

NUDE AND EXCITING

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

WAITRESS	A helpful woman, young enough to be at ease with technology.
HENRY	An old man trying to start dating again in a world thoroughly changed.
LAURA	A feisty young woman looking for a cheap one-time thrill with, well, pretty much anyone.

SETTING

A modern day restaurant.

(An older man, blond, is sitting nervously at a table in a restaurant, obviously waiting for someone to arrive. He occasionally looks at a smart phone, awkward and unsure that he is using it correctly. A waitress walks up.)

WAITRESS

Would you like another drink?

HENRY

What?

WAITRESS

Another—

HENRY

No, no.

(Waitress starts to leave.)

Wait. Yes.

WAITRESS

Another scotch—

HENRY

No. On second thought, no.

(She just watches him.)

You know what? Yes. On second thought, yes. Scotch and soda. Thanks.

(She makes a note, then starts to walk away.)

Wait! Forget that. On second thought, I really shouldn't.

WAITRESS

I think you're up to the fourth thought now, hon.

HENRY

Forethought? I don't understand.

WAITRESS

Fourth thought. It was a... never mind. *(Looks at him.)* Are you okay, handsome?

HENRY

Sure. Of course. Great. No. Not really. What gave it away?

WAITRESS

Just a hunch.

HENRY

I'm here on a date.

WAITRESS

Uh huh.

HENRY

But she might not be coming.

WAITRESS

Uh huh.

HENRY

But she might just be late.

WAITRESS

Uh huh.

HENRY

She sent me some kind of twit to tell me...

WAITRESS

A twit? Do you mean a tweet?

HENRY

Maybe. You know (*picks up the phone*), where it comes up in a little bubble, but—

WAITRESS

A text?

HENRY

Is that what... Right, right. I knew that.

WAITRESS

And she said that she was either late or not coming? That's... that's different.

HENRY

I don't know! I don't know what it said. I saw the bubble, but I'm so nervous and my hands are kind of shaking, and the phone slipped, and now it's gone and... (*puts the phone back down roughly on the table*). I don't know why they don't give you more time to read the damn things.

WAITRESS

More time?

HENRY

I mean, it's not bad if the phone is locked, because it stays on the screen, but I was using it, and the message comes up for only like two seconds and if you don't read it right away it disappears and then that's it and so when the phone slipped and then I couldn't—

WAITRESS

Wait, whoa, slow down, Lightning.

HENRY

I'm sorry. I'm just really nervous.

WAITRESS

(*Pointing to the phone...*)

May I?

(*Henry gives her the phone. She opens an app.*)

She said she's just running late. Should be here in... (*checks the time...*) any minute now, actually.

HENRY

How...?

WAITRESS

(*Pointing to the face of the phone...*)

This is where you can find all your texts.

HENRY

Oh my god! They're... they're *all* here! Look at this! All of th— I never even saw this one. It's from my daughter, and I never even saw it. (*Turns back to the waitress.*) Thank you!

WAITRESS

No problem. So you want to wait on the drink?

HENRY

Yes. No, wait. No. I... What do you think?

WAITRESS

I think you should wait. You don't want to impinge on that finely-honed mental acuity you've got going on.

HENRY

(Beat.)

I'm a total mess, aren't I?

WAITRESS

Maybe a little.

HENRY

I'm on a date, and it's got me a little flustered.

WAITRESS

No kidding.

HENRY

It's my first date in... well, a lot of decades, and I'm just not quite ready. It's all this... this... technology stuff now. Back in my day, you just met someone and if you liked the look and sound of her then you walked up, pretended that you weren't sweating out an ocean, and asked her out.

WAITRESS

Not this time, though?

HENRY

My daughter had me try this thing called Timber...

WAITRESS

Tinder...

HENRY

So I did. I onloaded a profile using this demon phone—

WAITRESS

Uploaded.

HENRY

And then I got this twit the other day...

WAITRESS

Message.

HENRY

From a woman named Laura who said that she wanted to hook in.

WAITRESS

(Bemused)

Hook in?

(During the next line, a young woman, Laura, enters. She's dressed in an overcoat that gives the sense that she is quite possibly not wearing anything underneath. She looks around, sees Henry.)

HENRY

Or something like that.

LAURA

Henry?

(The waitress looks back and forth between the two of them, a look of mild concern mixed with morbid curiosity emerging on her face. Henry is utterly stunned, and just sits there, blinking in complete disbelief.)

