

Emily's Test

Emily Seitz was a nervous wreck. What she had just seen called for immediate action and she didn't know what to do. During the training seminars for graduate teaching assistants she had been forewarned about the proper behavior to follow while proctoring a test. She had been told to stay alert and keep her attention on the class while the test was in progress. The advice given was clear: "keep your eyes riveted on your students and definitely do not use the hour to get involved in doing some of your own work". In fact, it was a good idea to keep moving about the room during the entire period and to refrain from sitting down.

Although she had made no objections in response during their meeting, Emily felt her advisor had been overreacting and that it was truly not necessary to patrol a classroom of thirty-five students. But this was her first experience in proctoring and who was she to question the advice offered by a seasoned faculty member. However, in all her years as an undergraduate she had never been in a class in which cheating had been an issue. She had never even heard of cheating going on in other courses at her college. When she offered this remark to her advisor, Emily was told that perhaps she was being a bit naive about the behavior of college students.

Now, here she was in a confrontational situation. While walking up one of the aisles, Emily saw some loose pages protruding out from under the blue book of one student. In giving directions at the start of the test, Emily had told the students explicitly to use the back pages of the exam book for scrap work and that no other papers were to be used for this purpose. All that was needed was a copy of the exam and the blue book. As she passed by Liam O'Neill's chair, the student made no attempt to hide the pages with his arm. Instead, Liam was writing away apparently oblivious to her presence. She focused more closely on the sheets of paper and saw that the one on the very bottom was somewhat askew and that it clearly contained some small neat handwriting. This contrasted with the scribbled writing currently being entered in the blue book. The loose paper certainly did not appear to be a page of scratch work. However, it was also apparent Liam was not using the paper at present; he seemed unaware that it was even on his desk. Emily wondered what information was on this paper - and if he had been using it earlier on when she was in another part of the room.

Emily realized that she did not know her new university's procedures for dealing with cheating. Then she remembered a story she had once heard, a story about a graduate TA who had confronted a cheater, only to himself be accused of improper behavior. Though she was utterly mystified as to how this could have occurred, the thought tied her stomach in knots.

As she agonized over what to do, Emily looked up and saw a student in the next aisle watching her. Her eyes seemed to be traveling back and forth between Emily's eyes and the piece of paper under the exam book. The student, Tabatha, always made her uncomfortable. Tabatha was a complainer and whether it was about a homework grade or something going on in class that she didn't understand, she had an attitude. At this moment, Tabatha had a knowing smirk on her face. Emily felt as if she were the one being tested. If she did the right thing according to Tabatha, all would be well. On the other hand, if she didn't, she was certain Tabatha was prepared to act. What should Emily do?