Rachel Sutton?
9. Angela initially demands that her son Spencer support Jason, his stepfather, when criminal accusations are made, telling him, “We have to protect our family.” To what extent should familial support be unconditional or not?
10. Angela explains that, “finding humor was [Spencer’s] way of dealing” with his stepfather’s trouble. In what ways is this appropriate or not, given the seriousness of the claims?
11. Considering her own abduction, Angela anticipates that many people would argue that “it’s only human nature to blame the victim.” Why might a person be so quick to blame the victim of a crime? In what ways might such blame be unfair or even illogical?
12. In what various ways is Susanna Coleman a good and valuable friend to Angela?
13. Angela’s mother, Ginny, believes that Jason’s goodness was “a bit too on display...like every part of his life was about cultivating an identity.” What might she mean? What does a more genuine or authentic goodness look like?
14. Detective Duncan calls out ADA Brian King on his sexist critique of attorney Olivia Randall’s effectiveness with law enforcement by saying, “if she were a man, you’d admire his vast network of contacts.” What’s at the root of such double standards in the workplace? How does Detective Duncan work to maintain equal treatment in her job?
15. When confronted by Angela with evidence of his extensive infidelity, Jason says, “I know it’s terrible, but I’m still me.” To what extent is a person’s character inherent or more so the result of his or her actions? When does a good person doing bad things cease to be good?
16. What is Angela’s mother Ginny like? In what ways is she helpful to Angela or not?
17. What are the various reasons women tend to underreport sexual assault? What is “cognitive dissonance”? What could be done to make reporting a crime more comfortable and effective for victims?
18. To what extent were Angela’s decisions regarding her former friend, Trisha Faulkner, understandable and justified or not?
19. In the end, safe with her mother and son, Angela says she has no regrets. Should she?
20. What drives Detective Duncan to continue to search for Angela? How might she find her?