

REBEL  
IN  
HIGH  
HEELS

**CHARLOTTE LAWS**

TRUE STORY ABOUT THE FEARLESS MOM WHO BATTLED  
– AND DEFEATED – THE KINGPIN OF REVENGE PORN AND  
THE DANGEROUS FORCES OF CONFORMITY

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Rebel in High Heels

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For information about this title or to order other books and/or electronic media, contact the publisher:

Stroud House Publishing

Offices in New York and Anaheim, California.

[StroudHousePublishing.com](http://StroudHousePublishing.com)

[Contact@StroudHousePublishing.com](mailto:Contact@StroudHousePublishing.com)

ISBNs: 978-0-9961335-1-7 (Print)

978-0-9961335-2-4 (eBooks)

Printed in the United States of America

Cover photo by Jeremy Saffer at [www.jeremysaffer.com](http://www.jeremysaffer.com)

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P R E F A C E

# May The Fierce Be With You

HEN IT COMES TO STYLE, format and design, *Rebel in High Heels* is distinctly disobedient. It nuzzles nonconformity and irreverence, ignoring traditional literary structure. It is, in effect, a rebel in a binder.

That which seems incompatible in this book may, in truth, be harmonious. That which appears frivolous may carry great meaning. That which jumps out as humorous and carefree may camouflage deep tragedy and struggle. In other words, *Rebel* is not predictable, and there is a unity that may not be immediately obvious.

The often-outlandish adventures of my teen and young adult years taught me about character, creativity, courage, and confidence. I learned about “character” when I was forced to rely upon my own conscience because the values of my community seemed skewed. I learned about “creativity” when I finagled a date with my longtime celebrity crush and when I sneaked my brother to visit our “brain-damaged” mom against our father’s command to “forget she ever existed.” I learned about “courage” when I crashed ferociously guarded VIP events (i.e., to converse with the President), and when I went toe-to-toe with bullies and racists. Success in all of these areas gave me confidence and a fiercer mindset

which 30 years later, boosted my ability to fight Internet criminals and the online trolls who frolic in hate.



The seeds of my formative years comprise the center of *Rebel*. Cradled and protected in Part II, they are revealed in flashback to Sharon, a woman I have been meeting secretly for 26 years due to a bizarre set of circumstances. These seeds from my iconoclastic—and largely disastrous—youth give rise to the path that I embrace as an adult. How does a child escape, who is battered by tragedy and feels confined inside a gilded prison? How does she develop personal identity and a mission in the world? How does her dissonance with the community of her youth prepare her for a large-scale crusade in support of victims and a fight against prejudice?

Parts I and III of *Rebel* comprise the outer layer of this stylistically postmodern memoir. They detail the ups and downs—including the countless nail-biting experiences and threats to my life—in connection with my recent, public battle against revenge porn and the Internet trolls who revel in victimizing the weak and unsuspecting. I began this war to help my daughter when her private topless photo was hacked and posted on a pernicious website run by a 25-year-old who called himself a “professional life-ruiner.” I soon learned that there were hundreds of other victims who needed my help. When I expanded my efforts, I became known as the Erin Brockovich of revenge porn.



This book is full of battles.

They are often uphill, sometimes treacherous, and usually energizing. They may be important or frivolous. They may make you cry or

laugh. They may teach you a life lesson or not. But they are numerous, and they are always fraught with dragons.

I dedicate this book to my family who has spent the past three years—and counting—tolerating the late-night phone calls from victims, the meetings with legislators that forced me away from the dinner table, and the speeches around the country that whisked me out of town. I had to quit my “day job.” Devoting one’s life to causes is not always a practical choice, but it is indeed a satisfying one.

There are three pronounced themes within this book: (a) perseverance is the key to success; (b) othercentrism (helping others) is the key to happiness; and c) a person is more likely to realize success and happiness if she lives in the bold zone. The bold zone is that area just beyond the “fear zone” and the “lazy zone” where fierceness resides. It requires “showing up,” taking calculated chances, going at life with gusto and becoming an accomplished, caring and relentless force of nature.

It is my hope that this book will embolden and energize readers.  
May the fierce be with you.



P A R T I  
Rebel Against  
Revenge Porn



*“I didn’t realize quite how brave Charlotte Laws is until I see her in action.”*

~ THE GUARDIAN

*“I am glad that Charlotte is sharing her story in writing this book.  
It is important that we educate people about revenge porn and the  
devastating effects on victims.”*

~ SENATOR ANTHONY CANNELLA, CALIFORNIA

*“Charlotte Laws single-handedly dismantled the empire of pure evil that earned  
Hunter Moore the title of ‘Most Hated Man on the Internet.’”*

~ MSNBC

*“Dr. Charlotte Laws became the ‘Erin Brockovich of revenge porn.’”*

~ CBS NEWS

*“One mother’s journey to affect serious change.”*

~ ALTERNATIVE PRESS



*“We know where you live,” a muffled male voice rasped. “Your life will be ruined.”*

## Justified Fear

I had come to feel like Will Smith in *Enemy of the State*. I was being hunted, harassed, and stalked by criminals with technological expertise. I had been thrust into an unexpected war. I felt exposed, vulnerable and alone on the front line. I had awoken a hideous network of villains and saboteurs, who were in pursuit of me, hoping to ruin my life. I had received terrifying emails, backlash on Twitter, and death threats. My computer had been bombarded with viruses, and a technician had advised me to buy all new equipment because the malware was too tough to remove.

“Also, be leery of unusual cars or vans in the neighborhood,” he added.

“Why?” I asked.

“If someone wants to break into your computer network, he will need to be close to your house. That is, unless he has advanced skills. Then, he could gain access from anywhere.”

