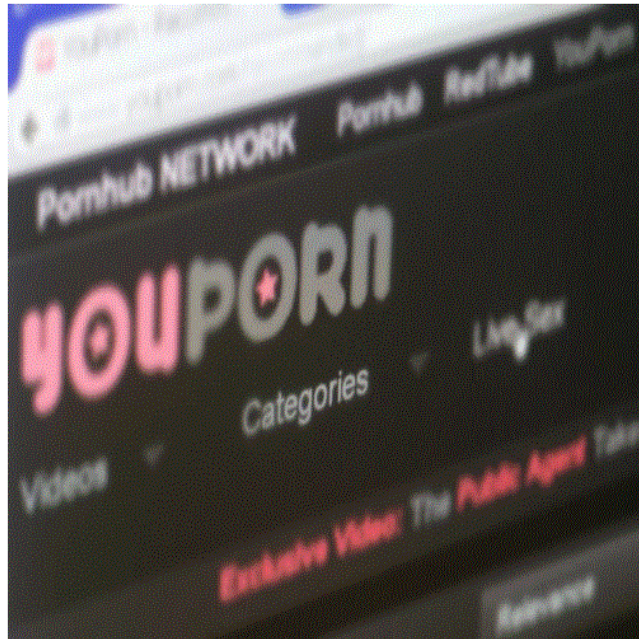

Three Clicks

"His finger hovered. He saw his reflection in the glass of the iPad. There was nothing wrong – not really, really wrong – with where he was now, *was there?* But Jonathan knew he must never go more than three clicks away..."



From "Lunch with Jason King" - Nick Wray's short stories and bedtime tales from the past, present and future of the Digital Age. Includes, 'Three Clicks' (full-version [here](#)) as well as 'Machines for Singing', 'The Beach at Narbonne' and cult-classic 'Lunch with Jason King.'

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Lunch with Jason King



Short stories & bedtime tales from the past, present & future of the Digital Age

by Nick Wray

"Dark & creepy, sexy and funny - a cult classic in the making..."

Three Clicks...

[Please note, contains explicit language and imagery]

He saw his reflection in the glass of the iPad. He wavered. His finger hovering. There was nothing wrong – not really, really wrong – with where he was now, was there? But Jonathan knew he must never go more than three clicks away.

'Ta da!' Their bedroom door burst open.

'Christ, Evie!' Jonathan felled his iPad face-down onto the duvet. He could feel the weight of the tablet through the bedclothes on his beating chest.

Jonathan's wife laughed. 'You look like you're going to have a heart attack... What's up?'

'Just... finishing stuff off for tomorrow. You know, staff appraisals...'

'For once fuck the office and fuck me instead, Jono!' Evelyn pursed her lips playfully. 'Ha! Sounds like the bathroom's free? See you in a minute. And try and switch off – *literally*, please?' she said looking at his iPad. Evie closed the door, humming the tune from a Candy Crush Saga that she'd absorbed from someone's leaky phone on the train ride home.

*

He waited until he heard the shower start, and then undressed the device from his bedclothes. Where to begin? The cold, smeared glass window of his iPad offered up a table d'hôte of just desserts. It groaned with offers of facials and cream pies, solos, duos, tits and cocks. À la carte threesomes, foursomes, *moresomes*: orgies, gangbangs, gangnam style gangbangs – gingham-gangbangs probably, somewhere, he thought smiling to himself. Half sweetshop, half sweatshop, a world of wide-eyed women gobbling, choking, looking startled, stoned, cross, and sometimes, another click away, maybe in pain too? No, that was wrong. He didn't like that. But that was *four clicks* away. He never went there. But where he was, amongst amateurs, secretaries, Old School

French Maids and girls next door; mums, hunns, teens and grannies. Here, amongst the bite-size videos of tens-of-thousands of women all, literally, at his finger-tips, no here he was fine, he thought.

*

'Not bad' she said out loud. Evelyn, pink and soft in the shower, examined herself. No. Not bad at all. Of course, Jonathan would probably like her *dressed* with some Baby Oil. Though he'd never admit that, would he? 'Perv', she said out loud laughing, then choking as hot water gushed into her mouth from the shower as she soaped herself with sweet smelling gel.

'All right Evie?' shouted Jonathan.

'Fine. Just getting in a lather at the prospect...' cringing at her hammy ad lib. She stepped out of the shower. If only Jonathan could relax a bit.