WAITRESS

(Aside to Henry...)

Good luck, handsome.

(Waitress walks away to get a menu as Laura walks up.)

HENRY

Are you Laura?

LAURA

(Seating herself roughly, she shakes her head no.)

Uh-uh. Isabella-tck *(Isabella followed by a clicking sound).*

HENRY

I... I'm sorry. I'm waiting for someone named Laura.

LAURA

It's spelled like that, but it's pronounced Isabella-tck.

HENRY

I don't—

LAURA

My parents really liked the name Laura, so that's what they named me, but there were like seventeen hundred million Lauras born in the same year and I really focus on being unique so I looked it up and there were only twelve people named Isabella and none of them have the *tck* sound at the end so that's what my name is now.

HENRY

But it says Laura in your—

LAURA

Did you know that you can pronounce your name any way you want? Any way at all. And it's *so* much work to get an actual name change. There's like a form and you need to bring your id with you and I went once to do it but I forgot my id and they won't let you just show your cell phone wallet info which is totally 1776 because nowadays your digital you is really so much more the real you then just you, you know?

HENRY

1776?

LAURA

That's when the U.S. was invented.

HENRY

Invented?

LAURA

I know everyone says "founded" but honestly if you read about it the country was founded way earlier than that, but in 1776 they invented this idea of—

HENRY

Right. Right, I see. (*Standing...*) Can I take your coat?

LAURA

(Surprised but not upset...)

Ooh, you're feisty. Jumping right into it like that. And you said you were bland.

HENRY

I what?! I didn't say that! I wouldn't say that, even if it were true.

LAURA

You did.

(She takes out her phone and navigates.)

HENRY

(Muttering to self...)

I mean it may be a little true.

LAURA

Right here. Tall, bland, and...

HENRY

Blond. I said I was blond.

LAURA

Says bland.

HENRY

Well that's a typo. I meant blond.

LAURA

So where you said that you wanted to try things that were nude and exciting...

HENRY

(In shock.)

New! *New* and exciting!

LAURA

(Looking down at her coat, then tightening it a little more.)

I see.

HENRY

Laur-- I mean Isabella, I'm so sorry—

LAURA

Tck.

(Henry stares at her, confused.)

Isabella-tck. Isabella is my python's name.

(The waitress returns, and mid-sentence sees that Henry has been stunned speechless.)

WAITRESS

(Straight through, no pause.)

So are you ready to ord—I'll get you another drink.

(Waitress leaves, and Laura and Henry have a long silence where Laura is waiting for Henry to say something, and Henry doesn't even know where to begin. Finally...)

LAURA

Are you still there?

HENRY

I'm sorry. I'm just... processing. I'm... I wasn't quite ready for this.

(Waitress returns with another scotch and soda for Henry, places it on the table as Laura says...)

LAURA

What, because of Isabella? Are you an ophidiophobe? Cuz that's okay, unless you were thinking we would hook up at my place.

HENRY

(To waitress...)

Hook up! Not *in, up!*

WAITRESS

Yeah, I'd worked it out, Lightning.

(Waitress leaves.)

LAURA

Which is fine, you know. We could maybe go do it in a mattress store or maybe a parking garage. Actually, you know where I always wanted to have sex? On a ferry. Like a boat, not a—

HENRY

Wh-wh-what? What? Wait, what?

LAURA

A ferry. We'd probably want to get in the mood before we get onboard because the ferry rides around here are pretty short, but so long as—

HENRY

I.I.I.I.I. *(moans in desperate confusion, then goes for the drink)*

LAURA

What's the matter? You said you wanted to try just having some fun. No Strings Attached. That's what you wrote in your profile.

(Spits out drink.)

HENRY

What? I said no such thing!

(Laura refers to her phone.)

LAURA

You... said... here it is. Working at NSA.

HENRY

Yes, I work at the National Security Agency.

LAURA

That's not what NSA means.

HENRY

I assure you it is.

LAURA

So are you like a spy or something? That's so cool. I always wanted to hook up with a spy and—

HENRY

I'm a gardener.

LAURA

Is that your cover? That's so sick! So how do you—

HENRY

No. Not a spy. Just a gardener. I'm one of the groundskeepers at the fort.

LAURA

Oh.

HENRY

Right.

LAURA

So not a spy?

HENRY

No. Not a spy.

LAURA

Oh.

HENRY

Sorry.

(Pause. Then...)

LAURA

Do you want to pretend to be a spy for a few hours?

(Lights out)