I hurried home from the hardware store with my all-important purchase: heavy-duty padlocks. I knew I had to secure the gates at my residence, so that an intruder or a team of intruders could not access my backyard and possibly my home.

I pulled into my driveway, glad that the suspicious white car with the young, male driver was no longer present. It had been there on the previous evening, according to my daughter, Kayla. She'd seen it when she returned from work, and she had monitored it for several hours until it disappeared. She did not report the incident to me until the next day.

"Mom, why was there a guy in a white car, watching our house last night?"

Because she had no knowledge of the "be leery of unusual cars or vans" warning from the computer technician, I could not accuse her of paranoia.

I affixed padlocks to the gates. Then the phone rang. It was like a gun. It had become a powerful way to threaten and to terrorize me. It was one of my enemy's weapons. I reluctantly picked up the receiver.

"We know where you live," a muffled male voice rasped. "Your life will be ruined." He hung up.

A caller that morning had told me that I would be raped, tortured, and killed. I glanced out the front window. The night that had once looked innocent and peaceful suddenly seemed ominous. Then I logged onto my computer to see whether the Twitter backlash against me had ceased. It had not. But there was an odd message on my feed, which read, "Please follow me. I need to direct message you."

I did as I was instructed, and the interaction resulted in a bizarre phone call. Just as *Enemy of the State* protagonist, Will Smith, got aid from Gene Hackman—an off-the-grid, former government agent—I was being offered assistance.

"Don't worry. We're going to protect you. We're computer experts," were the first words uttered by a man nicknamed "Jack," who claimed to be an operative with the underground group, Anonymous.

I knew little about the famous, decentralized network of hackers, who are sometimes called "freedom fighters" or digital Robin Hoods, so I conducted Google searches during our half-hour phone conversation.

“Jack” instructed me on how to protect my computer network and explained in detail how he and a buddy planned to electronically go after the man who had been threatening me and who had been urging his devotees to follow suit. He then uttered the name of the person who had become the most well-known online face of revenge porn: Hunter Moore.

“We see Hunter Moore and his followers have been attacking you on Twitter. We will go after him, and we won’t stop until he stops victimizing people,” he said.

I felt better after the call, but wondered if it had been a practical joke. Was this really the notorious group Anonymous or was I being duped? Did I have an ally or would the stalking and emotional harassment escalate into physical violence against my family? I would learn the truth within 24 hours...

## How It All Began

My battle began a year earlier. Think Jordin Sparks music, a knotty-pine bedroom set, flowery pink linens, and my 24-year-old daughter, Kayla—an exotic beauty and actress—emulating poses in fashion magazines. She snapped over a hundred pictures of herself in the mirror with her cell phone, hoping that a few might be compelling enough to send to the *Maxim* magazine modeling recruiter.

Kayla’s boyfriend, Dan, lived far from Los Angeles in New Jersey. They’d met in Israel, during “Birthright,” and their long-distance romance thrived. They nourished it with phone calls, text messages, periodic visits, and social media interaction. Dan was an airline pilot, smart, Jewish and handsome. On the other hand, he was a little too controlling and way too conservative. He complained about Kayla’s occasional, low-cut dress or sexy Halloween costume. She sometimes hid her fashion choices by omitting them from Facebook. Kayla’s daily adventures were detailed

through social media, and if a photo was not there, it meant it did not exist. Except when it came to Dan and racy outfits.

On a now memorialized evening in October 2011, Kayla took those selfies in the mirror. Some were sexy, some were goofy, and as a gag—and for her eyes only—one was topless.

That topless shot would change our lives.

I was on television that night. I had constructed a makeshift TV studio, complete with professional lighting and backdrop, in a corner of our den, where I did a weekly gig, via Skype, as a political commentator on the NBC show, *The Filter*. Three years prior, host and renowned anchor, Fred Roggin, had caught an episode of a public access program I hosted, and he had miraculously invited me to join the NBC show. Being a TV commentator was the realization of a lifelong dream.

I took my job seriously, more so than the other pundits who did not go to the expense or trouble to assemble “production facilities.” Fred and staff liked to call my home “NBC’s West Valley Studio.” When I was on air, I placed a daunting “Do Not Disturb” sign on my front door; it said, “Beware of Mom.” The word “Dog” was crossed out.

Kayla and my husband, Charles, called me “unpleasant to be around” on taping days. They were right. I was stressed, frazzled, driven, and not interested in being sidetracked. The producer typically gave me only two hours to prepare four topics. I felt compelled to come up with jokes, titillating tales, statistics and facts in addition to “my opinion.” I wanted to be informative and entertaining. At the onset, the task never seemed achievable; I always felt like superwoman afterwards. One of my episodes was nominated for an Emmy.

Charles (Kayla’s stepfather)—a witty, British lawyer and Oxford graduate—was on the phone in his home office on “selfie taking” night. He was discussing a bizarre case he’d won which involved grade school students whose mouths had been taped shut by their teacher. It happened

in Barstow, California, and the children were “physically challenged.” One was blind.

Charles is brilliant and twenty years my senior. He knows full Shakespearean plays by heart, and he has memorized countless poems. He knows dates, names and seemingly everything about history and politics. But he is clueless about American culture; he has never heard of Archie Bunker, *The Brady Bunch*, Kourtney Kardashian, *Punk’d*, The Spice Girls or the song, “Pants on the Ground.” A couple of years ago, I had to explain that they make “touchdowns” in football, not “baskets.”

Charles and Kayla have one long-standing complaint about me: I am always too busy. I become obsessed with a goal and refuse to relax. In fact, I am downright *down* on the idea of “down time.” I feel guilty unless I am soaring at the speed of a fighter jet.

So it was not unusual for there to be a mama fighter jet pointed at the nasty world of revenge porn... only three months later.

