

**Charlotte Mendelson, *When we were bad*.**

Mendelson takes us to a very special wedding on the first page of this witty and socially incendiary novel. The Rubin family have turned out to see one of their members, their first son Leo, married before his Rabbi mother Claudia, easily the most exotic, creature in the world: 'No one is interested in you. There is one star of this show: tall and distractingly voluptuous in sea-green silk devore. With her in their mist...who could not be happy?' Yet Leo strangely has other plans. He elopes before the congregation with the seductive wife of the presiding Rabbi and precipitates the whole Rubin family into chaotic disarray. Claudia's control begins to slip. Her dutiful daughter Frances, once gratefully married to the monstrously complacent Jonathan, falls for the 'boyfriend' of her younger sister and finds that attraction has its own surprises and rewards. Rebellion mounts and even Claudia's steady husband Norman has his own preoccupations and secrets. Mendelson's writing delights in its frothy intelligence, sudden illumination and underlining compassion for the disordering impulses that may unravel our tried and tested lives, yet also redeem us, as we discover who we really, honestly are.