Where Do I Know You From?

By AmandaJilling

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What happens when a stolen nude photo of her ends up online.

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Once, as a joke, a female friend took a picture of me with a digital camera as I stood naked in her bathroom after a shower. We laughed about it and forgot its existence.

Several years later, while I was doing some shopping at our local mall, I noticed a man seated on one of the benches staring at me as I browsed through the discount bin in front of the bookstore. He alternated between looking at me and focusing on his smart phone; he seemed to be searching for something.

I'm not a beauty. Average, really. And, being in my middle forties, my body had begun to show the effects of gravity. I didn't generally attract much attention. So to have this man, who seemed average himself, covertly studying my face and figure, made me curious. And a little frightened.

All at once his demeanor changed. He sat back, nodded his head, and tapped the screen of his smart phone.

I went into the store to pay for the books I'd found and in the process almost forgot about him. When I came out I did notice he was no longer sitting on the bench.

About half an hour later, as I sat in the food court eating my lunch, he approached my table with his smart phone in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other.

"Would it be all right if I joined you?" he said.

I hesitated, looked around, and then made a gesture of permission. There were enough people that I didn't think things could get too out of hand.

"I thought I knew you from somewhere," he said after he sat down. He took a sip of his coffee.

I stared at his face trying to make his features fit into the lines of someone I recognized.

"No, no," he said, "you wouldn't know me. I saw your picture."

"My picture?" I said.

"Yeah," he said, "online."

"Online?" I said. "I don't have any pictures online." I stopped. "Except for Facebook."

"No," he said, "It wasn't Facebook. Definitely not Facebook."

Something about the way he said it made me think that he was thinking I would understand. I didn't have a clue. I just looked at him.

"Aah," he said. He frowned. His body jerked as if he were about to get up and then he relaxed. "It's a nude photo," he said.

I stared at him, my mind blank. And then I started to get angry.

"What kind of crap is this?" I said. "Do you get some kind of perverse thrill out of doing this to women? Jesus."

He held up his smart phone. There I was in all my average middle-aged glory; droopy boobs and all. The moment I saw it I remembered although I couldn't fathom how it had gotten into his possession. He put his phone down, careful not to let anyone else see the image.

I was stunned. And apprehensive.

"What do you want?" I said.

"I don't want anything," he said. "Well, I don't want to do anything to hurt you."

"Why do you have my picture?" I said.

For the first time he seemed unsure of himself. He looked down at his coffee.

"I like to look at naked women," he said in a voice I could barely hear. "I love the Internet." He perked up a little. "I've gotten into putting pictures of women who are supposedly local on my phone. You're the first one I've ever actually seen."

I shook my head. The whole situation seemed bizarre to me but he appeared to be harmless. A pervert, but harmless.

"Okay," I said, "you've seen me. Can we wrap this up now?"

He slumped down again.

"I'd like to take pictures of you," he said in that barely audible voice.

"Nude ones, I suppose," I said.

"Yes," he said.

"I don't think so," I said.

He gathered himself and looked into my eyes. "I know you think I'm a weirdo," he said. "And I don't blame you. I suppose I am. But I do love to see women naked. And I would like to see you naked and take pictures of you. My wife," he stopped, looked down at his coffee for several long seconds, and sighed, "my wife doesn't like to be naked. She definitely won't let me take pictures of her. I thought because you'd put your picture on the Internet you'd be willing."

"I didn't put that picture on the Internet," I said, "I don't know who did. I can't believe the woman who took it would have."

"Okay," he said, "I'm sorry." I had the impression that he was about to get up.

"Why would you want to take pictures of me anyway?" I said. "I'm just your average middle-aged housewife."

"Oh, but that's what I like," he said, "real women with lived in bodies."

"You're kidding," I said.

"No," he said.

"Why don't you go to strip clubs?" I said. "You could see naked women there."

A look of repugnance flashed across his face. "I hate strip clubs," he said. "It's based on men's

fantasies, it's a caricature. I hate Playboy for the same reason."

"I thought all men liked Playboy," I said.

"No, they don't," he said.

"You'd rather look at my saggy old body," I said, "than at some fresh perky young thing?"

"Yes," he said. "I would. I like your body. I like that you don't shave, well, not completely."

"Only down there," I said, "I shave my armpits and legs." I was feeling that the conversation had suddenly gone off the tracks; here we were discussing my pubic region.

"Will you think about it?" he said.

I looked at his face. He had a florid complexion with a scattering of freckles. His eyes were light blue and his hair was dirty blond with traces of grey. He met my eyes and smiled tentatively. I didn't see any ill-intent or obsession, only a boyish look of fragile hopefulness.

"I'm an idiot," I said, "but okay."

"Okay what?" he said.

"Okay I'll get naked for you," I said.

He tried to hide his exhilaration but it was obvious."When?" he said.

"We'd better do it now or I'll never work up the courage again," I said.