Revenge porn (RP) is the online distribution of nude and topless photos, without consent, in an effort to humiliate and hurt victims, mostly females. A picture is uploaded by an angry ex-boyfriend or malicious hacker with identifying information about a woman, such as her full name, workplace, social media page, boss’ email address or parents’ phone number. Followers of the RP websites then harass the victim, often forwarding the embarrassing photo to her family members, friends and business contacts. It can lead to a loss of economic and employment opportunities, and it can strain or end a woman’s personal relationships.

The most notorious revenge porn website was *Is Anyone Up?* (IAU), which had an estimated 30 million page views per month. Hunter Moore ran the site. He was an unshaven and scrappy “bad boy” who had been dubbed the “Most Hated Man on the Internet” by the BBC. He did dozens of interviews, calling himself a “professional life-ruiner.” Some media outlets glorified him, giving him big-league headlines and

a platform to spew hatred and misogyny. Hunter bragged about his 600,000 followers on Twitter and said, “All women are sluts... and if someone killed themselves over being on the site do you know how much money I’d make?”



In January 2012, Kayla was in a high-rise on the west side of Los Angeles, auditioning for a G-rated part—or as she put it, “a once in a lifetime role that would launch her career”—while a 23-year-old computer hacker was surreptitiously nabbing her topless shot. He worked at Disneyland, went by the fake name, “Gary Jones”, and had attended high school only two blocks from our house. This was ironic because “Gary” was not targeting our community; he was randomly stealing photos from unsuspecting folks all over the U.S. and then allegedly selling them to Hunter Moore. He began his life of computer crime at age 16, according to his former pal, Annie, who I later interviewed. She and Gary shared a deep friendship—or so she thought—until she found out he was secretly stealing nudes from her computer and sending her anonymous threats.

Anyway, I can imagine Kayla innocently reading the childlike script in the high-rise, while “Gary”—a sleazy, Edward Norton-type—rifled through her emails. At the conclusion of the audition, the casting director pulled Kayla aside and gave her the good news: she would get the part.

But there was bad news waiting for her at home. She could not log into her Facebook or email accounts; her passwords had been changed. Alarmed, she came to me with “Mom, I’ve been hacked.” I told her to alert her credit card companies. It never occurred to either of us that someone might be pilfering photos.

Kayla asked me to call the credit card companies for her, a request that launched us into another mother-daughter battle over Kayla’s

independence or lack thereof. Our conflicts always ended with my charge, “You’re old enough to stand on your own two feet”, and Kayla’s rebuttal, “You’re always too busy. You never do anything for me.” It was routine for Kayla to stomp away and lock herself in her room. Our fights were short-lived. Despite the pain that revenge porn would bring our family, it would have one unexpected benefit: in the end, it would help Kayla transform into an adult.

Nine days following the “hack,” Kayla’s topless photo was uploaded to IAU, along with her personally identifying information: her name, city and social media link. I can envision the scene at Hunter’s parents’ home near Sacramento where the “most hated man” operated his site. I imagine he looked at his tattoos in the mirror, admiring how his skin looked like a graffiti wall, and then shifted his gaze to the gash on his upper arm, recalling when a former sexual conquest—pissed about being drugged, photographed nude, and posted in cyberspace—jumped from a van with her burly brothers and stabbed him with a pen. He regularly bragged about the “pen attack” to reporters, admitting he deserved it. I assume Hunter then wandered over to his computer and clicked on Gary’s email titled “Per Your Request, Bro” to find Kayla’s compromising photo.

Kayla learned about the uploaded picture at her waitress job. She got an urgent phone call from her friend, Katie.

“Kayla, I have to talk to you right now.”

“I’m at work in the middle of my shift. I can’t talk,” Kayla said.

“This is really important,” Katie replied. “You need to take a break.”

Kayla knew Katie would not interrupt her at work unless there was good cause.

“Could someone please cover my tables?” Kayla asked as she headed to the parking lot with the phone.

“You are—” Katie knew the news would devastate Kayla. “You are topless on a website. It’s called Is Anyone Up dot com.”

“What?” Kayla’s voice trembled. She was in disbelief. How was this possible? She had never given a revealing photo to anyone. She was confused; it had to be a mistake.

Kayla searched the website on her iPhone. She found the upsetting photo, along with personally identifying data. She erupted in tears. She felt helpless, exposed, violated, and vulnerable. Who had seen the picture? Would it be saved on strangers’ hard drives? Would it spread to other sites? Kayla was frantic. The world had intruded on her private life.

Kayla stumbled through the rest of her shift, feeling disoriented. She knocked over a glass of water at table 22.

“I’m so sorry... so sorry,” she said, as she wiped the spill, which seeped onto a customer’s shoes.

“It’s okay,” the patron replied. “Are you all right?”

“There was a death in my family,” she mumbled.

During a break, Kayla phoned me and uttered the four words that every mother dreads, “Something horrible happened, Mom.”

“But, don’t tell Charles.”

“Why?” I asked.

“It’s too embarrassing,” she said.

I launched “Operation No Moore.” This was my personal investigation of revenge porn and *Is Anyone Up?*. I resuscitated my skills from the past. I’d once been a detective for Proficiency, a private eye firm in Commerce, California. I’d also handled freelance work. A major studio paid me to find out whether a producer was making porn flicks on the side, and wives hired me to follow their husbands.

I’d never heard about revenge porn prior to Kayla’s call, but for many months after, I would hear about little else. My daughter returned from work that night, distraught and withdrawn, and barricaded herself in her room—behavior that Charles attributed to “an actor’s life of perpetual rejection,” assuming she didn’t get the part.

Shattered, sequestered in her room, and confronted by lewd online comments, Kayla raced to shut down her social media profiles. She was also bombarded by graphic phone calls: from strangers who called her a slut and demanded sex and from a male acquaintance who had saved her image. She turned off her phone and tossed it in the trash. Her reputation had crashed and burned; her world was falling apart.

