**Meetings in a Park**

by Dormouse

**Meetings in a Park 1 - The Beginning**

It started for Karen one hot summer night when she was about to go to bed. The curtains to her bedroom were still open, the better to allow a breeze to circulate. She saw a movement across the road. She looked again, and then quickly closed the curtains.

She switched off the light and then went back to the window, opening the curtains just a bit so she could look out without someone outside being able to see her.

Across the road was a park, an expanse of trees and grass around the local river. It was usually deserted at this time of night, although there was no fence round it and anyone could get onto the grass. And there was someone there, standing right at the edge, nearly on the pavement across the road.

This person was clearly illuminated by a nearby street light. And Karen was absolutely sure that that person was totally nude. Naked breasts were clearly visible. There was no pubic hair, but no penis either, so it was definitely a woman. Karen couldn’t quite make out the face, but there seemed to be something familiar about her.

What’s more, this person seemed to be looking directly at her window. She was sure she couldn’t be seen, but she definitely felt like she was being watched. It was eerie. Karen wondered if she should do something: open the window and call out, ask if she was OK. Still the person was staring. Could she engage with this strange naked woman? Was it, even, someone she knew? In her imagination, she concocted a fanciful tale of someone, an old school friend, perhaps, or a friend of her parents, having accidentally locked themselves out of their house and walking naked through the streets to her house in search of help. But if that was so, why didn’t they come across and ring the doorbell? It didn’t look as if they were trying not to be seen. The lamp post saw to that. Anyone going down the street, motorist or pedestrian, would see this person.

Finally, the person turned around and disappeared into the trees. Karen continued watching but she didn’t return.

Karen continued getting ready for bed and thought it was too hot to wear pyjamas, and lay naked on the sheets, too full of adrenalin to be able to sleep. The thought kept going through her head: could I do something like that.

**Meetings in a Park 2 - The First Steps**

*The First Steps*
The next day, Karen found herself on the web researching public nudity.

It was the long summer vacation from university and she had her parents’ house to herself. The idea had been for her to get a summer job but no opportunity had arisen. Her parents had decided to take a long holiday and she volunteered to stay behind and look after the house, but she had been at a loose end since they left. She’d fallen out of contact with most of her old school friends, and those she did still stay in touch with all had summer jobs. None of her university friends lived anywhere near.

So, she had plenty of time to do some research.

It turned out there was plenty of stuff on the internet about public nudity, including whole websites dedicated to the subject, many of them with interesting pictures. As far as she could tell, there were parts of Europe where you couldn’t walk down the street without coming across one or more young women walking naked, pursued by camera teams. And then there were all the fictional stories about women taking their clothes off, or losing their clothes, and having to walk around naked. Again she wondered if she could do that in real life.

She also discovered that being naked in public was not technically illegal in England (although Scotland was a bit different, apparently) but there were conditions. It was complicated.

She made her decision. That night, after the street outside had gone quiet, she found her largest tee-shirt. Then she stripped entirely and put the tee-shirt on. It came down halfway to her knees. She looked at herself in full length mirror. It was impossible to tell she had nothing on underneath. Well, if someone were lying on the ground looking up, and she was standing over them, they’d know, but she didn’t think that would happen. Also, she realised, that if she stood with her arms out wide, you could probably see her breasts through the armholes.

She went out the back door as that didn’t have a deadlock. She could close it and not need a key to get back in. She thought it unlikely that someone would go into the back garden just to check to see if the back door was unlocked whilst she was out. She was glad she lived in a semi, so she could go down the side passage between the houses to get to the street. The road was empty. She crossed it and entered the park.

When she was away from the road, and more importantly, away from the street lights, she took off her shirt and hid it under a bush. She could still see her house through the trees, so theoretically her neighbours, if they were looking out, could possibly see her, but in the dim light they probably wouldn’t recognise her.

She set off to walk down to the river. It had been another hot day and the heat was still coming off the tarmacked path. She had thought about not wearing shoes, but she was now glad she had as the path was painful to bare feet. The cooling air mixed with the rising heat and caressed her naked skin. It felt even better than she’d imagined it would. After weeks of inactivity at home, she felt more alive. One hit from this drug and she was addicted.

