



## Five minutes ago – A short story by Jan Harvey

She called five minutes ago.

She's broken down high up in the moors and it's a filthy day. I was up at 6.30am and it was raining cats and dogs then, now there's a black sky resting heavily on the hills ready for another downpour.

It's so typical of her, she'd never think to take an A road when she can use a minor one. She told me once that she'd heard Vivienne Westwood always took side roads if they looked interesting, regardless of where they ended up. So she started to do it 'for fun'. I told her you're not Vivienne Westwood you're Janet Penfold, from Giggleswick. It fell on deaf ears.

I'm supposed to ring the AA and give them her whereabouts, I wouldn't care but this is the second time she's done this to me in a month and it's not even me she's visiting.

I'm sure the number for the AA is on the pad from last time. There's the number for the Indian I ordered last week, with what I chose listed down the side: 3, 40, 42, 96 and 98. I think I'll use those for my lottery numbers this week.

I've known her for thirty years but she's got to me lately. The slow realisation of what she's like has come over me like the achey, shivery feeling you get before a cold.

The phone rang when I was chopping onions for tea. I am half way through a meat and potato pie recipe my Mother-in-Law gave me.

What am I thinking? I couldn't use those numbers for the lottery, it only goes up to 49.

I did everything with Janet; shared boyfriends, stole boyfriends, laughed, sang and wept. Then she met her Billy and we saw less of each other, and I found Dan. Then I had George and lost him and I didn't see her at all through all that time of grief, hating myself.

She's been dead fourteen years this month, my Mother-in-Law. That was a blessed release, for me that is. Dan thought the sun shone out her you-know-what but we never got on, not really. I wasn't what she considered 'good enough'. Luckily, Dan's not an anniversary man, it's likely he's not remembered.

The rain is coming down in streaks, masking the hills behind a great grey curtain. It reminds me of those hanging lights in the arctic, the ones that dance. Dan saw them once on Scotland, Rory Balliaris they're called.

Janet'll be sitting in her car. She said she had to walk right up to the top of the hill to get a reception. She was lucky, there's hardly any signal on the moors and she's in the wildest part. She does it for her art, she likes to pull over and 'capture things' with her sophisticated camera. She makes huge paintings from them that don't sell. I've got six all parcelled up in my barn, the chickens sit on them and crap all over the wrappings.