### “Operation No Moore”

Our family had many sleepless nights after the photo appeared online. Kayla tossed and turned in her bed, while I stayed up, amassing data. I perused Hunter’s online interviews, printed revenge porn articles, jotted down contact information for lawyers and read the nasty comments posted by IAU followers.

Hunter maintained that his victims were sluts, asked to be abused, and deserved to lose their jobs, embarrass their families, and find themselves forever ruined. Below photos on the site, his followers posted crude and misogynistic remarks. Victims were taunted as “fat cows,” “creatures with nasty teeth,” “ugly whores,” “white trash sluts” and “whales.”

One commenter said, “Jesus, someone call Greenpeace and get her back in the water.”

There were naked photos of a legally blind paraplegic, an elderly business owner, a midget, and a mentally incapacitated woman, among others. The website was not about pornography; it was about ridiculing and hurting others.

Charles woke at three a.m. that first night, curious about my whereabouts. He donned his bathrobe and came to my home office, where I quickly concealed my research. Suspicious, he jumped into “trial attorney” mode, interrogating me.

“What are you hiding?”

“What is so important that it can’t wait until morning?”

“Do you realize you have a show in fourteen hours?”

I deflected his questions, adding that I cancelled the TV appearance.

This was completely out-of-character, and Charles joked, “*You* cancelled? What about all those people desperate for your opinion?”

He continued, “You wouldn’t be seeing another man when you have a good-looking chap like me?” I told him to stop being ridiculous and to go back to bed. He obeyed, grumbling to himself.

I *had* to cancel appointments, put work on hold, and ignore routine tasks because a naked image rarely comes off the Internet unless someone becomes obsessed with its removal. RP website operators are consumed with what they do; therefore, anyone who hopes to prevail against them must be equally consumed. I emailed Hunter multiple times, asking him to take down the photo in accordance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. He refused. I was not surprised.

According to his online, TV and newspaper interviews, he threw legal letters in the trash; addressed his followers as “my children,” taking a page from the Charles Manson handbook; and regularly taunted victims, encouraging them to commit suicide. People claimed to be afraid of him. He had no fear of lawsuits, perhaps because he lacked assets. He knew a victim would be unlikely to sue because a civil suit would cost \$60,000 and forever link a woman’s name with the image she hoped to hide. Plus, if she won in court, she’d be unable to collect and feel further exploited.



On the following morning, Charles found me still anchored at my desk, surrounded by papers and absorbed in a call with an attorney. I spoke in a hushed voice when he got close, eventually putting my phone mate on hold.

“Good luck with your appointment,” I said.

Charles, still suspicious, pretended to leave, but actually eavesdropped from behind the doorway. He heard me discussing Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, the law that exempts website operators from civil and criminal penalties. More confused than ever, he left.

Under Section 230, website operators are not deemed “publishers of content,” but merely “platform providers,” giving the public a place to post comments and images (including nonconsensual pornography).

After Charles left for work, I found Kayla in her room.

“Aren’t you supposed to be at work?” I said.

Kayla, still down in the dumps, asked if the photo was still up. I told her that Hunter refused to remove it.

“We need to use Charles’ legal letterhead for leverage,” I suggested. But, Kayla responded, “Absolutely not.”

I rustled Kayla out of bed saying, “It is irresponsible to skip work. It is not what adults do.”

Work was humiliating and agonizing because restaurant employees passed around the now infamous topless shot. They whispered, pointed at Kayla, and giggled, plus a smug assistant manager crowed, “I could get you fired.”

During a break, Kayla clicked on IAU—something she did frequently, hoping the photo would magically be gone—and she found a topless picture of her friend, Susan. She immediately phoned her.

“My husband’s email was hacked,” Susan said.

When Kayla told me about Susan, I realized the media had been all wrong about revenge porn. It was not only about angry ex-lovers. It seemed to be associated with theft, and I wondered if “the most hated man” was linked to a hacking scheme.

Susan had snapped the shot for her newlywed husband, Josh, a semi-famous musician in a semi-famous band. Although Susan and Josh were devastated, they had no plans to confront the situation.

“Lots of people I know were hacked,” Josh told me when I called. “Asking Hunter to remove the photo will just make things worse.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“Word of advice. Stay away from him. I know friends who know him. He’s a scary guy.”

I told Josh I would not stop until Kayla’s photo was down, and I also planned to investigate the hacking since I had proof that both Kayla and Susan had been robbed by “Gary Jones.” He had used the same email address to nab both girls’ shots.

“You’re crazy,” Josh warned. “Do it at your own risk, but don’t mention our names to Hunter under any circumstances.”

Josh and Susan were not the only folks intimidated by Hunter. The Internet was flush with similar sentiments. An individual who claimed to be a victim wrote, “Don’t fight Hunter if you know what’s good for you... I tried to get my pictures down, and now I regret it. I will never go against him again.”

Frankly, I wondered if Hunter was creating fake profiles and posting ominous comments in order to discourage complaints and takedown notices. The climate of fear no doubt helped him maintain control, build a larger base of obedient minions, and keep profits flowing. Plus, he was becoming more and more “Internet famous”; this made him seem untouchable.

## The Threats Began

Hunter was periodically paid to host nightclub parties around the U.S.; the attraction was loud music and alcohol. But, according to photos, online comments and newspaper articles, the gatherings sometimes included drugs, nudity and sex. Some reporters tagged along, witnessing the (periodically illegal) behavior. A *Nightline* cameraman told me that he saw Hunter using cocaine, and a New York reporter informed

me that she watched “the most hated man” have sex in the back seat of a limousine.