As she had expected, the park was deserted at this time of night. But then, she saw a movement in front of her. Her first instinct was to dive for cover, but she told herself that the whole point of this exercise was to work up to being able to walk around naked in front of other people. Anyway, it was probable that the movement was just an animal, a stray cat maybe.

Only it wasn’t. Round the corner in front of her strolled a young woman. A young naked woman. She was sure it was the woman from the previous night. And there was something about her. Karen was sure she knew her from somewhere.

“Hello,” said the newcomer, “I wondered if there’d be anyone else around tonight.”

“Well, it’s a lovely night for it,” said Karen, immediately realising how lame that had been. “Were you here last night? I saw someone from my window last night. Someone naked.”

“I thought someone had seen me. Is that why you’ve come out tonight? Did seeing me inspire you? Is this your first time?”

“I found it intriguing,” answered Karen. “It got me wondering if I could do this, so here I am. Do you do this often?”

“I’ve been doing this for some time now,” she replied. “After a hot day, as the night starts to cool, it’s the best time.”

“Do you ever get caught?”

“You mean, do people see me? Of course it happens. Mostly people either don’t care or have no problem. You’ll see, if you continue doing this.”

“I’m certainly going to try this again,” Karen responded enthusiastically. “Will you be here tomorrow night?”

After leaving her new friend, Karen headed back to where she had left her shirt, but after picking it up decided against putting it back on. As she crossed the road, she was actually disappointed that there were no cars or pedestrians coming along to see her.

**Meetings in a Park 3 - Longer Steps**

Karen didn’t get dressed at all the following day. She had no reason to go anywhere, and she had studying to do for when the new term started at the end of summer. But she also got side-tracked into more investigations into public nudity. She wondered if she could take some photos of herself outside and put them on the net. There seemed to be plenty of photographs around like that.

Two events made her realise how far down the path she had gone. She needed to put some rubbish in the wheelie bin after lunch and she didn’t get dressed to go out. The bin was in the side passage between the houses so she wasn’t actually in the street, but anyone walking past who happened to look in her direction would have seen her. And, indeed, there were people walking along the pavement opposite and in the park. If anyone noticed her, they didn’t advertise the fact.

Then in the middle of the afternoon she got a Skype call from a university friend. She accepted the call without thinking, and she and Isabel were talking for several minutes before her friend exclaimed:

“Whoa, are you topless? As you leant back just then I thought I saw your nipple. I thought you were wearing a tube top at first.”

“Yeah, I’m topless. Bottomless, too. Want to have a look?” And she stood up and stepped back so the camera could capture all of her.

“It seems like a good idea in this heat,” Karen continued. “And besides, I think I’m becoming an exhibitionist.” She went on to describe her actions the previous night and her encounter in the park.

“Wow! Are you going to hang around the house like that next term?” Karen and Isabel had arranged to share a house when they got back to university. Karen hadn’t thought that far ahead with regard to her adventures. The autumn term would certainly be colder than it was currently, and she wasn’t sure how warm the heating would be in their house. She answered with a teasing “maybe”.

That night, she went back to the park. This time, she left all her clothing behind and left the house naked. Then, instead of crossing the road outside the house, she walked along the street towards the centre of town until she came to a set of traffic lights. This was where a main road crossed her street and then went over a bridge over the same river that went through the park. She turned onto the main road and walked towards the bridge.

As she expected, here there were the occasional cars. The first time one went past, she nearly jumped out of her skin. Well, it couldn’t scare the pants of her, she thought. It was anti-climactic that nothing happened. She couldn’t even tell if the occupants of the car had seen her. However, as the next car passed her, one of the occupants shouted at her out of an open window. It sounded like, “Phwoar! Hello darling.” That car didn’t stop, either, but she assumed the occupants of the car approved.

After crossing the river, she turned back into the park. She knew that there was a footbridge back across the river, near to her encounter the previous night. And sure enough, when she crossed the river she saw the other woman sitting on a felled tree. Karen sat down next to her and told her all that had happened that day.

**Meetings in a Park 4 - The Big Decision**

Karen couldn’t stay in the house during the daytime for ever. She needed to buy food. But she was sure that turning up naked at the supermarket would cause problems. However, she remembered she had a bikini somewhere that she had bought for a Mediterranean holiday she’d had with her parents. In the end, her parents considered the bikini too brief to allow her to wear it in public.

