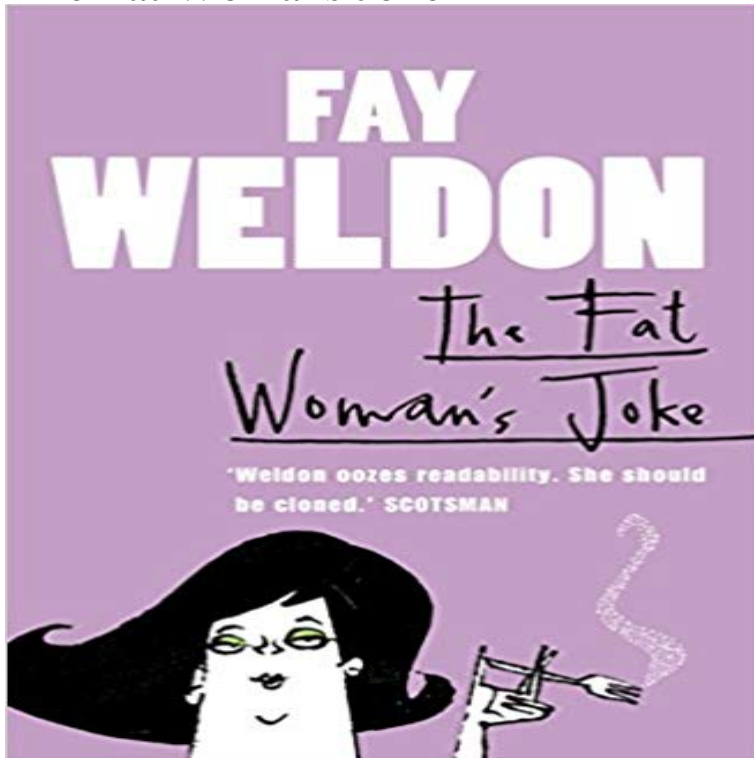


The Fat Womans Joke



Fay Weldon's first novel, a sharp and witty parable of the way people see themselves. For several weeks, Esther Sussman had lived in a sordid flat in Earls Court. During the day she read science fiction novels. In the evenings she watched television. And she ate, and ate, and drank, and ate. She had not felt so secure since she spent her days in a pram. It had been her husband's idea that they should go on a diet. Together they would fight middle-age flab and feel young again. It was the diet that had made Esther leave home. The lack of food had made her see things very clearly and she had looked at her life—the daily dusting, sweeping, cooking, washing-up—and found it all pointless. She had not felt strong enough for marriage, and so she escaped. From the fastness of her Earls Court retreat Esther starts to recount the events leading up to her revelation to her friend Phyllis. I suppose you really do believe your happiness is consequent upon your size? she asks. Phyllis does; Esther does not and triumphantly sets out to prove her point.

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