



Blackmail

By Curtis Jerry Smothers

Dan had only himself to blame for the blackmail.

His student, Carla, was irresistible—flirtatious, sexy, and well aware of the effect she had on him. She looked at him in class in a way that turned his insides to warm Jell-O. When she volunteered to become his student helper, he couldn't believe his luck.

She seduced him right in his own office. Afterward, Dan could hardly believe how quickly he had given in. He felt guilty not only because he had violated every rule of professional ethics, but because he was a happily married family man—or at least had been until then.

His wife would be devastated if she found out. She had caught him straying once before, and he knew there would be no forgiveness this time. The truth would destroy his marriage. Carla wasted little time making the price of his silence clear.

“So here’s the deal,” she said. “I get an A in this course, or I turn you in. Not only that, I’m exempt from the term paper. And you’ll see that my boyfriend, Dave, gets at least a B. No term paper for him either.”

Carla got her A. Then she took every course Dan taught.

Before long, she raised the price of her silence. She forced him to give her advance copies of his tests, which she sold to her friends. What had begun as one disastrous lapse in judgment had become an ongoing racket, and Dan was trapped in the middle of it.

Eventually, word began circulating through the student and faculty grapevine. When Dan was summoned to a meeting with his department chair and the Dean of Instruction, he knew the jig was up. The meeting was scheduled for the next morning.

He had two choices: confess and face the consequences, or somehow find a way to save his career and his marriage.

Desperate, Dan decided to confront Carla and plead with her to clear his name. He found her address in her student file and drove to her house that evening. Just as he pulled up, Carla and her boyfriend, Dave, drove away. Dan followed them.

Their destination was a secluded spot overlooking the ocean, a favorite make-out haunt known locally as Lover’s Leap. Despite warning signs advising motorists to stay well back from the unguarded edge, Dave parked his Honda Civic barely two feet from the precipice. Beyond it was a 300-foot drop to the breakers and rocks below.

Dan stopped his Land Rover some distance behind them and waited. Soon the Honda’s windows began to steam over. Carla and Dave were clearly too preoccupied with each other to notice him.

Dan started the engine. Slowly, he eased the Land Rover forward until its bumper touched the rear of the Honda. Then he accelerated. The little car lurched forward, disappeared over the edge, and plunged toward the rocks below.

The next morning, Dan sat across from the department chair and the Dean of Instruction.

They told him they had received disturbing reports concerning his conduct as an instructor. Dan listened quietly.

Then he denied everything.