

By Ashwin Ahmad

**T**empted to flirt with that cute colleague? Or take your secretary out to lunch? And all this when your wife is out of town. Think twice. For that woman giving you those dazzling smiles and flirtatious looks may not be who she appears. In fact, she could be a decoy.

According to private investigators, decoys are now being seen as a necessity by most people in urban India. Investigators say from being a once in a way case, a number of agencies in Delhi take around 25-30 cases of suspected spousal infidelity every month.

"Today, with the rise of double income nuclear families, both men and women want to assure themselves that their partner is remaining faithful when they are not there. Since most of them can manage (financially) on their own, their attitude is 'why should I tolerate this'," says Sanjay Singh, CEO of the Indian Detective Agency in Delhi. In the busi-

*With infidelity on the rise, more and more Delhiites are hiring private eyes to flirt with their spouses and trap them in the act. So if you're ever tempted to stray, beware...*



ness since 1999, Singh estimates the number of clients coming to see him about spousal infidelity has since risen by over 50%.

The cases do vary but investigators insist the signs of spousal infidelity are common. Garima started becoming suspicious of her husband Alok (names changed) when she found pornographic material and websites of various chatsites on their computer. Garima got in touch with a leading private detective agency, who decided that the 'female decoy' would be the best way to test his fidelity. Using an alias, a female agent got onto the chat site and began a lengthy correspondence with Alok. Garima, who later received printouts of the

transcriptions, found her husband had described himself as a "lonely widower, trying his best to bring up his only son."

As the above evidence was found online, this was a rare easy case. But more often than not it's not that simple. First an initial estimate is given. Then a thorough surveillance of the person is carried out, with his daily habits, likes and dislikes noted. He or she is followed for a few days before the private eyes decide on the total cost. As a senior investigator says, "As circumstances vary in each case, it's impossible to set a

budget. But normally, an average case can take up to 15 to 20 days. In a normal case, costs can vary from Rs 25,000 to Rs 45,000."

The cost depends on various factors: for instance, the person under watch may be in the city or going abroad on a business trip, the degree of surveillance involved — some clients want a 24-

7 watch, while others just request it on certain days and hours (when they are away from home) and most importantly: the decoy. Says an investigator, "Cases where the spouse is already having an affair, are easier, as we just have to bide our time. But with a decoy there's more expense: the agent's cost, hidden cameras and bugs all add up. Costs in such a case can even go up to one lakh."

Contrary to popular perception, investigators insist there is no gender bias in the clients who come to see them. As one laughs, "Both men and women are equally suspicious of one another. But most of the time their suspicions are not without reason. In eight out of ten cases we have found evidence of cheating. As for the background of these people, a number of them are from business backgrounds. But we are getting cases from people in other sectors as well."

While in most cases, it's the

# It could be a HONEY trap

spouses who ask detective agencies to spy on each other, there are times when parents have stepped in. In one case, a parent worried about the "loose morals" of his to be daughter-in-law, ordered a male decoy. As a senior investigator remembers, "He (the parent) introduced the decoy— as the son of a close friend of his— to the lady, while the son was away on a business trip. The decoy's job was to flirt with her, which he did over the phone." He adds, "He made some insinuating remarks, to which she replied in kind. In fact, she even suggested that he come over to their house. As the phones were tapped, the recordings were then later played back to her fiancee."

Ask the investigators if they ever question what they are doing and the answer is no. As Singh reasons, "Any marriage or relationship is based on trust. If your partner is cheating on you, you have a right to know. And I am paid to find that out for you."