Oil, then? Oil might help. Of course, it wasn't very practical, was it? Jonathan might think of himself as a bit of a *Guardian* reader, she thought, but she was still the one who did nearly all the laundry, wasn't she. And, with oil, you always picked up bits of, of what was it?; like grit, on your skin. No, definitely not oil, then.

It had been a shitty week. All her team's projects were late, again. A deluge of office e-mails, adding to her digital mire of Tweets, links to never-to-be-watched TedTalks, and pointless carbon copied reports which she'd have to keep, fossilising, somewhere on her hard drive.

Breathe she thought... and for a moment she was in the lemon grove, the one they'd walked in on their first holiday together. But the scent of citrus had evaporated from her mind by the time she caught herself thinking about the stink there'd be if she didn't get to grips with the quant- and qual- charts for Friday's presentation: 'The Family in the Digital Age'. Her MD, was flying over from the States, specially, just to hear it. So much for her personal stand on flying long-haul, she thought. How many billions of tons of CO₂ was all that responsible for,

she wondered? Why bother? Evelyn closed her eyes as she brushed the sable hairs on her cheek, stroking blusher gently into her face...

*

An orgy was already unfolding in the bedroom. But it was all right. Wasn't it? He had double-checked? Yes, he *had* selected *Incognito browsing*. Of course, he was only three clicks away, but he couldn't be too careful. With his job. He knew he really needed to look into *anonymous browsing*, Virtual Private Networks, the Dark Web, it was called it, wasn't it he thought as he fingered the button making a smiling secretary come to life on-screen. Admiring the tightness of the white blouse, the black patent heels (what was it about heels?). So corny. He wondered if *any* office still had *secretaries*, these days?

Subject: 'URGENT - Employee Engagement Survey – Sexism in the Workplace' PPT attached.'

Startled, for an instant Jonathan was back in the HR Department as the Gmail alert from his office assistant appeared before floating up off-screen into the ether. What on earth was she doing, his PA, working so late, he wondered?

Then, the woman in the video drew back from his gaze as she bent, 'point-of-view' style, over an office desk, a desk a bit like his, and slowly peeled down her knickers. Looking back at him blankly, performing in the same way as she had for tens of thousands of other men, looping forever, again-and-again, in repeat-after-repeat play. He knew it was just a video, but Jonathan felt a moment of jealousy as the secretary smiled, biting her lower lip in a way he'd never seen anyone do in life. Laughing coquettishly, she sucked on her finger, a red manicured nail disappearing into her mouth for the millionth time. It was harmless. Really. A bit of fun, wasn't it?

A distracting ad came to life. Storyboarding a middle-aged man grasping a young woman's pony tails from behind. A woman young enough to be the man's daughter – which was presumably the point, Jonathan thought, uncomfortably. The girl, the woman, the *actress*, as he told himself,

was flinching in the man's grasp; feigning full-frontal fear. A promise of something stronger, something darker through the door of the animated gif just another clicks away.

'Won't be long.' Evelyn sang from the bathroom.

Jonathan jumped. 'OK.' His voice sounding strained, he thought.

'I hope you're not still on that thing, Jono?'

'No. Well, just checking email. It'll save time tomorrow.'

'Forgot to say, Jono. Your mum called today.'

Over 60s Slappers Need Sex Now demanded another on-screen ad which had appeared, abutting the now moaning secretary...

'What?' For a moment Jonathan couldn't help but see something of his mother's face in the graphic, which leered at him in a weird amalgam of wantonness alloyed with parental disapproval.

Do they? He wondered? 'Do the over 60s really need sex, *now?*'

'What did you just say Jonathan?' Called out Evelyn. He'd spoken out loud without even realising.

'I mean did she? Mum? She phoned? 'Fuck!' Jonathan twisted towards the bedroom door as it burst open. 'Poppy!'

'Nice to see you, too, Dad.'

'You two all right?' Evelyn called out from the bathroom.

'Fine, mum. Just keeping an eye on Dad'

'Good girl, Poppy. Somebody's got to.'

Jonathan, despite all his practice, was still fumbling, unsure if he'd clicked the iPad's 'sleep' switch as Poppy threw herself on the bed next to her dad, wrapping her arms around his neck,

before plucking the headphones from her Dad's ears. Jonathan squirmed as he pushed the virginal white buds into the duvet, trying to smother any moans and squeals which might be coming from the headphones.

'It's late. Why aren't you asleep, Poppy?'

'Bored. Why are you so grouchy, Dad? What you up to?'

'The, the...'