Violence was rare; but at a venue in New York, Hunter was arrested for physical assault. He became incensed and attacked someone. There were no major injuries, but Hunter was taken into custody. He was released a few hours later on bail to an outpouring of relief by his toadies. Hunter was their “daddy” during good times and bad.

It was troubling that Hunter had appointed himself “The Father” and named his group “The Family.” It was also troubling that suicidal victims were badgered with vicious posts, such as “Go kill yourself” or “You’re an ugly whore. No one wants you. Die.”

But most troubling were remarks about *murder*.

“I would kill for you, Father” was a post that I saw more than once.

So you can imagine my concern when I sat down at my computer with a cup of hot chocolate and clicked on an anonymous message addressed to me, which read...

“Back off Bitch or ELSE.... Signed The Family”

I had done nothing more than send emails requesting the removal of Kayla’s photo and tweet a revenge porn lawyer asking if he could help me “take down a photo on *Is Anyone Up?*” The Twitter post had been public, so I figured any of Hunter’s followers could have sent me the menacing message.

A feeling of vulnerability washed over my body. I realized Hunter was not my only enemy; there were potentially dozens or thousands. An army of sociopaths could be plotting my demise. My detractors were faceless and unpredictable; they could lunge at me from any angle. Did they live near my home? Were they ex-convicts? Did they own weapons? Did they have anger issues? Maybe Josh was right. Maybe I should have been scared.

Instead, I was angry and not about to let some punk and his toxic followers destroy my daughter’s life.

## Contacting Law Enforcement

Kayla and I went to the Los Angeles Police Department, where we hoped to find sympathy and an eager-to-help attitude. We found neither. A female detective from the cyber-crimes division was more interested in condescending stares and judgmental remarks than taking a report.

*“Why would you take a picture like this if you didn’t want it on the Internet?” the detective blasted Kayla.*

“Why would you take a picture like this if you didn’t want it on the Internet?” the detective blasted Kayla.

Kayla tugged at her baseball cap, so as to partially hide her face. “I wasn’t going to show it to anyone.”

“People blame rape victims,” I said. “You’re doing the same thing right now. This is cyber rape. Would you blame Kayla if she’d taken the photo with a Polaroid and stuck it in her dresser drawer? And then a burglar had broken into the house and stolen it? Or would you do your job and arrest the burglar?”

The detective clearly dubbed us a nuisance. “I will only be looking into the hacking, not anything else. You understand that, right?”

“Of course,” I replied.

When the detective went to fetch forms, I whispered to Kayla, “I’ll call the FBI when we get home.”

The operator at the FBI call center was not condescending or discourteous, but he also did not want to help. He said, “Just file a report online.”

I knew this was code for “we are too busy with other cases and won’t do a darned thing.”

“I see,” I replied sarcastically. “You help Scarlett Johansson when she gets hacked, but you won’t help the average person.” (The actress’ nude picture had recently appeared online.)

The man sighed as if he didn’t have the energy to fight me. “Just a moment. I will transfer you to a detective.”

The FBI told me that three agents would be coming to our house later in the month.

I phoned the LAPD detective to say the FBI would be taking the case and that she could close her file.

“What? The FBI?” she was offended. “You think they’re better than we are?”

I explained that there were multiple victims, and some were probably located outside of Los Angeles.

I spoke to Kayla again about the need to tell Charles. “A legal letter could keep the photo from spreading to other sites.” Kayla reluctantly agreed.

Later that day, Kayla was on set with a dozen actors. She was thrilled about her film debut—and finally able to put on a happy face—but seconds later, her dreams were dashed.

The casting director approached her, “What are you doing here? Didn’t you get my email?”

Kayla shook her head, explaining that her computer was hacked.

“I’m sorry, but this is a children’s film. And we found this... well, this photo of you online.”

Kayla left while actors galloped past her. One stopped. “Hey, where are you going?”

“The casting director says I have the wrong look after all.”

Meanwhile at home, Charles returned from work, once again baffled by my odd behavior. He caught me screaming at the computer in reaction to one of Hunter’s online interviews. When I noticed Charles’ presence, I calmly closed the browser as if nothing was wrong and exited the room, leaving him further perplexed.

That night, supper was uncomfortable, then combative. Everyone ate in awkward silence.

Then, I turned to Charles and said, “We have something to tell you,” but Kayla kicked me under the table, followed by more “quiet dining.”

Finally, Kayla nodded that it was okay for me to spill the beans, but when I did, Charles made light of the situation.

“Is that what this is all about?” Charles laughed. “It’s no big deal. The photo will just go away if you ignore it.”

Kayla burst into tears and ran to her room. “I knew we shouldn’t have told him.”

“That’s not how the Internet works,” I explained. “You never go online, so you don’t know. Things proliferate. They don’t go away, especially nude pictures.”

I told Charles about the FBI, but he replied, “I think they are just trying to pacify you. They probably won’t take the case.”

“Well, maybe you could help us with a legal letter?” I asked.

Angry, Charles left the table. “I don’t want to get involved.”

Revenge porn was a pack of wolves. It was tearing our family apart. Kayla was withdrawn. Charles was agitated, and I was obsessed. I contacted Hunter Moore’s publicist, his attorney, his hosting company, his Internet Service Provider in France, some of his advertisers, and his mother’s former workplace in the city of Davis, where associates pressed for details about Mrs. Moore’s son and his venomous website. I also registered Kayla’s photo with the U.S. Copyright office and spoke to nine attorneys about copyright law, right to privacy, and options for legal recourse. The consensus was that revenge porn was largely untested in the civil courts, while criminal laws were nonexistent, except in the state of New Jersey. Within days, I became an expert on revenge porn, and it was not long before lawyers were telephoning me for guidance.

