

From Erasures

By Don Zolidis

(Lights up on RICK, Hispanic, 50s, in a suit. CAITLIN enters and sits with him.)

RICK, an investigator

CAITLIN, 23, a new middle school teacher.

RICK

All right. Have a seat.

CAITLIN

Thank you.

RICK

First I wanted to let you know that this is being recorded.

CAITLIN

Okay.

RICK

Could you please state your name?

CAITLIN

Caitlin Caldwell.

RICK

And you're a teacher here at Oak Grove Middle School?

CAITLIN

Yes. This is my first year. I'm on a Teach for America contract.

RICK

All right. I'll get right into it. Were you aware of any anomalies in the gathering of the Staar test booklets from March 23rd through the 27th?

CAITLIN

No, sir.

RICK

You weren't aware of any anomalies?

CAITLIN

No, sir.

RICK

Were you surprised by your class' results on the test?

CAITLIN

Um... I don't know.

RICK

Your eighth grade English class posted a twenty-three point improvement in their scores from the year previous.

CAITLIN

Yes.

RICK

And what would you attribute that to?

CAITLIN

Uh – you know we worked really hard –

RICK

You're a first year teacher, correct?

CAITLIN

Yes. I already said that.

RICK

And your class jumped twenty-three points.

CAITLIN

Yes.

RICK

Do you think that's unusual?

CAITLIN

I don't know.

RICK

Okay.

CAITLIN

I guess the scores went up around the school.

RICK

They did. They went up around the school by quite a bit.

CAITLIN

So maybe it was just a... rising tide floating all boats kind of thing.

RICK

Maybe it was. Maybe that's all it was. You proctored a test, correct?

CAITLIN

Yes, it wasn't my class, but it was –

RICK

Are you certain it was proctored correctly?

CAITLIN

Yes.

RICK

And you signed your name to that effect?

CAITLIN

Yes I did.

RICK

Are you aware that that signature is a legal document?

CAITLIN

Yes.

RICK

And that if you lie on that document you could be indicted?

CAITLIN

They told me that yes.

RICK

And you're certain it was proctored correctly?

CAITLIN

Yes.

(short pause)

RICK

I'm going to be frank with you. I don't think you had anything to do with this. But there's a whole lotta people at this school about to be in very serious legal trouble. The special prosecutor is very interested in this school – and there are a number of options available to him. We're talking about making false statements, embezzlement, theft, racketeering. You could be looking at a significant amount of prison time.

(Pause)

You're twenty-three years old?

(CAITLIN is starting to cry.)

This is your first job?

(CAITLIN can't answer.)

Do you know anything about what happened?

(Pause.)

I'm telling you: I'm not after you. This is bigger than you. But if you have information for me, then I won't be forced to indict you too. I don't want to see you in prison. I don't think that does anybody any good.

CAITLIN *(weakly)*

You think you're doing good?

RICK

What do you know about the erasures on the test?

CAITLIN

Do I need a lawyer?

RICK

That depends.

(He takes out an agreement.)

This is a plea deal right here. In exchange for surrendering evidence, the state agrees not to prosecute you in relation to this matter.

(CAITLIN can't really look at it.)

Listen – I don't need to tell you this, but this is an airtight case. The score increases at this school are statistically impossible – there's a clear pattern of erasures that suggests that scores were changed, there's evidence that the test booklets were removed from the school. I don't need you to testify in order to indict people. We're going to indict them anyway, and we're going to win. I'm giving you a chance to help the good guys here, clear your conscience, and save your life. Just tell us what you know.

(CAITLIN breaks down.)

CAITLIN

...okay... okay...

(she starts signing the agreement.)

To read the rest of this play, email me at donzolidis@gmail.com