'...the *usual*, eh, Dad?'

'Poppy?'

'*Work?*'

'Yes. Work.' There was a pause. 'So...? How was, how was school?'

'All right.'

'That bad?' The concern in Jonathan's voice was genuine.

'Just because you pay megabucks for it doesn't mean it's any good, Dad.'

'We're trying to do our best for you, Poppy. It's why we both work the way we do.'

'Your choice. I didn't ask to go there.'

'You want to have choices, don't you? To be a professional woman?'

'Like Kim Kardashian? Or Miley Cyrus?'

'Funny. Come on. It's time to go to bed, Poppy. It's late.'

'Yeah. You've said that, Dad.'

'I'm tired. Your mum's tired.'

'Not too tired for mum to tart herself up for you tonight, though, Dad? Oooh, la, la!'

'Poppy...'

'Dad...'

'Yes?'

'...Daa-aaa-ad?'

'What, Poppy?'

'Dad... Mum says I can't stay over at Josh's party at the weekend.'

'We've done this. You are only 14.'

'All the other girls are going.'

'And the boys?'

'God, Dad! You're so old fashioned!'

'I know what men are like, Polly. I used to be one.'

'Dad. It's so unfair. I'll be the only one who isn't going.'

'I'll talk to your mother about it. If – and only if – you go to bed, *now*. It's late. I've still got things to do.' Jonathan said, glancing at his iPad.

'Thanks Dad. Love you.' Poppy planted a kiss on her father's head.

'God Dad! You really need to relax a bit. You are so stiff!', she said as she stroked his face. 'Oh my god, Dad!'

'What? What is it?'

'OMG, Da-ad... You're actually starting to thin a bit, on top. Dis-gus-ting!' Poppy sprang from the bed giggling, turning to stick her tongue out at Jonathan before slamming the door shut as she left the bedroom.

Jonathan looked towards the ceiling then closed his eyes and breathed out deeply as he counted to 10 before easing the iPad up from his abdomen. Two women, frozen on their knees stared up at him wide-eyed, waiting for his command to continue.

'Shit!' Jonathan swore as the door swung open again.

'Forgot. Must show you, Dad. There's this great new Vine, piss-take of that old *Blurred Lines* vid.

'Vine? *Blurred Lines*?'

'Doh Dad! What do you do with your iPad? Robin Thicke? The Inter-web? Hello!' Polly grabbed for the glowing screen in her father's hand.

'No!' Jonathan snatched the screen back from Poppy's small hands. 'I said *I'm working*: Go to bed. Now. It's late.' Jonathan was taken aback by the anger in his own voice.

'*Stress-sie*. All right, I'll use my own! Anyway, hate that pervy PVC case on yours!'

'It's leather actually.'

'It's horrible. Like something out of a fetish shop.' Poppy slammed the door as she left.

'Everything all right, you two?' Evelyn cried from the bathroom.

Jonathan, closed his eyes and breathed deeply again. 'Fine. Yes. Everything's just... fine', before flipping over the screen, again.

'I won't be long, Jono...'

'Take your time. Still finishing off, here'.

Evelyn would be back any minute and he still hadn't really seen anything. *Not really*. Nothing good, anyway. So... *Ratings*, or *Views*...? He scanned the A-Z category menu for a quick fix, not sure what we was really looking for, ...hoping to recognise it when he saw it... ...*Amateur, Anal* (no thank

you!), *Asian* – Shit! He had to finish that Diversity at Work report, too, before the end of the week, immediately wondering what would happen if a trace of his viewing were ever to be discovered at work on his silicon tablet? No, *Asian* certainly wouldn't do... *Big Butts, Blonde, Blow Job, Brunette*, ...that was more like it. Ads screamed at him, now, '*click to see this ass in action*', flesh wobbling as it was pounded at merciless speed. It was tempting – the promises of a quick fix? But those ads were four clicks away. No. He was fine where he was. There'd be something just a scroll away... ...'*College*', the thought reminding him that he needed to Skype his son, soon, to ask how Fresher's Week had gone; ...*Creampie*... he wasn't even going to look that one up, but felt simultaneously hungry and nauseous; *Fantasy*...