My investigation file quickly expanded. The contents included personal data about Hunter and his associates, printouts from his website, copies of relevant articles and reams of information on other involuntary porn stars who were featured on his site. In other words, Kayla and Susan were no longer the only hacked victims. I’d found

others, and I knew it would be difficult for law enforcement to ignore folks from all over the country, who had been violated by the same pair: Moore and Gary Jones.

## Other Victims

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### Jill

*“Please gather your things and go home,” he told her while her five-year-old students watched in wonder.*

Jill was a kindergarten teacher in Kansas. I knew she was going to be posted. Hunter had mentioned it on his Twitter feed—which I had been monitoring—and he asked his followers if they thought she’d get fired. They had responded with the typical landslide of loutish and smutty comments.

An hour later, her photos were visible to the world along with identifying information, including the name of the school where she taught. This was the cue for followers of *Is Anyone Up?* to bombard the principal and school board with Jill’s naked shots and crude remarks, such as “Fire that slut” and “You have a whore teaching your children.”

“Is Jill there?” I said to the school receptionist.

“She’s in class right now.”

“I’d like to leave a message. This is urgent. Please tell her to call me when she gets time.”

While I was leaving my message, the principal had marched into Jill’s classroom and interrupted her lesson.

“Please gather your things and go home,” he told her while five-year-old students watched in wonder.

“Why? I don’t understand.” Jill was confused.

“Please gather your things and go home,” he repeated.

Bewildered, Jill accumulated her belongings, and as she was leaving the building, the receptionist handed her my message.

“Call someone named Charlotte.”

“Charlotte?” She wandered out the door.

School employees, aware of her X-rated pictures, congregated and peered at Jill through the reception area glass.

Jill called me from the parking lot, and I revealed the agonizing news. She became hysterical. “Oh, my God. No. Oh, my God. No.”

I was teary-eyed myself. I could feel each victim’s pain and I could imagine being in their situation. Anyone could be in their situation. It was not their fault. Making calls was depressing, and I felt like a suicide hotline. Yet, in a weird sense, it was satisfying in that I felt I was helping others. Plus, I had experience with the issue, and I could offer advice.

Jill noticed her gawking colleagues.

“They’re staring at me,” she screamed into the phone. “Oh my God, they all know.”

She fumbled for her keys, dropping her purse; contents scattered. Bawling, she quickly refilled the bag and ducked into her car.

“Those photos were private. I don’t understand how anyone got them. Wait... how do I know who you really are? Don’t ever call me again.”

“Hello? Hello?” Jill had hung up.

I placed Jill’s information in my file titled “Unknown” because I didn’t know how her shots got onto IAU. I also had files labeled “Angry Exes,” “Hacked,” and “Self-Submit.” I was sorting victims into categories.

An hour later, Jill phoned me back. She was with her fiancé.

“I’m sorry I hung up. Please help. I have no money for a lawyer. I’m going to lose my job. How did the pictures get on the Internet? I don’t understand. Could it be my ex-boyfriend? Maybe the guy at the computer repair shop?” Jill rambled. “Do you think I was hacked?”

“Maybe. Lots of people were.”

I gave Jill instructions on how to send take-down notices to Google and other search engines in order to de-index her name from the pictures. I told her to beef up her online presence, joining respectable websites so the disturbing pictures wouldn't appear on the first page. I told her to register the photos with the copyright office, and I told her about the FBI investigation.

“Plus, if I get my daughter's picture off the Internet, I will tell you what I did.”

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## **Tory**

Tory lived in Atlanta.

A month prior, she had been sitting on an exam table in her doctor's office. She asked a nurse to photograph her because she wanted to document the healing process. Her post-surgery breasts were bandaged; only her nipples were visible.

The nurse snapped the shot. “I will email it to you later today,”

Soon thereafter, the medical office email was hacked by Gary Jones; and the topless, bandaged image was uploaded to IAU, along with Tory's identifying information, including the name of the store where she worked.

“I'd just had surgery,” Tory weeped into the phone when I called. “How could someone do this to me?”

She and her manager received troubling phone calls. Tory was slammed as a “physical retard” and “ugly stepsister with thrashed boobs.”

Tory quit her job.

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## **Carl**

A nude photo of Carl was uploaded to IAU.

Carl was about to graduate from law school, and he was searching for a job.

“This is really bad timing,” he whispered from a high-rise hallway. “I’m going to be interviewed by a top law firm in ten minutes. If they do a search and find that photo, I’m toast.”

“Do you know how it got on the Internet?” I asked.

“Yeah. My girlfriend’s email was hacked. The hacker is across the country in California. We have the IP address. I’ve sent DMCA notices to Hunter Moore, but he won’t take my picture down.”

Carl forwarded information to me about the hacking, including the IP address, so I could pass it on to the FBI.

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## **Pam**

Pam, an affluent Ohio executive, was normally in control, but that day she felt helpless. She was in crisis mode. She finished up a board meeting, hoping her colleagues would not detect her anguish.

“Cancel my appointments for the rest of the day,” she directed her secretary. “I’m feeling ill.”

She locked herself in her office. Her email box was full of degrading and inappropriate remarks from strangers. Pam was unsure how her nude shots made it to IAU, but she knew her career would be over if anyone found out. She had worked tirelessly to advance in a man’s world, and now she could lose it all.

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## **Tina**

Tina, from northern California, was also a victim. She and a female friend had been documenting weight loss through photos. Some of the shots were topless. Gary Jones had gotten into Tina’s email, nabbed the sexiest pictures, and sent them to Hunter, who posted them.

“I was horrified,” she told me on the phone. “I was at a restaurant, and a total stranger came up to me and said, ‘I’ve seen you naked.’”

Tina had been stalked online, and she was seeing a psychologist because she no longer felt safe in the world. I put her in touch with the FBI.