He frowned with concentration. "Okay. Okay," he said, "there's a motel not far from here, on Lansing. The Dover Inn or something."

"I know it," I said.

"I'll get a room and meet you there, okay?" he said.

"Now hold on," I said, "let's get this straight. This is only about photographs. No sex. Right?"

"Right," he said. "Oh God, this is great. Thank you."

"You're welcome," I said. "I'm going to stop for some wine coolers. I don't think I can do this completely sober. So I might be a little while."

"Okay," he said. "I'll meet you there." He turned several times on his way out as if to convince himself that I wasn't some phantom out of a hallucination.

I gathered my things and followed a ways behind him.

I sat in my car for several minutes before turning on the ignition. Alone, honestly examining my feelings, I had to admit that I found the idea arousing, more because this was so unlike me, so unlike the routine of my life, than because of any sexual urge. Within a short time I would be revealing myself to a stranger in a way that only my husband and a few old boyfriends had seen. In person, that is. The photo that had started this had revealed me to untold numbers. I wondered what he would want me to do, what poses he would ask for. I realized then that I didn't even know his name. I shook my head and then covered my face with my hands. And then I started the car.

I got the wine coolers at a quick mart and drove to the motel. I decided to park on a side street on the off chance that my husband would drive by and see my car. Very unlikely but I didn't want to be sorry. I grabbed the coolers and my purse and walked down to the motel.

"Oh God, I thought you weren't going to come," he said. He had a camera case hanging from one shoulder and a laptop bag hanging from the other.

"What's your name?" I said. "I realized I don't know your name. I'm Clara."

"Roger," he said, "my name's Roger." We shifted our burdens and awkwardly shook hands.

"Well, this is the room," he said, stuffing the card in his left hand into the slot. The light turned green and he pushed the door open. It was a standard motel setup with two beds, a dresser, a small table, and two chairs.

"I need to use the restroom," I said. I pulled one of the coolers out of the carton and went into the bathroom, closing the door. I put the bottle against my forehead and looked at myself in the mirror. Then I twisted the top off, threw it in the waste basket, and drank most of the contents. I sat down on the lid of the toilet. After a moment I took a deep breath, emptied the bottle, sent it to join the cap, and struggled to my feet. With a wry look at myself in the mirror I opened the door and walked out.

Roger had set up his camera on a tripod and was now sitting at the table working on his computer.

He looked up and smiled uncertainly. I pulled another cooler out of the carton and sat down in the chair on the opposite side of the table.

"What now?" I said.

"Are you ready?" he said.

"As ready as I'll ever be," I said and started to unzip my jeans.

"Wait," he said and got up to go to his camera. "I love these digital cameras; you can take pictures as long as you've got memory." He turned the camera on. "And once you've bought a camera and memory it doesn't cost a thing." He took a picture. "I'm going to start taking candid shots, get you used to my being here, and as soon as you feel more comfortable you can start taking your clothes off." He took another picture.

At first I felt awkward and self-conscious but slowly, as he continued to take picture after picture, I began to relax.

Behind the camera his persona became more confident and expressive. "Nice," he'd say. "Oh, I like that. Move your head a little to your right. You have wonderful eyes."

I felt myself responding, wanting to win his praise. I kicked off my shoes and finished unzipping my jeans. After a moments hesitation I half stood, pushed my jeans down to my ankles, sat back down, and pulled them off my feet.

"Nice panties," he said, "lime green."

I took a sip of my wine cooler, took a deep breath, and pulled my top off. Now all I had on were my bra, my panties, and ankle socks.

"Hmmm," Roger said, "thank you, Clara. You look nice."

I took another sip of my wine cooler and then reached back to unhook my bra.

"Oh," Roger said, "I love your breasts."

Now, my breasts are nothing to write home about. They're on the small side with dark wrinkled areolas. But the sincere appreciation in Roger's voice made me like them better. I reached up and cupped them, pinching the nipples.

"Oh yes," Roger said. "That's nice."

Since I'd gone this far there didn't seem to be any point in holding out any longer. I stood up, pushed my panties down, and stepped out of them.

"You can leave the socks on," Roger said.

I thought of the Randy Newman song "You Can Leave Your Hat On" and laughed.

"Walk around as if you were just hanging out," Roger said.

I walked back towards the bathroom, careful not to touch Roger as I passed, and then stopped in front of the mirror on the dresser.

"Oh yes, the mirror," Roger said, "that's great. I can catch your bottom and pussy at the same time."

His saying "pussy" jarred me a little. It made me feel exposed in a way I hadn't before. I looked down at my reflection and saw a pink hint of my labia through the hair. I took several deep breaths to calm my panic. Roger didn't seem to be aware of my state of mind. And then it passed.

"Why don't you lie down on one of the beds," Roger said several minutes later. "Whatever poses you feel comfortable doing."

I shifted through several rather modest positions.

"Ah," Roger said, "I'd love it if you would spread your legs but I'd understand if you don't want to."

It took me awhile to work up the courage.

