

WRONG NUMBER?

Cathy could hear the happy shouts of the children playing in the garden.

The phone rang. "Mrs Collins?" It was an unfamiliar voice.

"Yes?" Cathy tentatively replied. Not another cold call!

"Your husband has been having an affair with my wife."

Cathy laughed in disbelief. "You've made a mistake. You must have the wrong number!" She put the phone down.

It rang again.

"I'm sorry if I've given you a shock Mrs Collins, but this is not a wrong number. There's no easy way to put this. Your husband Gary, who works at Ridgecombe School, has been having an affair with the teaching assistant Janice, who happens to be my wife."

Cathy was shocked into silence. Outside she could still hear the children playing but she felt that her world had stopped.

She remembered how Gary always seemed in such a hurry nowadays to get to work. He'd also been quite short with her of late. Was it possible? Could he be unfaithful?

"Are you still there Mrs Collins?" said the voice.

"Yes, I'm here", she replied weakly. "How do you know this?"

"I received an anonymous letter. I confronted my wife and she confirmed it was true. I thought you'd want to know."

Cathy put the phone down. She was shaking.

Gary would soon be home from work. Should she confront him? He'd be bound to laugh it off. And she would laugh with him. Just some silly prank caller. Maybe a former student who had a grudge against her husband?

Cathy threw herself into household tasks. Somehow she managed to give the children tea, get them bathed and into bed.

Not long after she heard Gary's key in the door. What should she do? Should she say anything at all? Why should she believe someone she'd never met? Yet, the more she thought about it, the more convinced she was that it could be true. Gary had changed towards her in the past months. And he'd been coming home late quite often – staff meetings he said.

After dinner, over the mundane task of stacking the dishwasher, she casually asked,

"Do you know someone called Janice?"

Gary looked startled.

"Why do you ask?"

"I received an odd phone call today. A guy who said he was her husband. He seemed to think the two of you were having an affair."

Gary took his phone out of his pocket and began fumbling with it. His eyes did not meet hers.

"Are you having an affair Gary? Are you?"

Cathy gripped the steak knife angrily in her hand.

"Look at me!" she screamed.

Gary looked up and she could immediately see from the guilty expression on his face that the caller had been right.

.....

ONE YEAR LATER

Cathy Collins visibly trembled as she was escorted into the crowded courtroom.

"Catherine Elizabeth Collins - do you plead guilty or not guilty?"
