

NOTES ON A SCANDAL

Sheeba's secret

Woman/Woman

Drama

BARBARA, 60, and SHEEBA, 40, are sitting at a PUB.

SHEEBA

When... when will you tell them?

BARBARA

I need to know the circumstances.
You must inform me of everything.

SHEEBA

Actually, you were there when I...
when I first saw him. I think you
gave him a telling off.

BARBARA

I gave him a slight ticking off.

SHEEBA

He dedicated his goal to me. It
amused me, nothing more. Then a few
days later he came to see me.

BARBARA

You found your gem, as Sue would
say.

SHEEBA

I said that I would teach him after
school, but only if he felt like
it. It's our job, isn't it?

BARBARA

Within specified hours and
curriculum.

SHEEBA

Barbara, he came every day for two
weeks. Yes, I was flattered, but
more than that. I was excited to
find someone who wanted to learn.

BARBARA

But surely you must have suspected
his motives?

SHEEBA

I sensed he had a little crush on
me, but so what? It was innocent.

BARBARA

That's when you should have stopped
it.

SHEEBA

I did. I told him I wouldn't be teaching him anymore. But he refused to accept it. He just kept coming back. It began to feel like our secret, and secrets can be seductive. His father has been hitting him. He didn't want to tell his mum because she was ill. Kidney disease. He was so vulnerable. I hadn't been pursued like this for years. I knew it was wrong and immoral and completely ridiculous, but I don't know. I just allowed it to happen!

BARBARA

The boy is 15!

SHEEBA

But he's quite mature for his age.

BARBARA

"But" is not a helpful word here.

SHEEBA

This is going to sound sick but something in me felt entitled. You know, I've been good all my adult life. I've been a decent wife, dutiful mother, coping with Ben. This voice inside me kept saying, "why shouldn't you be bad?". You know, "why shouldn't you transgress? You've earned the right".

BARBARA

The day we met it had already begun?

SHEEBA

Yes.

BARBARA

And you had further relations that day?

SHEEBA

We went to the art room.

BARBARA

Well, I'm glad I was such an aphrodisiac. I was trying to help you.

SHEEBA

You did. I'm incredibly grateful. You've been such a good friend.

BARBARA

Not reciprocated, it seems.

SHEEBA

I desperately wanted to confess to you. But how could I? Barbara? It would have put you in an impossible situation. I so wish I had. You would have made me see sense. Look, I know you have to tell them. You know, the head, the school. All I ask is that you wait till the New Year. I'm begging you. Please let me have this Christmas with my family.

BARBARA

Oh, you poor thing. You've got yourself into a state? I'm not going to report you. I want to help you, to support you through this.

SHEEBA

You are not... you are not going to tell?

BARBARA

No.

SHEEBA

You won't tell anyone?

BARBARA

Who would it benefit? Not you or the boy and certainly not the school. No, this is a private matter and we must keep it so.

SHEEBA

Yes. Maybe I should resign.

BARBARA

Oh, no. That might alert suspicion. No, you must stay at the school,

(CONTINUA)

BARBARA (SEGUE)
but the affair must end. Your
solemn promise. I can't help you if
you