

## Wilderness House Literary Review 20/1

*John Alexander*

### THE ALABAMA WEEKEND

#### CHAPTER ONE

October 15, 1974

-Late Tuesday Afternoon-

The Beginning of the End

THEY WERE JUST BULLSHITTING, the two of them, with their feet up on Gene's desk and leaning back in their standard, institutional-issue office chairs, when she knocked softly on the partially opened door.

"Excuse me, Bob," Gene interrupted, looking up at the door.

"Yes? Come in," he called.

Assuredly, she pushed the door open and confidently stepped into the office.

Gene remembered her from today's ten-thirty in the morning class.

"Doctor Warner," she began, "you may not remember me, but I'm Stephanie Richards. I'm in your graduate class, on Tuesday and Thursday, over at the Policy Center."

Gene smiled casually and harmlessly at her, quickly taking in the luster of her shoulder-length blonde hair, the fullness of her breasts and the easy yet magnificent curves to her shoulders, waist and hips.

"Not remember her?" he thought. "With that face and that body!"

"Of course, I remember you, Miss Richards."

"Stephanie is fine," she corrected him.

"All right," he replied. "In my graduate classes, *Stephanie*, I try and make things personal. I try and remember names *and* faces. Now what can I do for you?"

She looked from Gene to Bob and back again. "I hope that I'm not interrupting anything."

"Not at all," Bob quickly offered as he brought his feet down from the desk, sat up and crossed his leg.

"No, of course not, just shop talk," Gene added. "By the way, Stephanie Richards, this is Bob Owens. He's a graduate student, here, in the program, too."

Bob and Stephanie traded the perfunctory 'nice to meet you.'

"Now," Gene began, "What can I do for you?"

"Well," Stephanie embarked, in a gauged and careful style, "the reason I stopped in was to find out what I need to do in order to get an 'A' in this course."

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"An 'A'?" Gene asked with a semblance of uncertainty. "First of all, you must not have received a syllabus when I handed them out," he said, while reaching to look through a stack of manila folders on his desk.

Neither Gene nor Bob noticed her shifting her weight, from side to side, uncomfortably.

"Ah! Here it is," he said, beginning to pull out a copy of the syllabus.

"Excuse me, Doctor Warner," she called, with a slight touch of impatience. "You don't have to do that. I already *have* one of those."

"Oh, okay," he said with a slight shrug of incomprehension. "Well, would you like to sit down and discuss it?" he asked, indicating to an empty chair off to the left side of his desk.

Again, she shifted her weight from one hip to the other- but this time with intended exaggeration- while she brushed back her hair from her face.

"To tell you the truth, Doctor Warner, I am really kind of pressed for time- all I came here to find out is what do I have to do to get an 'A' in this course?" she emphasized.

Gene shook his head and brought his feet down, slowly, from off the top of his desk and onto the floor, bringing him to an upright position.

"Miss Richards- er, Stephanie," Gene began with mild exasperation, "I really don't understand. You tell me that you already have the syllabus- the course outline- and that you can't spend just the few minutes that it would take to begin to discuss your grade." Gene paused for a moment before moving on to his conclusion.

"Stephanie, on what basis can we realistically decide what you need to do to get an 'A' in this course?"

He shrugged his shoulders, self-assuredly and smugly, leaned back in his chair and put his feet back up on the desk.

She stepped further into the office, shook the hair off of her face and said, matter-of-factly, "Sex, Doctor Warner. Sex. How do you want to work it? How much and what kind of sex is worth an 'A' to you?"

Gene glanced from Stephanie to Bob and back to Stephanie before shooting up to a posture-perfect, sitting position.

"Shh! This place is crawling with people. You just can't come in here, stand there with the door open and shout that out."

Stephanie looked from Gene to Bob and back to Gene. "I don't give a shit who's around here, but, if you're self-conscious about it, I'll close the door."

She closed the door in a fashion ripe with exaggeration. After taking a moment for effect, she then turned, leaned across Gene's desk, and fixed her stare on the dead- center of his eyes.

