

CRIMINAL CONVERSATIONS - Synopsis

Dr. Alexandra Livingston, a college drama professor, is unpleasantly surprised when her ex-husband of 29 years ago, Dr. Ted Smith, suddenly shows up at her campus office and tells her he is coming back to school to study acting. When Ted, now a psychiatrist, also informs her that he will be in her class, Alexandra tries to talk him out of it. But he has already enrolled, and he insists that he is jealous of good actors. He has always wanted to act, and he hopes to be in at least one movie and one play before he dies, he tells her. Unable to change his mind, Alexandra stresses that he will be just one of the thirty students in her classroom. He will get no special breaks from her.

There are other—and bigger—complications, of course. Ted's current wife is dying and is pushing him away so he won't watch her suffer; and Alexandra's current husband is suing her for divorce and also having her spied on. He wants to prove adultery— which is also known as “criminal conversation” in legal terms--and leave her with nothing in the divorce settlement.

Both Ted and Alexandra now need someone they can confide in and seek comfort from – but their timing for getting back together is all wrong. Alexandra is up for tenure in her teaching position, and she needs to keep her pending divorce out of the tenure committee's sight. Ted, meanwhile, has a struggling psychiatric practice to run and has to be home each day by early evening, so his wife's home health-care nurse can leave. Also, Ted and Alexandra did not have a happy marriage, so there is still a tension between them that time has not healed.

Whatever can happen between Ted and Alexandra must happen on campus, in the classroom, in her office or on the drama department's stage, always in view of others, including “The Watcher,” a shadowy figure with a camera who keeps trying to capture compromising photographs of Ted and Alexandra when they are together – or just in close proximity.

Ultimately, Ted's wife dies, and Alexandra is granted tenure. Meanwhile, a sudden and common moment of campus life blocks The Watcher from getting the one picture that might have appeared to prove adultery. Alexandra is granted a divorce and gets to keep her assets.

In the end, Ted gets to prove that he can act, Alexandra continues to teach, and the world is wide open to them getting back together again -- if that is what they choose.

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