And putting it on now and looking at herself in the mirror, Karen could see why. It was at least a size too small. She had trouble fitting the cups over her breasts, and as the top did not have neck or shoulder straps, any violent moves and her breasts would spill out. Just the outfit she needed.

She picked up a bag and put her keys and money in it and headed to the supermarket. Looking around as she neared, she realised she wasn’t being as daring she thought. There were many women shopping in just shorts and bikini tops, and many men were wearing just shorts.

The cold of the air-conditioning hit her as she entered the supermarket. It was that rather than the amount of flesh on display nearly convinced her this had not been a good idea. But nobody said anything except for the girl on the check-out.

“That’s the briefest one I’ve seen all day,” she said. “I think I’ll strip down to a bikini when I get off shift.”

“Funny, I was thinking of taking this off when I leave,” Karen replied. The girl grinned, thinking of Karen walking across the supermarket car park in the nude.

As it happened, she kept it on for the first part of her walk home. Then, as she neared her street, the inevitable happened. The top burst undone and fell on to the pavement. Karen bent over, allowing her breasts to swing like pendulums as she stooped to pick the top up. Then, rather than attempting to put it back on, she stuffed it in with her shopping and walked down the street. A few people looked twice as she walked past, but no-one commented. So, when she was nearly at her house, she loosened the ties on her bottoms and they joined the top in the bag. There were people around and they looked at her, mostly with amusement, as she entered her house.

Karen knew what her next step would have to be, and checking the weather forecast she realised it would have to be the next day. The heatwave was due to break in two days, which would probably mean a day of thunderstorms followed by cold rain. Actually, the forecast was for the temperature to be in the mid-teens, but after several days in the thirties, it would feel cold.

She made her decision.

**Meetings in a Park 5 - The Final Leap**

She had told her new friend of her decision when they met again in the park that night.

“Good for you,” she replied. “Are you nervous?”

“After today, I don’t think I have anything to worry about. I’m more worried about the weather changing tonight and it pouring with rain tomorrow.” And she imagined she felt the start of a cold breeze on her bare skin. Was the weather changing already?

But it was still hot and sunny when she got up the next morning. She stood looking out the window for a few minutes, oblivious to whether anyone could see her bare breasts from the road. After all, they’d be seeing a lot more in a minute.

Despite saying the night before that she wasn’t nervous, the anticipation of what she was about to do gave her butterflies in her stomach. She had trouble eating her breakfast. Finally, it was time.

She was determined to have no lifelines for her walk that day. No bag, even. She had fashioned a sort of purse that could be worn on her wrist. In that, she put her keys, and a banknote and a credit card in case of emergencies. She didn’t even take her mobile phone. The purse was all she was wearing as she went out the front door.

And nothing happened. The sun beat down on her. The occasional passer-by stared at her. She was sure that some of them turned to look as she walked past, but nobody said anything. She felt great.

Instead of heading towards the supermarket she had visited the day before, she headed for the high street. This time of morning, it would be crowded with shoppers. She was hoping to be seen by as many people as possible.

And so she was. In some places, she had to jostle through the crowds, her bare flesh brushing past clothing, or other bare flesh as many men were bare-chested and many women were wearing brief tops and shorts. Nobody complained, nobody tried to grope her. She did hear the occasional call of “Nice outfit!” as she walked past.

Somebody stopped her. Her heart leapt into her throat. Was this woman going to berate her, call her a name? But no.

“Can I take a selfie with you?” the young woman asked.

“Sure,” she replied. Then, the woman whipped off her top, dropped her shorts, and handed her phone to a friend to take the photograph. Now it was Karen’s turn to be surprised, as the newly naked women cuddled up to her. The onlookers cheered them both.

Karen was starting to feel aroused by all this attention, and was almost embarrassed, not by being naked in public, but by being turned on by it. But I’m doing this because I’m enjoying it, she told herself, and tried not to look flustered.

She got to the end of the shopping area and then turned round and walked back the way she came. The woman who’d asked for the photograph hadn’t got dressed. She seemed to be trying to get her friend to strip, too.

