Nigel Williams is the author of sixteen novels, including the bestselling Wimbledon Trilogy. His stage plays include Class Enemy and a dramatization of William Golding’s Lord of the Flies. He wrote the screenplay for the Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning Elizabeth I, starring Helen Mirren, and is the writer of the BBC Radio 4 comedy series HR (featuring Jonathan Pryce and Nicholas le Prevost). He has lived in Putney for thirty years.

Praise for Unfaithfully Yours

‘A suburban black comedy that only the master of the genre, Nigel Williams, could pull off with such outrageous wit. It’s been ten years since his last novel, but well worth the wait.’ Daily Mail

‘Unfaithfully Yours is acerbic, amusing, yet with a rich seam of melancholy. The epistolary form is perfect . . . Acutely funny.’ Financial Times

‘This is a cruel, clever, hilarious and stylish novel in which almost everyone is simultaneously villain and victim . . . A wonderfully entertaining novel which cannot fail to delight.’ The Times

‘From the master farceur of Middle England, Unfaithfully Yours is a triumphant comic return.’ Metro

‘Nigel Williams is a consummate entertainer. As with all good comedy, this tale is underlain by a vein of sadness and regret, of belated self-knowledge and understanding.’ The Herald

‘Unfaithfully Yours in a literary tour de force by Nigel Williams; take it on holiday and laugh yourself silly this summer.’ Tribune

‘A novel of great seriousness that is also blistering fun.’ Daily Express

‘The author of The Wimbledon Poisoner is back with another entertaining drama about – what else? – infidelity in the burbs . . . Witty and humane.’ Tatler

‘The realism of Williams’s novel is helped by the closeness to his own life...but the real charm is in the idiosyncratic quirks of the characters.’ Mail on Sunday
### Novels
- My Life Closed Twice
- Jack Be Nimble
- Johnny Jarvis
- Charlie
- Star Turn
- Witchcraft
- Black Magic
- Charlie (based on his teleplay)
- The Wimbledon Poisoner
- They Came from SW19
- East of Wimbledon
- Scenes from a Poisoner’s Life (short stories)
- Stalking Fiona
- Fortysomething
- Hatchett & Lycett
- Unfaithfully Yours

### Plays
- Marbles
- Double Talk
- Class Enemy
- Easy Street
- Line ‘em
- Sugar and Spice
- Trial Run
- The Adventures of Jasper Ridley
- W.C.P.C.
- My Brother’s Keeper
- Country Dancing
- As it Was
- Consequences
- Breaking Up
- Nativity
- Lord of the Flies (adapted from the novel by William Golding)
- The Last Romantics
- Harry and Me
- MyFace
- HR (radio series on BBC Radio 4)

### Non-fiction
- Two and a Half Men in a Boat
- From Wimbledon to Waco
Unfaithfully Yours

Nigel Williams
Unfaithfully Yours (B).indd   4
09/10/2013   12:52
‘More than kisses, letters mingle souls.’

John Donne


Cast of Principal Characters

In order of appearance

Elizabeth Price, a classics teacher
Orlando (Roland) Gibbons, a private detective
Gerald Price, a successful barrister, married to Elizabeth Price
Mike Larner, a retired BBC producer, late of the Natural History Unit
Mary Dimmock, wife to Sam Dimmock, a dentist
John Goldsmith, a Putney doctor in general practice
Sam Dimmock, a Putney dentist
Barbara Goldsmith, a novelist, married to John Goldsmith
Pamela Larner, career mother, married to Mike Larner, now deceased

The novel is set in SW15. Now.
Dear Mary –
I thought I would put together all the letters that passed between what I still cannot help calling the Puerto Banús Eight. Nine, I suppose, if you included me, but I was never – thank God – conscripted into one of those villa holidays.

I come over as an absolute jerk. I think that is what I was in those days. Maybe that is still a good way of describing me, but at least now I am an absolute jerk who is loved by you.

Don’t ask me how I got hold of them. That’s my job. I am rather proud of being a snooper – and getting better and better at it with every new marital breakdown in Putney. I am no longer ashamed of who I am – and have even been known to own up to the fact that I went to a minor public school.

These aren’t all the letters, of course, and, as well as letters, there were emails and phone calls; but I think the letters say more about us all than any of the more casual traffic. Your prose style tells the world more about you than almost anything else, which is perhaps why now I take more trouble with it.
I have typed them up – so that you don’t get John Goldsmith’s unusually neat doctor’s hand, Barbara G’s wild scrawl, Mike Larner’s prim italic, Sam’s bold cursive or your wonderful way of managing to make the alphabet look as if it was eating itself. The butch, broad strokes of Gerald Price’s Parker pen are also absent – as are the hideous, spider-like marks made by my (now abandoned) Mitsubishi Uniball. The only handwritten letter I have left as it was is the last and, I think, rather touching, message from Elizabeth Price to me.

Her handwriting was not as I had imagined it. It was crazy. There were wildly irregular spaces between words, sentences and even, sometimes, different ingredients of the same character. Significant?

Here they are anyway – Elizabeth and Gerald Price, Sam and Mary Dimmock (that’s you!), Mike and poor Pamela Larner and the Perfect Couple Who Weren’t – John and Barbara Goldsmith. They come over as clear as day, don’t they?