*

...Evelyn opened her eyes, her pupils wide, humming that tune to herself, again. *Blurred Lines*, or something, wasn't it? Poppy would know. Evelyn wiped the condensation from the mirror. She hardly recognised herself. Yes. Her makeup looked good. Still got it in you, old girl. God, it must be getting late, she thought, licking her lips, desiccated from another day in the office, another day on another overcrowded train. Lippy? Why not – let's go the *whole hog*? She oinked out loud and then laughed, tasting wax and vanilla, feeling warmth flow through her body as she reddened her lips. Bit of dirty sex never did anyone any harm, did it? Evelyn opened her mouth, struck out her chin, and licked her lips.

*

...something that big would go in, would it, would it...? Jonathan half squirming, half-transfixed couldn't quite believe it. On-screen an anonymous hand held something bulbous. One end a bit like one of their never used rubber wine stoppers, the opposite end moulded into a pink, plasticky pig's tail. A fist poking, prodding the weird hybrid towards another anonymous woman in yet another video, facing away on her haunches. Then, just at the point of entry, the screen froze.

'Poppy! Poppy!' Shouted Jonathan through their adjoining bedroom wall. 'Get off the Internet, now! *Please*. I'm trying to work.' Gagging and spluttering, the iPad displayed weird, broken choreography: grimacing faces and contorted limbs freezing one instant, reanimating then seizing-up, again, into a pink and purple still life. A Francis Bacon rictus, screaming angrily in silence at Jonathan through the window of his iPad.

For a moment he stared at the grotesque portrait then, desperately, stroked at the 'play' icon, coaxing it to fast forward. Trying to scrub the video to the money shot – *money shot*, he'd heard that on a *kid's* TV programme recently. When did that start to happen? Some of the stuff people watched on their tablets on the train, these days, too, he thought. What was wrong with the world, today? At last, a hypnotic pink, spiral looking a bit like, well a pig's tail appeared on screen, signalling that the video was finally starting to buffer again. Turning, teasing, promising 25 lewd images-a-second, libidinous moments queuing obediently for his very own private view...

*

...Stockings? A corset, even? No, Evelyn, thought. Too much of a faff. It was midweek, after all. God, was that the time? She stared at Beauty. The sun bleached blue and pink; the curvy plastic of the oddly busty Sleeping Beauty figurine. The digital clock in its tacky base still, somehow, managing to count out all those years since their first holiday to Florida. A family mascot, a family joke, these days. At least, until Polly grew too old for it.

No, too late in the day for a corset. That could rest a while longer in the bottom drawer, until her Prince Charming demanded it.

'Eyeliner?', she wondered, looking at the clock again. He did like that.

Dirty bastard! She tried to laugh, but realised she was tired.

*

...Jonathan still hadn't seen anything he wanted yet. Not really, he thought. He knew that he couldn't have long now before Evie's return. Jonathan's head was propped up awkwardly on three pillows. Duvet pulled tight under on his chin, iPad held angled away from his chest, but ready to be smothered, face-down, if there were any more interruptions. It was annoying as it meant he didn't have a free-hand. Did he ever have a free hand, these days, he thought?

'Da-dah!' Evelyn flung open the door.

'Fuck!'

'That was the idea...'

'That was quick! You've had a shower?'

'Well, I'm all... wet', she said laughing. 'I thought that I told you. Put that bloody thing away. I want a snog. And I want it *now!*'

That's it. Kill-switch engage for the evening, thought Jonathan, as – without looking – his fingers caressed his iPad's sleep button, this time successfully.

'You *do* work too hard!' Evelyn sat down next to Jonathan, stroking his hair gently as she spoke.

Of course she looked sexy, Jonathan thought. Really sexy... she always did. But it just wasn't, well, *Evelyn* beside him, now. Why couldn't they just cuddle, instead, tonight, he thought? Suddenly, ashamed at the warmth he could feel through her fingers, Jonathan grasped at Evelyn's wrists, angrily pulling her hands away from his face.

'Steady tiger... Hey! Jonathan. Fuck off, *that hurts!* What are you playing at?' Jonathan shocked at his own reaction, let go immediately.

'Sorry, sorry, sorry. It's work, it's... all this...' said Jonathan, pointing to his iPad. 'And you've made such an effort.'

'You make me sound like the Forth Bridge. Not that you ever seem to get up enough steam to come across me...', realising too late, that she'd not managed to say it *sotto voce*.

'Thanks.'

'Sorry Jonathan.'

'...No, I'm sorry. It's just. Polly's still up, isn't she, Evie? And I've been doing all this...'

Jonathan nodded, again, towards the tablet. 'Couldn't we...? Maybe at the weekend..?'