**Meetings in a Park 6 - All is Revealed**

When she got to the end of her road and was crossing the main road that went over the river, she saw a familiar figure standing at the edge of the park. It was her friend from her nightly excursions. The cars were going past, apparently totally oblivious to the two naked women at the side of the road. Karen realised that this was the first time she had seen the other in broad daylight. I still don’t know her name, Karen thought, and she definitely looks familiar. Then again, she thought further, maybe I’ve been walking past her for years and just wouldn’t recognise her with her clothes on.

“I did it!” Karen said when she could get close enough to talk without being drowned out by the traffic noise. “I walked all the way along the high street to the end by the church and then walked back again. I didn’t get arrested, I didn’t have abuse shouted at me. Some people cheered me, some ignored me. Someone even stripped off to have a photograph taken with me. It was great.”

“I knew you’d be OK,” said the other. “Come with me. I have something to show you.” She led Karen into the park until they came to the fallen tree they’d sat on during the nights. Her hand reached into the air above the tree and suddenly she had what looked like a laptop computer in her hands. She set it down on the tree and gestured at it. Suddenly, in the air above there was a large three-dimensional moving image. Karen realised it was her, walking along the street just now. She had so many questions.

“That’s incredible! How do you get it so life-like? Where were the cameras? And who are you?”

“The cameras were very small, so nobody noticed them. And I set them up without anyone seeing me. You can do that when you’ve got a time machine.”

Karen’s jaw dropped.

“You’re not from around here, then?”

“Oh, I’m from around here. I just won’t be born for some years yet.”

“A time traveller?” Karen queried. “You’re having me on.” But the images of herself before her was enough to convince her. She was sure technology like that was not available.

“Look around you.”

Karen did so, and realised that it had gone quiet. Although there were people in the park, they didn’t seem to be making a noise. And she realised that nobody was moving. There was a jogger down the path, motionless in mid-stride. A dog was in the air, about to grab a motionless Frisbee hovering above it.

“I didn’t want to be disturbed while I was showing you this. This is much more earth-shattering than two naked women having a chat.”

“So, why are you here, now?”

“I’m a historian, and I’m here doing research on you.”

“On me! I’m not famous.”

“No, but you will be. Your little walk today was one of several that happened, or are going to happen, this year in England, leading to a general acceptance of public nudity. You’re remembered as a pioneer. My name’s Karen, by the way.”

“But my name’s Karen too!”

“I know. I was named after you. That was part of the reason I decided to study you. That, and it’s not often you get to hang out naked with your own great grandmother.”

With that bombshell, she gestured at her machine again and vanished from sight.

Karen was left alone. She was still naked, and the sun was still beating down. People were moving now. She had nothing else to do but walk home. She was sure that she’d never see this other Karen again.

The jogger had continued on towards her and as she passed, she stopped.

“You’ve got the right idea,” said the jogger. And quick as a flash, whipped off her training bra and pulled down her shorts. She then resumed her jog.

Two young sunbathers - perhaps they were secretaries on their lunchbreak - cheered and removed their bikinis. Obviously, Karen was making as much of an impression on the people in the park as she had in the high street.

On her walk home, there were two thoughts going through her mind. Firstly, there was the apparent fact that she was going to have great grandchildren. To do that, she’d need to have grandchildren, and to do that she’d need to have children. She hadn’t thought of motherhood. She was still young, she had her university course to complete, a living to earn. But it would happen, she was now sure.

Secondly, she realised that this whole adventure wouldn’t have started if she hadn’t seen the other Karen standing outside her house all those nights ago. She had read enough science fiction to know all about time paradoxes, but her head hurt just thinking about this. The other Karen had come back from the future to film her walking through town naked, but she’d come back naked and that had inspired this Karen to walk into the park naked.

She left the park and crossed the road towards her house. One of her neighbours was outside as she walked past and stared at her.

“Don’t gawp like that, Mrs Patel,” Karen said. “I’m reliably informed that this is going to be all the fashion some time soon.”

The weather turned the next day, and it was cold and raining, but a local TV news team tracked her down and interviewed her naked outside her house. And there were a few more sunny days before the summer ended. Karen’s period of fame had begun.