

## WHAT WAS I THINKING

I was freaking out and had no idea how this happened. When you scorn a woman, holy shit, revenge is brutal. I couldn't sleep after I received the notice from the dean. My mind was screaming at me, "What did I do?" I was fucked and had no idea what would happen next.

My problem was I told people online, some guy friends who were like, "Damn, you're crazy," a couple of ex-girlfriends, one co-worker, and all my caregivers knew that I'd engaged in a relationship with a student. However, as somebody I'd considered a friend, I'd emailed Lauren about my personal history, which was a big mistake.

I was invincible even though I kept saying I'd get fired. I thought this would show her I was wild and up for anything.

My primary caregiver was off that week, so my mom dropped me off at the hearing held at work. I told her everything the night before, but she couldn't comprehend the enormity of what I'd done.

I hoped for the best and expected the worst on the morning of my hearing. The meeting was at 10 a.m. on November 9, 2011, at Bay Side College—BSC—and consisted of the Human Resources—HR—Director, the Dean of Counseling and my union rep. The rep advised me of my rights. The HR Director gave me an immediate 30-day suspension letter

as I entered the room because I'd violated a direct order by contacting Lauren. I replied to Lauren's email when she asked me for a letter of recommendation. In my mind, I was going, Jesus, oh shit. I didn't know what the fuck I was thinking when I told her intimate details about me. My employment wasn't at the forefront of my mind, that's for sure.

They asked me questions.

“Was Alexandria Gonzales a student in your PSY 46 2008 class? What grade did she receive? Why did she get an A? Who is Raul Patron? What grade did he receive? Why did he get a W? Are you familiar with this email? Do you know Lauren Smith? How did these emails come into Lauren's possession? Is the content in these emails accurate? Did you abuse your power and take advantage of Alexandria as her instructor? Did you have any intimate contact with this student? Did you know Raul dropped out of college after your course? Did you know Alexandria dropped out of college after your class? Your actions caused two students to drop out of college. Lauren sent us emails suggesting you had a relationship with another student while you were her counselor at BSC. The student she refers to is called Camila. She said Camila is married. Please explain yourself.”

Fuck Me. My mind was reeling about how to go about answering and whether I should be honest or deny everything. I'm not a monster. I didn't pursue those students, and I didn't plan on it happening—it just did. We were consenting adults. I was 36 and single. Alexandria was 22 and unmarried. However, she had a boyfriend, Raul, a 27-year-old guy who was a student in my class.

A year later, Camila was in her mid-40s, and I didn't know she was married until a week after we started our affair.

They repeatedly drilled me with questions—the same ones on a loop. After 45 minutes, they asked me to recess to discuss my options with the union rep. Then I'd return to hear their decision.

I was terrified as I waited to hear the outcome. The main issue was whether my position at the college as an instructor was tenable. If I was allowed to continue as a counselor there, I could be put on probation. Other options were being fired or forced to resign. I didn't know what the fuck would happen to me.

I've counseled students who were suicidal and veterans assimilating back to college. Some of them had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and I advocated for students when professors wouldn't accept reasonable accommodations. I went to meetings on the students' behalf when the Department of Rehabilitation—DOR—didn't authorize funding because they pigeonholed them into a major suited for their disability. I was responsible for providing resources for homeless students, and I worked with clients with schizophrenia. One person thought demons were coming after them and me. I put myself in the students' shoes and tried to provide the best counseling, teaching, and employment advice possible.

I received a BSC School Success Award Nomination a year before it happened. Before that, in 2007, I wrote the following, which was published in the Alumni Association.

I broke my neck in a car accident, resulting in a C3-4 spinal cord injury—SCI—as a senior in high school in 1989. I took a huge risk by attending BSC three years later. Not knowing how I'd survive the rigors of being a student, I met staff from the Disability Office, who guided me in the right direction.

The advice I received helped me excel at BSC, where I received my associate's degree in liberal studies. I attained it within four years, which gave me the confidence to transfer to Western University—WU. I gained my bachelor's degree in psychology in 1998 and my master's degree in counseling in 2001.

While attending BSC, I received scholarships and service recognition awards. I loved my experience as a student and was given the opportunity to return to BSC as an adjunct counselor in 2001. Six years later, I have three wonderful jobs. Two are at BSC as an adjunct counselor for the ACE Program, teaching a psychology of disability class. My third job has been as an Employment Specialist at the Workforce Center since 2003. My ultimate goal is to be a full-time counselor at BSC, so I can help students achieve their dreams.

People who ask what happened at BSC don't believe the answer. I had an affair with a student in 2008 while I was her instructor. As her counselor, I had another experience with a student in 2009, and I wrote a book about it. I hired a caregiver who I hooked up with in 2011 and emailed her with my updated book.

My world fell apart when she blackmailed me by threatening to send my book to BSC. This was because I'd had cause to fire her. She used extortion

against me, and when I didn't concede to her demands, she carried out her threat. I disobeyed the dean and was investigated.

I have tried to recreate events, locales and conversations from my memories of them. To maintain their anonymity in some instances, I have changed the names of individuals and places. I may have changed some identifying characteristics and details, such as physical properties, occupations and places of residence.

Here's the deal. I am a simple yet complex man with an addictive personality who received a spinal cord injury in a car accident when I was 17. What I did with my life over 30 years later is beyond crazy. It can be argued that my life is different from any other guy's—but not that different.

Let the journey begin.