

## The Call

I was so aggravated; I couldn't believe he was calling back already. "Nick, I was just walking out the door."

"Babe, you have to come home NOW! There are weird messages on the answering machine." "Do you know someone named Nancy?"

"The only person I know named Nancy is my birth mother and I have never spoken to her."

"That's it; she said something about being your mother..."

The day started pretty much like any other Saturday. It had been a rough week. We were fighting constantly. So I told Nick I was taking the car and going shopping with Michele and I wouldn't be back until late and when I felt like it. After all, it was my car and I just needed a break. I needed to pretend that I had my own life, that I didn't have to answer to someone on where I was, what I was doing, and how long I was going to be doing it.

So, Michele and I went shopping and spent some quality time being friends again. It was just like the old days when I was single. We hit all our old favorite spots. We went to Wal-Mart, the mall, the craft store, the flower shop for candles and finally Burger King. It was great to be out of the house, alone. I felt rejuvenated and like the cob webs had been cleared from my head. I didn't want to go home. But, I knew that soon we had to return to our regular lives with our significant others and that by now mine would be chomping at the bit because we hadn't spoken all day. It was almost 7:00 p.m. and I was going to drop Michele off and get up the courage to go home.

Dennis, Michele's live in boyfriend, wasn't home so Michele's house was nice and quiet. You could hear the hum of the refrigerator and the tiny clicking of her dog's nails on the kitchen floor as he came to greet her. I sat down in the living room in the dark on her couch. I was remembering when there was a time when I couldn't wait to have someone else to spend my life with. I remember envying Michele because she had Dennis and I didn't have anyone. What I was learning or maybe I should say living, was the good old proverb, "*Be careful what you wish for.*"

The ringing of the phone snapped me out of my trip down memory lane. Michele took a peak at the caller id and said, "Bet you can't guess who that is." I groaned and got up to answer the phone. I grabbed the phone that was hanging by the doorway between the kitchen and living room and leaned against the pantry.

"Hello?" Although I knew it was Nick since it was my number on the caller id.

"Hi honey, did you miss me today?"

"Sure did" I responded as I rolled my eyes at Michelle in an exaggerated fashion. "What's up?"

"Well, I was just wondering if you were coming home soon. I thought we could get a movie and some ice cream or something, and I need cigarettes." Of course he needs cigarettes, he always needed cigarettes. I told him I would be home in about an hour or so. Then I spent a few minutes listening to him talk baby talk to convince me to come home sooner. It wasn't so much that he wanted me there; he just didn't like not having control. Right at the moment I had control. Finally, I had control! I had the car, I had the money, and I had me. Maybe I would never go home. But that was stupid because it was my home. He had moved in about four months ago right at Christmas time and it was only the beginning of

April. Boy, you learn a lot when you live with someone. You learn a lot about yourself and the person you think you can't live without. Sometimes the pressure was stifling.

Michele and I carried in her bags and finished unpacking them. We chatted a bit about the old days when we used to watch the television show, *Sisters*, on Saturday nights before we went out. Back when I didn't have to answer to anyone except myself. She was trying to cheer me up by reminding me how it wasn't so long ago that I couldn't wait to see him again much less live with him.

"Remember how you ran from one end of the house to the other when he left that first message?" "I thought you would run right out the front windows you were so excited," she said.

Yeah, I remembered a lot. I remembered how much I loved him the first time I saw him. I often wondered why Joe didn't introduce us sooner. Joe, if it wasn't for Joe, I wouldn't know Nick. Should I thank Joe or blame this entire mess on him? Joe was a friend who camped out at my house sometimes. We had tried to date, but it didn't work out. Nick was Joe's best friend. I heard a lot about him, and then one night we stopped to say hi when we were out for a ride. All Nick did was stick his head in the driver's window and say hi hon. how are you, and I was hooked. I despised the girl he brought to my old apartment and how she treated him when they came to visit. I remembered the 4 hour drive together in my car while Joe and I drove him to Quincy. I remembered how that was the first time he kissed me and I slapped him because I thought I was being unfaithful to Joe. And I remembered how I couldn't breathe when I heard his voice on my answering machine. I was so happy when he moved back to our area. What I didn't want to remember is how he always needed money, and how it was always \$40.00. How I knew he was using drugs and how much I hated to admit that I knew he was using drugs. I also remembered how scary the past week had been and how Nick was bringing out emotions in me that I didn't even know I possessed.

My thoughts were again interrupted by the sound of the phone ringing. It had been less than 20 minutes since I hung up with him.

Michele saw the caller ID and said 'Wow, he sure misses you.'

I responded, 'It's either me or the cigarettes and I am betting on the cigs.' This time I answered the phone by saying "I was just walking out the door".

Nick's voice was anxious and he sounded out of breath on the other end of the phone. "Babe you have to come home NOW! There are weird messages on the answering machine."

"Nick, what do you mean weird messages? And for God's sake take a breath, you sound hysterical."

"Do you know someone named Nancy?"

"No I don't know anyone named Nancy. Can't this wait? I will be home in 15 minutes at the most"

"Trac – think.... are you sure you don't know anyone named Nancy, she left two messages."