Evelyn got up from his side of the bed. Aware her attempt at a conciliatory smile was already stiffening. As she tightened the belt on her dressing gown Jonathan couldn't help his gaze be drawn back to her nipples, pointing firmly through the silky fabric.

'Um, hello, Jonathan. My face is here! You're definitely not getting a blow job, if that's what you're thinking?'

'I'm not asking for a bloody blow job, Evelyn!' He sounded hurt. 'I'm just tired.'

'Yes, tired yourself out on that bloody thing.' Said Evelyn, gesturing at the iPad. 'Well. Please yourself. Your loss.'

'I said I'm sorry.'

'Forget it.' Evelyn was already wondering whether to change the pillow cases and duvet cover tomorrow or wait until the weekend. And thank goodness she, thought, she'd not bothered with the oil.

'No, I'm really sorry. For everything.' Jonathan sat up and kissed Evelyn on the forehead.

'Forget it, Jonathan. Think I'll read for a bit, though. Anything good you can share from your thing.' Evelyn said with a nod to the iPad.

'Everything on here's probably a bit dull, for you. No Mummy Porn, anyway.'

'Quelle surprise...'

'Meaning?'

'Nothing, Jonathan.'

'Just don't see the attraction myself. Being a bloke and all...'

'Well, I meet the criteria, don't I, Jonathan?'

'For Mummy Porn?'

'Yes, Jonathan.'

'Well. You are a mother?'

'...and a *woman*? Go on. Download some for me? On Kindle. We could read it together?'

'And if someone saw it on here, at work? My battery's nearly flat, anyway.'

'You said it, Jonathan.' But the iPad felt warm, fat, tumescent to Jonathan's hands.

They looked at each other for a moment, pausing, expectantly, hopefully, before the smile-and-kiss of another ritual 'goodnight' took over.

Jonathan turned away from his wife, gently stroking his hand across the metal base of his bedside light, sinking him into a pool of darkness. It was silly, but the way his hand magically stroked the brightness always gave him a comforting feeling, a feeling of being in control, again.

'*A demain.*' said Evelyn

'*A demain.*' said Jonathan, but by now addressing his iPad, as he leant down feeling for its power lead snaking amongst red-eyed transformers glowing in the nest of extension sockets beneath the bed.

*

Evelyn remained upright. Sitting in an island of cool light from her bedside lamp. Looking straight ahead as she thought. After some time had passed she turned towards Jonathan, his back now facing her. His snores yet to kick-in, but he was already breathing deeply in that way of his. A sure sign that he was gone. Jonathan's breath slowed further...

...A few more minutes then, once she was sure... Evelyn pulled her phone from her bedside drawer cradling it against her warm bosom as she looked over, once again, to check that Jonathan was asleep. It was going to be a long night, she thought as she tapped in her PIN. Selecting images from her phone and the cloud; Instagrams, Flickr, picture perfect moments from their last 10 years': beaches, parties, moments of joy, splashing, leaping in the air, holidaying on some forgotten sunny shore. She'd actually been taking her lunch break at work, recently. To curate the images. Admittedly, nipping and tucking a few, here and there. 'Healing' any spots and blemishes, there. And, of course, cropping Jonathan out whenever he appeared. Just a few more and she'd be done...

And as she worked, Jonathan dreamed. A dream of walking down a suburban street, his shoes clicking noisily, as he passed by door after door. Each with ornately lettered, incongruous signs: *...Fetish, Fingering, Funny...*, one side, *Hairy, Handjob, Hunnies...* on the other, on-and-on, as he continued. And in each door a smeared stained-glass window looking onto rooms of writhing pink, plump, living flesh. Moving bodies that he could never quite make out, never quite see, or touch...

*

Meanwhile, as the night wore on, Evelyn, glancing across at Jonathan from time-to-time – pulling up the duvet to keep him warm – felt a frisson...

...*Click* – as one-by-one she read through the dozens of new messages in her DiscreteEroticEncounters account. God, there were so many! Stroking a profile picture, this way or that...

...*Click* – scanning the biogs and likes and peccadilloes of selected visitors to her growing inbox, and...

...*Click* – sometimes coaxing 26 virtual letters, yaying or naying an email, a profile, deeper into her folders to 'flirt'.

But it was late. She opened her bedside drawer to put the device away. Then she paused. She saw her reflection in the glass of the phone. It would be so easy, wouldn't it? Evelyn wavered. Her finger hovering, as she stared at the avatars, her cast, which could be conjured into flesh, only another click away...

'Three Clicks' by Nick Wray

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