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## Cathy

Forty-year-old Cathy was divorced, and she feared losing custody of her two children. She had taken extreme measures to dodge the graphic photos depicted beside her name, city and social media links. Cathy had quit her job, changed her phone number, moved to a new town and gone back to using her maiden name. She was freaked out when I located her, because she thought she'd erased all traces of her existence.

"I don't understand how you found me," she bawled into the phone. "If my ex-husband sees the photos, he will petition to take my kids away. I'm gonna lose my kids. What am I going to do? I can't lose my children."

Cathy had not been hacked; her photos had been morphed. In other words, she had never taken a nude shot. Someone had Photoshopped her head with an unknown nude body in highly acrobatic and embarrassing poses. It made Cathy look like a vulgar and veteran porn star.

"I've emailed Hunter Moore twenty times. He knows it isn't me, but he won't take the pictures down," she wailed. "Please help me."

I said I would.

After the call, Charles asked if I wanted to rent an after-dinner movie. I bargained, "I will if you provide a legal letter."

He became furious that he had to bribe me to have fun and that there were headshots of victims all over my desk staring at him.

"Who are these people?" Charles picked up the headshot of Cathy. "You're letting strangers into our home. Stop with this nonsense. You're disrupting our life. You're not a private investigator anymore. That was twenty years ago." He marched away.

I looked out the window and saw Kayla in her "sad spot" in the yard, cuddling the dogs. It hurt me to see her in pain. I joined her and dove into a private conversation about going public. I asked permission to reveal the hacking to the media because they had been reporting that revenge porn was only about disgruntled exes.

“If I go public, you do, too,” I said. “Your name will be out there.”

Although Kayla was concerned that Dan would find out about the photo and break up, she agreed to let me talk to reporters if it could help others.

“I will withhold my identity for as long as I can.”

Kayla asked about the other victims, and I relayed the harrowing tales.

“Some jobs are in jeopardy,” I said. “All worry that friends and family will find out. Some people are suicidal, and I have to jump into the role of crisis counselor.”

I listed some of the other victims: a photography business owner, two real estate agents, a bank executive, a Pizza Hut employee, three actresses, a boutique shop owner, two waitresses, three teachers (including Jill), a Nordstrom manager, a public speaker, a stay-at-home mom, a social worker, a car salesman, a yoga instructor, a college student, a mathematician, a social worker and a police officer’s wife, among others. And then there was an accountant named Mandy.

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## **Mandy**

Mandy was a special victim. If I were Sherlock Holmes, she was my Watson. She was from Iran, had been hacked by Gary Jones, and was as feisty as a tornado.

Under her topless photo, there were posts such as, “I hope she gets stoned to death.”

Although Mandy was Catholic, not Muslim, she had highly religious relatives who would ostracize her for this sort of transgression. Most women in her family dressed like nuns; they considered it sinful to show too much skin. Although Mandy was not expected to don a hijab, burqa, or habit, her family demanded that she wear modest attire. Plus, if news of the photo leaked, she could never return to Iran. It would simply be too dangerous.

Mandy's boss called her into his office.

"Strangers are emailing a topless picture of you to company employees."

"What are you talking about?" she was bewildered.

"Get it off the Internet right now, before a client sees it," he barked.

Shocked, confused, and horrified, Mandy dashed to her computer to search for the humiliating shot. She was all sobs and frantic mouse clicks.

I called her that evening. She was in the midst of conducting robo-Google searches with hopes that the photo had not spread. Her traditional, hijab-wearing sisters and mother—unaware of her situation—were nearby in the kitchen, cooking. Mandy ducked into a private hallway to speak with me.

She whispered into the phone, "Who are you? How did you find me? That photo was stolen. I've sent five emails, but he won't take it down."

A few days later, Mandy's dad said, "We have to visit your grandpa. He's dying."

Mandy—terrified because a topless picture in Iran can mean death—launched into every excuse in the book.

"I can't get off work."

"I think I have jury duty."

"My passport is expired."

Her dad, a militant patriarch, ignored her song and dance, saying, "You are coming to Iran with us. Period."

Mandy knew she *had* to get her photo down.

"I can't go back while my picture is up," she told me. "It's too dangerous. You have to help me."

She explained how a woman can be killed in parts of the Middle East over minor infractions, such as showing too much skin or holding hands with a man not her husband. Mandy told me about Mina, a female friend, who was nabbed by Iranian officials after holding hands with a male acquaintance. She was tortured in jail and killed.

“The authorities didn’t initially tell her family the truth. Her relatives got the run-around. They went to visit Mina after her arrest, but were told she was transferred to different prison. The family went there. Then the authorities said she was sent to yet another prison. They went there, but nothing. This happened again and again... until her family gave up. The authorities did not want to reveal the truth... that she had been dead for years.”

Although Mandy had never been a private eye, she was very smart. She knew how to finagle information, find clues, look outside of the box, and compile information for “Operation No Moore.” Although she was afraid of “the most hated man on the Internet,” she worked tirelessly behind the scenes, helping me to compile evidence for the FBI.

“Is that Mandy again?” Charles stood at my home office doorway, watching me on the phone.

“Mandy? I’m not sure who you’re talking about,” I joked, but he knew it was her because it was *always* her.

“I’ve decided this is a worthy cause,” Charles continued. “I will help you get Kayla’s picture off the Internet. I will write a legal letter.”

“Thank you,” I jumped up and gave him a hug, glad that we now had a top lawyer on our team.

“Not all victims are so lucky,” he added, “to have an ex-private detective for a mother and an attorney for a stepfather. Hunter Moore will regret the day he messed with Kayla Laws.”

