

## **Anne Barreta**

Anne Barreta was excited but scared when she became the first woman and the first Hispanic American ever promoted to district marketing manager at the Hillcrest Corporation. She knew she could do the job, but she expected to be under a microscope. Her boss, Steve Carter, was very supportive. Others were less enthusiastic—like the coworker who smiled as he patted her on the shoulder and said, “Congratulations! I just wish I was an affirmative action candidate.”

Anne was responsible for one of two districts in the same city. Her counterpart in the other district, Harry Reynolds, was 25 years older and had been with Hillcrest 20 years longer. Some said that the term “good old boy” could have been invented to describe Harry. Usually genial, he had a temper that “flared quickly when someone got in his way. Anne tried to maintain a positive and professional relationship but often found Harry to be condescending and arrogant.

Things came to a head one afternoon as Anne, Harry, and their immediate subordinates were discussing marketing plans. Anne and Harry were disagreeing politely. Mark, one of Anne’s subordinates, tried to support her views, but Harry kept cutting him off. Anne saw Mark’s frustration building, but she was still surprised when he angrily told Harry, “If you’d listen to anyone besides yourself and think a little before you open your mouth, we’d make a lot more progress.” With barely controlled fury, Harry declared that “this meeting is adjourned” and stormed out.

A day later, Harry phoned to demand that Anne fire Mark. Anne tried to reason with him, but Harry was adamant. Worried about the fallout, Anne talked to Steve, their mutual boss. He agreed that firing Mark was too drastic but suggested a reprimand. Anne agreed and informed Harry. He again became angry and shouted, “If you want to get along in

this company, you'd better fire that guy!" Anne calmly replied that Mark reported to her. Harry's initial words were, "You'll regret this!"

Three months later, Steve called Anne to a private meeting. "I just learned," he said, "that someone's been spreading a rumor that I promoted you because you and I are having an affair." Anne was stunned by a jumble of feelings—confusion, rage, surprise, shame. She groped for words, but none came.

"It's crazy, I know," Steve continued. "But the company hired a private detective to check it out. Of course, they didn't find anything. So, they're dropping it. But some of the damage is already done. I can't prove it, but I'm pretty sure who's behind it."

"Harry?" Anne asked. "Who else?"