I gave it some serious thought before I responded. "Nick, the only person I know named Nancy is my birth mother and I have never spoken to her."

"That's it! She said something about being your mother, oh my God! You have to get home"

The world seemed to stop for a few minutes; I don't think I was breathing. I couldn't form a complete thought. What the hell was he talking about, Nancy? Could it really be THE Nancy? After 32 years

Nancy just popping out of thin air on a Saturday in April. Or, was this just Nick messing around to get me to come home. Nick knew that I was adopted and had never met my mother, but my history after that was too much for him to keep up with.

The floor was spinning, "Babe, listen real close and I will play the messages."

Michele was grilling me from the living room, "What's going on?" "Why can't he wait 15 minutes?"  
"What's the emergency?"

I said, "He said my mother left 2 messages on the answering machine."

"Which mother you have many?"

"Nancy"

Michele stopped dead in her tracks half-way across the room on her way to the bedroom. She knew who Nancy was and she knew that I didn't know where she was and had never met her much less spoken to her.

"WHAT?"

"Shhhhhhh, he's playing the messages for me."

On the other end of the line I heard "Traci, this is going to seem strange, but this is your mother Nancy Urban. I got your number from Ronny and I would like you to call me back. I would like to talk to you. You can call collect if you need to." Then beep and that was it, the message was over. My heart was pounding so hard I thought it would jump right out of my chest. I knew this was THE NANCY because Ronny was my birth father and I knew that he had my number and address. Then I heard the beep again as the next message started to play. I strained against the receiver to hear it. "Traci, this is Nancy again, I am so nervous that I hung up without leaving the number, and you must think I am crazy." I was thinking many things and crazy wasn't one of them. She left her home number and her work number and said that I could call collect if I wanted to. Nick got back on the line to see if I could hear. I said Yes, I heard and under no circumstances was he to erase those messages. I would be right home.

I couldn't even get out the house before Michele's phone rang again. It was Nick.

"Babe – what the hell – now someone named Ronny called – people are crawling out of the woodwork here – hurry up!"

I told him Ronny was my birth father and I would be right home.

That short 15 minute drive seemed endless. There were so many thoughts in my head. It was a miracle that I could even drive. I still wasn't sure I believed any of this. What type of cruel person would play a joke like this? If it was a joke. But wait, it couldn't be a joke because Ronny was calling too. Ronny just didn't call out of the blue without a reason.

I flew into our driveway spewing pebbles everywhere and slamming on the brakes just within a few inches of the porch. My dog, Buddha, a golden lab was going crazy at the door to greet me.

Nick opened the door, "Babe, are you ok"?

I said, "I am fine; play them again." I stood in the middle of our living room, the kitchen clock was ticking, ticking, ticking while the tape rewound. Nick was pacing back and forth commenting how amazing and crazy this all was. It seemed like the tape took hours to rewind. Finally, I heard the messages again, noted the nervousness in her voice and tried to see if there was any connection. I think I expected to sound like her. My mind was full of questions, why did it happen? Where has she been? Do I have siblings? Is she married? Why didn't she try to find me? Nick was talking to me and I didn't even realize it.

"I'm sorry, what did you say?"

"Are you going to call her?"

"Yeah, I guess, what the hell. I might as well see why she picked this day to turn up." I played the messages again and jotted down the number.

Before I decided what to do I remembered that Ronny had called too. I said to Nick, "What did Ronny say?"

"Well, he seemed very excited and wanted to tell you that Nancy had contacted him and she would be calling you and he wants to talk to you first." Of course he does, he wants to make sure his lies are in order before I speak to her, I thought. I walked into the kitchen and grabbed a diet coke out of the frig, a glass and some ice and sat down at our kitchen table. It was cool for April, but I was so clammy. The front of the trailer was all windows, and there was a slight breeze coming through. It was dark outside and you could hear a dog barking near by. Buddha was trying to get his head under the mini blinds so he could check it out. I took Buddha outside and put him on his chain so he wouldn't be so distracting. Nick just stood by the sink and watched me, he looked nervous, like he wished he could do something but wasn't quite sure what to do. He finally spoke, "Do you want something to eat?" Eat? That was the last thing on my mind; my stomach was so full of butterflies that I felt like the diet coke was going to come up. I shook my head no in response.

I stood up with the number and walked to the phone on the wall. I took a deep breathe and started dialing. Someone answered on the other end, a woman. I said "Hi is Nancy there?"

The voice said "This is Nancy."

I wasn't sure where to take it from there so I said, "This is Traci; I got a message from you." With that, I grabbed the notepad and pen that we kept on the refrigerator and sat back down at the table and started to doodle like crazy. Nick sat down across from me and bounced his leg on the floor. I didn't realize it, but I was bouncing my leg too. On the other end of the line, the woman started to tell her story.

"Well, I am your mother, Nancy Lee Urban and I have tried to find you since the day Ronny kidnapped you."

Again, all the thoughts flooded my head at the same time. I didn't know what to ask first. There were so many things I thought of through the years. And now, I was speechless.

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