## My Shocking Survey Results

By this time, I had spoken with dozens of victims from around the country, and my findings were astonishing. A full 40 percent of victims had been hacked only days before their photos were loaded onto *Is Anyone Up?* In most cases, the scam began through Facebook and ended when Gary Jones gained access to the victim’s email account. Another 12 percent of my sample group claimed their names and faces

were morphed or posted next to nude bodies that were not theirs; and 36 percent believed they were “revenge porn victims” in the “angry ex-boyfriend sense” (although some of these folks were on good terms with their exes and thought the exes might have been hacked). Lastly, 12 percent of my sample group were “self-submits.” “Self-submits,” of course, are not victims at all; they are individuals who willingly sent their images to Moore. In the end, it was disturbing to realize that over half of the folks from my informal study were either criminally hacked or posted next to body parts that were not theirs.

I wanted to circulate this information, to alert the media and the public; yet I didn’t want my name to be linked. So I went to a resort in Las Vegas (I was on a three-day vacation there), and created a Blogger.com page under the fake name, “Cassie Freedom.” I wrote a post about the suspiciously high percentage of stolen photos that appeared on IAU and published it.

The blog was immediately hacked... clearly by someone who got a Google alert on the phrase “Hunter Moore” or “*Is Anyone Up?*” because I did not advertise the online journal or entry.

Plus, a video virus was planted on the blog; it carried the message: “Hey, Click here.”

The hacker also changed my password for the blog, and the only way to access it again was through the Gmail account tied to it. I suspected this person was trying to ascertain my identity. Gmail accounts identify the IP city at log on. Las Vegas had been listed as the first location. In order to further confuse the hacker, Mandy logged in at a Starbucks in Phoenix. I could imagine Hunter wondering who was in Nevada, and then suddenly... in Arizona.

## An Alliance with Facebook

“Hunter’s back on Facebook,” Mandy revealed. “We need to wait until he gets a few thousand friends, then pow. Kick him off.”

I was in daily contact with a number of victims from *Is Anyone Up?* Although they felt helpless and exploited, they shared a minor joy, a feeling of power that could be exerted at will. We could kick Hunter Moore off Facebook anytime, any moment, regardless of how much effort he expended to compile “friends.” This is because I had created an alliance with the executives at the popular social networking service, a feat which seemed remarkable itself.

I had initially contacted Facebook to request that they fund a civil suit on behalf of victims. They had banned Moore from their site and sent him a legal letter because he had violated their terms of service by linking victims’ photos with Facebook pages. Hunter responded to their letter with a copy of his penis. He had also put a bounty on their lead attorney; in other words, he wanted nude photos of this man. Facebook executives mulled over my “civil lawsuit idea,” but ultimately decided against it, thinking it would lead to a slippery slope in which everyone would ask them to finance lawsuits.

The victims and I repeatedly kicked Hunter off of Facebook. He would sneak on, create a new page and tirelessly build a huge network of friends and followers. We would wait patiently. Then, I would make the all-important phone call and poof, his page would disappear. The victims would phone me, elated. Also, one person from our group knew the CEO of Paypal and got Moore banned from the e-commerce site, hindering his ability to collect donations.

## Serving Moore and Going Undercover

Charles was watching television when I presented the ready-to-be-mailed legal letter, which demanded that Kayla’s photo be removed immediately or face a costly civil suit. Charles reviewed the document and signed.

“Maybe you could talk to Hunter Moore’s attorney? I’ve spoken with him twice, but I don’t think he’s taking me seriously. You could have a conversation lawyer to lawyer.”

Charles shook his head no.

I sent the document certified mail because I knew Hunter was crafty about avoiding service. In fact, I spoke to Ray, a process server who had been hired by a victim. He'd spent 72 hours staking out Hunter's parents' house. When the "most hated" man finally emerged on his way to get pizza, Ray sprang into action.

Hunter was climbing into his car when he noticed Ray and sprinted back to the front door. Ray chased him. Hunter was served.

Mandy also wanted to serve Hunter; and I suggested the perfect place: one of his DJ gigs. I knew it could be costly paying a process server to wait outside of a house, hour after hour, day after day.

Mandy was not affluent, but she'd exhausted her \$10,000 savings account on legal fees because getting her topless photo off the Internet was a priority. Her attorney hired a process server, who handed Moore legal documents at a northern California nightclub where he was hosting a party. Moore became incensed, tearing the papers into shreds and throwing them in the air. Later, he denied being served at all.

"You don't think he saw my name, do you? Do you think he read the paperwork? Oh my Lord, what if he saw my name?" Mandy was terrified.

I called Mandy's process server.

"Hunter was in such a fit of rage, ripping apart the documents," he told me. "I don't think he saw her name."

The process server also said there were club employees who witnessed everything. "So his denials about not getting served don't wash."

Because Mandy was scared that Hunter or one of his cronies would retaliate, she halted further legal action.

Another hacked victim wanted to serve Hunter and asked me to play witness. I agreed to go undercover at his DJ gig in Long Beach, California.



Before and After

“Undercover,” in this case, meant dressing like a freak with pasty white make-up, sunglasses, a black wig, a beatnik beret and a tacky velvet jacket. I looked hideous.

“What do you think?” I asked Kayla, who snapped a photo.

“Don’t let Charles see you. He’ll lock you in the basement,” she said.

“We don’t have a basement.”

“He’ll dig one just for you.”

Suddenly, Charles walked by, catching a glimpse of my crazy attire. He shook his head; he no longer had words.

Hunter’s party was held at a large Long Beach motel where there were bands at various locations on the premises. I climbed out of my car in the darkened parking lot, locked the door and whirled around to find myself face-to-face with my nemesis: Hunter. It was freaky. He was accompanied by three other scene kids.

I locked eyes with Hunter for one brief second. Then he and his friends continued on their way.

I took a deep breath, trying to contain my anxiety, and scurried to an outdoor stairway, monitoring the foursome, who climbed into a