

Chapter 1

Tony Young had spent all morning attending college classes. And he worked the rest of the day at the campus bookstore. He had just gotten home. Before he could change clothes, his phone rang. It was Brandi Ketchum. She was in his world history class.

“Tony, it’s Brandi. I’m calling about what happened in history class this morning.” She sounded scared. “You can’t tell anyone about it. Especially the police. They might come to see you. Don’t say anything if they do.”

“What?” Tony said. “What are you talking about, Brandi?”

“I have to go. Just don’t say anything about what happened in Mr. Dudley’s class.” She hung up.

Tony thought about calling her back. But then he figured it must have been some kind of joke. As he changed clothes, he thought back to Mr. Dudley's class that morning. Nothing unusual happened. It was the same boring routine.

Mr. Dudley gave his lecture. And the students listened. Or pretended to. The lectures normally weren't about world history. They were more about Dudley's history. Stories about the hard life he'd had. Experiences in the war. And his travels around the world.

There was no real interaction with his students. He didn't tolerate any talking during his lectures. The slightest whisper would make him mad. And Dudley talked down to his students. He treated them as if they were young children. He didn't give them any respect. It was no wonder the kids in his class didn't respect him.

Then there were the tests. Unlike the

lectures, the tests *were* on world history. And they were tough. The students didn't get the information from Dudley. They had to rely on reading the book. But it was anybody's guess whether they had studied the right material.

Now Tony wondered what he missed in today's class. Something must have happened to upset Brandi so much. Again, he thought back. Their tests had been returned. Tony was happy with his C. But he did notice that a lot of students were complaining about their grades.

Just before Tony left class, he saw several students crowded around Dudley's desk. They seemed to be arguing with him. But then Tony left. Maybe the argument got out of hand. Brandi made it sound like something bad had happened. Had someone gotten hurt? He couldn't worry about it. Whatever happened was over now.

Tony texted his girlfriend. "Pick you up

in an hour.” They had plans to get a bite to eat after Dawna got off work.

Dawna Reston had been going to college when the two met. She was a freshman and Tony was a junior. But then she dropped out. She decided to study cosmetology instead. After only eight months she got her license. Now she was working at a hair salon.

Tony liked the fact that Dawna was both beautiful and athletic. She was fun to be with. The two of them had so much in common. Both of them loved to run and go hiking. When Tony told her he surfed, she asked him to teach her. He was happy to do it. He'd been surfing since he was a kid.

There was one thing they didn't have in common. Dawna was always talking about getting married. It wasn't something Tony wanted to do. At least not any time soon.



At the restaurant, Dawna was talking about

a video she'd seen online. "There were these cats—" she started to say.

Tony interrupted her. "Not another cat video," he said, smiling.

"But it's so funny. Here, I'll show you." She pulled her phone out of her purse.

"That's okay. If you've seen one cat video, you've seen them all." He was laughing. But then he looked at her. She made a sad face. Next she'd probably start crying. She would get like that when he did something that hurt her feelings. It was one of the things that kept him from wanting to get closer to her. She was moody.

"Let's go to the beach on Saturday," he said, trying to change the subject.

"Maybe," she said.

"Okay," he said. "I'll watch the cat video."

Dawna smiled.



Tony hadn't thought any more about

Brandi's call or Mr. Dudley. Until now. It was Wednesday and time for history class. As he sat down at a desk, he realized that Dudley wasn't there. Brandi caught his eyes. She gave him a worried look and shrugged her shoulders.

After a few minutes of waiting, most of the students walked out. A few were gathered around a laptop, watching a video on World War II. They were the *good* students. Dudley's favorites.

"I wonder where the man is," Tony said to Chaz Spender, the guy sitting next to him.

"Weren't you here Monday?" he asked.

"Yeah. I was here," Tony said. "So?"

"Come on. Let's go. I'll fill you in," Chaz said.

"I'm surprised you didn't hear about it," Chaz said when he and Tony were outside. "Three students got into a big fight with Dudley. It was that guy named Mac and Brandi and her friend Lisa.

“They flunked the latest test,” Chaz said. “Mac called Dudley a senile old man. He told Dudley he shouldn’t be teaching anymore. Then Brandi and Lisa joined in. Brandi told Dudley to drop dead. And Lisa told him he’d be doing everyone a favor.”

“I didn’t hear any of that,” Tony said. “I must have left by then. What did Dudley say?”

“There wasn’t much he could say with all the shouting. But I could tell he was furious. He said something about calling security and left. The last I saw, he was heading toward the parking lot. Brandi, Lisa, and Mac were following him. I’m not sure why. And when I saw Brandi later on, she looked really scared.”