Bob stood up and let out an uncomfortable sigh. "I guess I'll head over to the library, now," he said, seeing a chance to exit.

Stephanie looked over at Bob with a quick yet penetrating glance.

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"You sit down," she ordered. "I'm not going to be here that much longer, and, besides, I think that you're old enough to hear and handle this."

She watched Bob sit down again before she turned back to Gene.

"Now, as I was saying- or, better yet, let me put it to you in a different way."

She leaned further over the desk, toward him, her breasts and cleavage clearly visible beneath her silk blouse. "I have neither the time nor the overwhelming interest to read either the syllabus or the assigned materials. But what I am willing to do is go to bed with you." She stopped and watched him before continuing, almost playfully. "Besides, aside from needing the grade in this course- in some ways- you turn me on, Doctor Warner."

Gene's eyes darted from Stephanie to Bob and then back to Stephanie, quickly interjecting before she could continue.

"Gene, would be fine," he said and smiled at her.

"Doctor Warner, Professor, Gene- whatever. The point is- *Gene*- I want to screw you, over and over again. On this desk, here on the floor, in the car, up in the mountains."

She leaned as far over the desk as she could. Now he could smell the perfume that he imagined she had dabbed between and over both of her magnificent breasts. "I want to screw your brains out," she whispered, then added sensuously and slowly, "over and over, again."

Stephanie straightened up, backed away from the desk and waited for his reaction.

"O-kay," Gene said, slowly, carefully calculating each syllable. "I guess you pretty much know what you have to do in this course. The only thing that remains is how much work you have to- so to speak- put out."

"Exactly," she said, nodding her head confidently.

Gene sat forward in his seat, gave his head a thoughtful twist and stroked his beard.

"What you're asking, then, is to, sort of, take this course as an independent study."

"If that's the way you want to put it," she said with a smile.

"Hmm," he uttered, thoughtfully, as he continued to stroke his beard. "This does present a number of interesting possibilities."

She nodded, impatiently. "Good. I'm glad that you're beginning to see my point. Now, I've got to be going," she said, turning to open the door. "I'll stop by later to get the particulars of how, what kind, when and where."

"You know," Gene added, quickly, almost as if he hadn't heard her. "With this kind of arrangement, the criteria for evaluation undergoes a significant shift."

Stephanie stopped, turned away from the door and came closer to the desk. "What do you mean, '...undergoes a significant shift?'"

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Gene sat back, raised his legs up onto the desk and crossed his feet. "Well, as you no doubt know, when you take a course the professor will, almost invariably, discuss grading. You know, things like what his expectations are in regards to attendance, required readings, class participation, papers, tests, *projects*—"

"I get the picture," she interrupted.

"Anyway," he continued, "the total evaluation- the final grade- is a product of both quantitative *and* qualitative evaluations."

"Meaning?" she asked.

"Meaning, that if this suggestion- proposition- is the way you want to handle your grade in this course," he paused to take a relaxed and deep breath, "you're going to have to be evaluated on something more than just the sheer- quantitative, if you will- number of times we screw. I mean, let's face it, this isn't just some rummy undergraduate course, this is the real thing- the big time- this is a professional program, and," he continued with feigned resignation, "you'll be expected to perform as a professional."

She smiled and nodded at him. "Is that so?" she asked, with staged indignation.

"Obviously," he went on, "if this is the way you want to be evaluated, then the *quality* of your performances will weigh as much as the number of your performances."

"My, my," she said, walking slowly around his desk until she was standing alongside of him, "don't some people catch on fast?"

"I try and make every experience a learning experience," he said, matter-of-factly. "I am an educator, you know."

"Oh, you're learning all right. You know, I think that I'm really going to enjoy this," she whispered, warmly.

"Well, I'm glad," he responded, now becoming slightly uncomfortable with her standing so close to him.

"But," she continued slowly, wisely, "there is one other thing that you really must know, my dear Doctor Warner- *Gene*."

"Oh?" he asked, trying to sound confident. "What's that?"

