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Ann's Dilemma

Ann Czaplicki is glad to have any job. She completed enough education courses to be certified as a high school teacher, but her English literature major was not in great demand. So, she became a part-time taxi driver and continued writing poetry, several pieces of which were published in a local magazine.

After a year of this life, a family acquaintance offered Ann a job as his assistant. Harry Goetz is an important official of the state Health Department. His office has a major say in the approval of new health facilities of various kinds, particularly for acute and extended care.

Ann knows little about the health field at first, but she reads a lot and learns fast. In less than a year, she becomes so knowledgeable that Goetz moves her into a program position in which she no longer has any secretarial duties. Ann remains on good terms with Goetz and sees him often, even though she now reports to another person.

Late one afternoon, Goetz's secretary calls Ann and tells her that Goetz would like to see her before she goes home. Ann gets her things together a few minutes early and goes over to his office. Goetz stays on the phone until after his secretary leaves.

Once they are alone, Goetz asks a favor of Ann.

"I have recently gotten information," he begins, "which leads me to believe that one of your co-workers is giving some nursing-home owners and builders advance word on the activities of this office. There is a lot of money that can be made if people have such inside information, Ann, as you know."

Goetz gets to the essential point, quickly. "Ann," he says, "I want you to keep an eye on that person for me."

"I don't want to call in the police, you know, because I'm only reasonably certain. And I don't want to be embarrassed if I am wrong. If my suspicions are confirmed, I'll call in the cops and you'll be out of it entirely, Ann.

"I'll give you the person's name when I have your agreement and your pledge of secrecy."

Ann does not have a chance to respond before Goetz goes further. He softens his voice:

"I know that it may seem that I am asking a lot, Ann, but I'm going to presume on our relationship even further. I would really appreciate it if you would go through that person's desk, preferably today, before you go home. I'm pretty sure that you will find some notes or correspondence that will confirm what I suspect."

"Gee, Mr. Goetz," Ann replies, "I've never done anything like that before."

"I understand, Ann," Goetz responds. "That's why I know I can rely on you to help. I feel I have been very good to you: I gave you some breaks that many other people, with better qualifications on paper, would have been eager to get. This is one way that you can repay those favors and, at the same time, help put a stop to some practices that we both abhor."

"I appreciate what you have done for me, Mr. Goetz," Ann responds. "But I still feel a little funny about going through someone's desk. Besides, I wasn't planning to go back to my office this evening: The janitorial people are already in there sweeping. Can I think about this overnight? I really do want to help you out."

"Why don't you do that, Ann," Goetz says. "Remember that you may help put a stop to some of the most unscrupulous operations in this business.

"I know you'll make the right decision. After you think about it, you will see that this is a fair way to recognize the breaks I've given you and can continue to give you."