"Oh, that's beautiful," Roger said when my knees began moving apart. "Yes, I like that."

The authenticity of his appreciation was working like an aphrodisiac on me. I could see a look of awe in his eyes. At last I was fully open to him.

"Oh my God, Clara, you're so beautiful," he said. "I love your colors. The black of your hair, the pinkness of your vulva, the reddish-brown of your nipples, the pink of your lips, the hazel of your eyes." It was as if he was reciting a dearly loved poem.

I'd been wet for awhile but I could feel myself getting wetter. I slid my hand over my belly and touched myself.

"Oh, Clara," Roger said. "Oh yes."

I fixed my eyes on his and began fingering myself with the sole intent of reaching orgasm. The wonderment I could read in his face spurred me on. His eyes flicked between my crotch and my eyes. He was pressing the button on his camera blindly, taking picture after picture.

I felt it overtake me and clasped my free hand to my mouth, stifling every sound, our eyes still joined. I shuddered. I lifted my butt off the bed and twisted, clenching my hand between my thighs. And then I rolled over on my side and relaxed. I could hear him breathing heavily.

"I think I'm done," I said sometime later. He didn't speak. After a couple of minutes I got up and went into the bathroom. I peed, washed myself, and splashed water on my face. When I emerged he was sitting at his computer again.

"I don't know why I did that," I said.

"It's all right," he said.

I sat down in the chair and finished the wine cooler.

"I wanted to show you one of my favorite sites," he said. "It's all amateurs. Kind of like a porn Facebook. You can friend people and comment on their photos." He swung the laptop around and I was looking at a screen full of photos of naked women and men. Some of them having sex.

"I have a profile on here," he said. "I'd like to put up some of the pictures I took today. With your permission, of course."

"I don't know," I said.

"I understand," he said. "But please think about it."

"Okay," I said.

I looked at the photos. A lot of the women looked pretty average, like me. Others were very fat but seemed to feel comfortable being naked in front of the camera. One of them had her legs spread and was holding her pussy open.

"May I?" I said, indicating that I wanted to change the page.

"Sure," Roger said, "go right ahead."

The next page was more of the same. I was starting to get interested.

"That's my friend Maureen," Roger said coming around behind me and pointing to one of the women.

"You know her?" I said.

"Just online," he said, "on this site. We correspond a little through email."

"Does your wife know about this?" I said.

"No, no," he said. "I'd actually like to share it with her. I've had fantasies about putting her pictures up. But she's made it pretty clear that she's not interested in doing anything like that."

"What do you write Maureen about?" I said.

"Her body, the poses and pictures I like," Roger said. "That's Raven, another one of my friends." He pointed to another woman on the screen. Her body was similar to mine.

"So you'd put my pictures up in the same way that Maureen and Raven have theirs?" I said.

"Yup," he said. "Exactly the same way."

"And people would write comments like they do with theirs?"

"Yup."

I got up and began putting my clothes back on.

"Thank you so much for doing this, Clara," Roger said. "You don't know how much I appreciate this."

"I think I might, a little," I said, pulling on my jeans. "And I want you to know that I had fun too. I didn't think I would but I did."

"I'm glad," Roger said as he packed up his things. "You seemed to."

As I pulled on my top I could feel myself blushing at the thought of my orgasm which, I assumed, he was thinking of too. I left the two wine coolers for the maid and picked up my purse. "Okay," I said, "I'm ready."

We walked out together. "Roger," I said, as he was about to turn towards his car. I briefly put my hand on his cheek. "You're a nice man. And you're not a weirdo; at least I don't think you are. You have my permission to put my pictures up on your profile. In fact I'm going to join that site myself."

"Really?" he said. "Here, I'll write down the URL."

"No," I said, "I remember it. And I'll write you."

"Oh God," Roger said. He looked at me for a moment and then turned quickly and went to his car.

I walked back to mine.

I did what I said I would do. And Roger and I kept in touch. I spent more time on the site than I care to confess. Seven months later Roger and I got together for another picture taking session. This time we did it outdoors. We may do it again.

And I've had two men approach me and say, "Where do I know you from?" The result, however, was very different. But those are stories for another day.

Epilogue:

It was almost two years after this encounter that I learned how the original photograph had made it onto the Internet.

"The fucker put nude pictures of me online," my female friend, the one who'd taken the picture of me, said during a phone conversation some time after she'd moved out of state. "The fucker" was her ex-husband. "Even ones of us having sex," she said, "asshole."

"Ah," I said, "that's how."

"How what?" she said.

"I think he put up that one you took of me too," I said.

"What are you talking about?" she said.

I recounted the details of the afternoon that had ended in my taking a shower at her house until it clicked.

"Oh yeah," she said, "I remember. Yeah, that was his camera. But I thought I deleted that."

"Apparently not," I said.

"Apparently not," she said. "Are you angry?"

"Not at all," I said. "I've had some interesting things happen because of that photo."

And then I told her the story I just told you.