She leaned over him, put her left hand on the desk and then gently, but firmly, grasped him between his legs and kissed him, gently and tenderly, on the cheek before straightening up, taking a step back and saying, "I'm no amateur, *Gene*. I know what I'm doing and I know what I want."

She came fully around from behind the desk, stood in front of him, arms akimbo, smiled and, again, waited for his reaction, for his response.

They stared at each other for a few moments before he finally said, "You know," and then paused to think before continuing with, "Stephanie, I've always been one to say that in today's world there isn't a whole lot- almost nothing- that one can be certain of. But, you know what? I think that I'm wrong. I really do. Because I'm certain that you know what

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you're doing- beyond a doubt, beyond a doubt," he trailed off, lost in thought.

"Anyway," he quickly returned to his thoughts and then added, "I want you to think about, what shall we call it, a program of study? Give it a couple of days and- like you said- stop by the office and we'll discuss the particulars. All right?"

She began shaking her head ever so slightly, when she heard him suggest stopping by the office, and she immediately said, "No," firmly and confidently right after he asked if it was "*All right?*"

"No?" he asked, incredulously. "What do you mean, no? I thought--"

"You thought right," she interrupted, reassuringly, "But a couple of days?" She laughed. That's too long. Let's meet at Ruby Tuesday's, tomorrow evening."

"Tomorrow evening?" he asked.

"Yes."

"At Ruby Tuesday's?"

"Do you have someplace else that you like better?" she asked.

"No. No, Ruby's is fine."

"Well, then, what's the problem?"

He brought his feet down from the desk, straightened up in his chair, stood up, casually put his hands in his pants pockets and came around the desk to her.

"What time?" he asked.

"How about somewhere between seven and seven-thirty sound?"

"You got it. Tomorrow evening at Ruby Tuesday's," he said.

"Good. And, why don't you bring him," she indicated to Bob with a shake of her head, "along with you?"

"You don't waste time, do you?" Gene asked.

She walked up to him and said softly, "You don't understand, do you? Like I said, aside from the grade, I want to screw your brains out, and the sooner we get things going the happier I'll be. Got it?" she asked, stepping to the door.

"Gene snapped to a stiff and exaggerated attention while saluting her and saying, "Loud and clear."

"Good. See you then," she replied and reached to open the door when he reached it first.

"What are you doing?" she stopped and asked.

"I'm going to see you out," he replied.

"Out to where?"

"Out to the hall, of course."

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She leaned against the still closed door and faced him.

"Now listen, Dr. War-, Gene. That's sweet of you- and very gentlemanly- but let's not get carried away here. I mean, let's face it, you're a married man and I still have to finish off my degree. It's one thing to meet with you in your office- even with the door closed- people do that a lot around here. But let's not draw anymore attention to ourselves than is necessary. Let's not give anybody a reason to talk. Okay?"

Gene went back around behind his desk, sat down, put his feet back on top of it, picked up his coffee cup, took a sip and finally said, "That *is* the smartest thing to do."

"And discreet, she added, quickly.

"Yeah, discreet," he nodded.

She grasped the doorknob, turned it and then paused before pulling the door open.

"Oh, by the way," she added, in a way and tone that was clearly intended to intimate a staged afterthought, "in the future, would you do me a favor?"

"Sure," he said in an equally affected tone. "What is it?"

"For the future, would you arrange your door so that it's locked from the outside. Maybe you could concoct some sort of story about having had something stolen- as the excuse, as the reason for having to lock it."

"All right. Sure thing," he agreed.

"Because," she went on as if she hadn't even heard him, "because it really bothers me to be interrupted when I'm working on my course. You promise?"

"Sure."

"Okay. See you tomorrow," she said, opening the door and stepping through it.

"Oh!" she added, poking her head back into the office with a wink and saying loud enough so that everyone in the outer office could hear. "Do you want me to leave it open or closed?"

"Close it, please," he called out, in an equally loud way.

Gene sat there, looked over at Bob and then shook his head in disbelief.

"I'll be damned," he said, barely loud enough for Bob to hear him. "I'll be damned."