That is the beauty of letters. There is nowhere to hide. So here you are. I thought it might amuse you. I’ve touched them up a little and added a few chapter headings, but – I promise – I have not seriously interfered with what any of us wrote to each other. This is Putney, red in tooth and claw. My version of the Great Putney Novel, the one I often talked about writing back in the day. All You Ever Wanted to Know About Sixtysomethings – a group I have only recently joined.

Enjoy!

XXXXX Orlando
PART ONE
From:
Elizabeth Price
PO Box 132
Putney
12 June

To:
Roland O. Gibbons
Gibbons Detective Agency
12 The Alley
Putney, SW15

Dear Mr Gibbons,
I am writing to you because I think my husband may be having sex. I am not sure with whom he is having it but it is certainly not with me.

He may, for all I know, be involved with more than one
person. I use the word ‘person’ advisedly. He may be doing the deed of darkness with females, males, or some combination of the two, since, as far as I can gather, at his public school, a boarding establishment, homosexuality was more or less compulsory for the younger boys. I am fairly certain he is not a paedophile, however, which is some comfort. We have two children and, as far as I know, he has never interfered with either of them. Indeed, it has been something of a struggle to get him to even acknowledge their existence.

I have studied various kinds of detective agency but none of them seemed entirely convincing. Indeed, from the general tone of their advertisements, I gained the impression that many of them would have joined, enthusiastically, in whatever it is my husband is doing.

I am not, at this stage of the proceedings anyway, interested in photographic recordings of him committing adultery. Nor am I sure, at the moment, what I will do with the information you obtain or, indeed, what it is I expect you to uncover. It may be that he is not having sex with anyone at all. Though, from my observation of him over more than twenty years, I think that highly unlikely. He once told me that he would ‘shag the Archbishop of Canterbury if that was the only thing on offer’. A joke – of course – but people reveal themselves through their jokes. Don’t you think?

We have – as people do over the years – grown apart and, to be honest with you, he has become, in many respects, a complete mystery to me. I want, in other words, to find out more about him without having to go to the trouble of asking him. It may be simply that he has discovered a new hobby and is not keen to tell me about it. He may have bought a boat. No
fewer than three men married to friends of mine have done precisely that – without telling their wives.

I want information about him, Mr Gibbons, and I want it gathered with complete and utter discretion. I suspect you are well placed to supply that commodity. If only because – during the quite extensive period of time in which I have lain in wait outside your offices – it has become clear that you are about the only person who ever visits them.

There may well come a time, Mr Gibbons, when I will require professional surveillance of his activities even when he is on our premises. We have a five-bedroom house and it is not always possible to keep track of him inside the property; but, for the moment, I am only interested in finding out what he does when I am not there. I see no reason why you and I should ever have to meet.

For reasons of security I do not wish you to reply to the address at which – for the moment – I am forced to reside with him.

Perhaps you would write to me care of the Post Office and let me know your rates and the kind of details you might need to help you begin the complex and probably unrewarding task of tracking the man to whom I am, unfortunately, married.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Yours
Elizabeth Price

PS I think he may be contemplating the prospect of doing away with me. I have seen him giving me some very suspect glances when we are watching television and he thinks I have
not got my eye on him. For some reason this often seems to happen when we are tuned to Channel Four. I am pretty sure, however, that he has not got the kind of nerve it would require to stab, gas or strangle me.

From:
Roland O. Gibbons
Gibbons Detective Agency
12 The Alley
Putney, SW15
14 June

To:
Elizabeth Price
PO Box 132
Putney

Dear Mrs Price,
Thank you very much for your letter.

I was really glad to get it. I know I should pretend to be ‘cool’ and look as if I can only just manage to fit you in – but – yowzas! A job! This was my reaction. The recession has affected our business very badly and small private firms such as mine are seriously at risk from the major conglomerates.

Well done with the ‘research’ too. I will admit to feeling slightly ‘weird’ that someone has been doing a ‘snoop job’ on me (shouldn’t it be the other way round????) but, in fact, Mrs Price, I completely understand you wanting to make sure that we would be a ‘good fit’. I do not know if you have been following
me home or monitoring my telephone calls and emails but, if you have, I hope you didn’t find any real dirt on yours truly!

Your letter does not suggest what it is that has made you feel Mr Price is having an affair, although you seem to imply that, whatever he is up to, it is pretty serious.

Are there stains on his clothing? Has he been making or receiving phone calls that he has attempted to hide from you? Has he been visiting inappropriate websites? I do appreciate your need for privacy but, obviously, in order to make an assessment, a ‘face-to-face’ meeting would be helpful. Perhaps you would call by the office. You seem to have had no difficulty finding it and I am pretty much free most of the time at the moment.

I’m not a hermit! I do occasionally get out for a light snack at the La Mancha Tapas Bar in Putney High Street. I usually bring a selection of sandwiches (cheese, ham or coarse pâté and pickle) to work or – on special occasions – order a delivery from the Royal China in Chelverton Road. Their Steamed Eel in Black Bean Sauce has brought me more moments of real ecstasy than – for example – my first wife. Although that would not have been difficult!

If you would prefer to telephone – and I often feel that, if a physical meeting might cause embarrassment, a chat over the ‘blower’ can be more helpful than words on a page – I enclose a leaflet, which, as well as giving our email and telephone details contains our mission statement and a few selected testimonials from satisfied clients.

I remain, yours respectfully,

Roland O. Gibbons (MA [Reading], PIAA registered)