



Zoe Quinn

GAMER OF FEAR

What if a stalker had an army?

Zoe Quinn's ex-boyfriend was obsessed with destroying her reputation—
and **thousands of online strangers** were eager to help.

by > **ZACHARY JASON** Photographs by > **Jason Grow**

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The first thing Eron Gjoni said after sitting down across from me at Veggie Galaxy in December was that he would probably violate his gag order if he talked to me. Then he talked for the next three hours, and again and again over the next three months.

Gjoni can be relentless that way. And in others. He maintains incessant eye contact from behind a tangle of dark, wavy hair. He is intensely focused. Just ask Zoe Quinn, the object of his unwanted obsession.

In September 2014, Quinn, 27, appeared in Boston Municipal Court to ask Judge Jonathan Tynes for a restraining order against Gjoni, her ex-boyfriend. In a handwritten affidavit to the court, Quinn tried to explain what had happened over the past month. After their brief romance ended, she noted, Gjoni “wrote and published a long post about my sex life and private dealings to several websites that he knew had a history of harassing me.” Quinn is a video-game designer and, like many women in the business, routinely receives misogynistic threats from strangers. Gjoni, Quinn contended, was aware that his

[Gjoni] had given details to,” she wrote. “My personal info like my home address, phone number, emails, passwords, and those of my family has been widely distributed, alongside nude photos of me, and several of my professional accounts and those of my colleagues have been hacked.”

Quinn understated the facts. The thousands of threats, which she continues to receive daily, terrified her. Tweets such as “Im not only a pedophile, ive raped countless teens, this zoe bitch is my next victim, im coming slut” spoke for themselves. Messages such as “could kill yourself. We don’t need cunts like you in this world” preyed on the common knowledge that Quinn struggled with depression; she’d won acclaim for creating an impressionistic video game called *Depression Quest*. Forced to flee her Dorchester apartment, she spent more than six months hiding in friends’ homes. In her affidavit, Quinn struggled to explain to the judge who was behind these threats: They were anonymous, faceless, and they could be anywhere. “Eron has coached this mob multiple times, made multiple social media accounts to smear my name publicly, and has stoked the fire of this on many occasions and doesn’t seem to be stopping,” Quinn told the court. “I am in fear of him.”

Judge Tynes asked if Quinn had sought help from the police. She had, in fact—numerous times. She told Boston police officers what Gjoni had done, including her allegation that he had turned violent the

find the right words as he scribbled down the conditions of a restraining order against Gjoni, barring him from *posting any further information about Quinn’s personal life online or encouraging* — “What’s the first adjective?” the judge asked. “Something mob—What was the mob?”

“Uh, *hate*,” Quinn replied.

“Hate mob—all right,” said the judge. “I’ll put that in quotations. Good luck, ma’am. So long.”

And now here Gjoni sat before me. Over the past three months, according to Quinn, he had continued to defy Tynes’s order, divulging further details about her personal life and forcing her to return to court in Boston again and again to address his repeated violations. As of April, the court had formally charged him with four.

There’s a haunting resonance to Gjoni’s choice of location for our meeting. This is where he and Quinn first hung out in person: It’s where his obsession with her began. He’s come back to the beginning, and he wants me to know that Quinn is a “hypocrite,” a “compulsive liar,” and an “asshole.”

Gjoni is a highly cerebral, 25-year-old software developer who was recently fired from Massachusetts General Hospital’s robotics lab. He chooses his words deliberately, spending much of our time together describing the month after his breakup with Quinn: how he extracted details from her Facebook, text, and email accounts; how he tracked her movements and shadowed her conversations. The process he described to me sounded as if he were gathering the pieces of a horrible machine, with each component designed to be as damaging to Quinn as possible. Eventually, the machine would have a name: “The Zoe Post,” a 9,425-word screed he published in August.

But before he emptied the contents of Quinn’s private life into the gaping maw of a bloodthirsty Internet, back before he instigated the most vicious online backlash against feminism in a generation, there was a first date. A date that began, not unlike many other 21st-century first dates, on OkCupid. The algorithms spoke: Gjoni and Quinn were a 98 percent match.

NEITHER GJONI NOR QUINN WAS PARTICULARLY good at dating. He’d had a handful of flings in college and she’d had a number of short-term relationships. Both seemed stuck



Eron Gjoni

in adolescence—the types of young adults who tend to burn hot and flame out fast.

Their first date lasted three days. They met one December night at a dive bar in Harvard Square, snuck into Harvard Stadium, stayed over at Gjoni’s apartment in Chelsea, and got breakfast the next morning at Veggie Galaxy before continuing to hang out. Over the next

few weeks, they went to karaoke bars around Boston, talked philosophy, and shared vulnerabilities. Gjoni regarded himself as a talented programmer and enjoyed cuddling and coding with Quinn late into the night. But he treated Quinn’s principled stands on gaming, social justice, and loyalty as if they were the behavior of some exotic creature.

Possessed of a boyish face despite his shaggy beard, Gjoni has brown eyes and a skeletal 6-foot-1 frame, and speaks in a matter-of-fact, deadpan monotone. His friends describe him as “extremely methodical,” “a very intellectual person with semi-decent people skills,” insular, rational, and almost preternaturally calm. Benjamin Hitov, a childhood friend and fellow programmer, told me he once beat Gjoni in the ninja fighter game *Dead or Alive* “100 times in a row, and he didn’t change his expression once.”

Born in Albania, Gjoni migrated to Worcester with his family when he was six to escape the Kosovo War. “Moving here was like a big reset button,” he told me. His mother, who had been an architect, became a convenience-store clerk, and his father, a former legal adviser to the deputy prime minister, worked as what Gjoni calls a “quality-assurance drone.”

Growing up, Gjoni struggled to assimilate, but with a precocious mathematical mind, he found solace in computers. School, he says, was “almost bizarrely easy,” so he dropped out of a computer science program at Worcester State when MGH poached him during his senior year. Eventually, he found a small group of buddies. Still, as his longtime friend Casey Evans told me, Gjoni remains “apprehensive about getting emotionally close to people.” So Evans was shocked by how smitten and affectionate Gjoni was with Quinn when they went on a double date in early 2014. It was one of the few times Gjoni introduced Quinn to his friends. “She came off as very charismatic,” Evans remembers.

Gjoni fell for her hard—maybe too hard, given how brief their relationship was. He began idealizing Quinn as “this perfect ethical thing,” he says, and less as a gifted and flawed woman who battled chronic depression. Quinn often traveled to speak at gaming conferences, and they saw each other at most once a week. After just five months, they broke up. But Gjoni wouldn’t let go.

Months later, his slinking obsession compelled him to write Quinn what he called a “giant” email begging her to get back together with him. (*continued on page 142*)

I didn’t care what the outcome was for Zoe,” said Eron Gjoni after unleashing his hate bomb online.

blog post would result in her being harassed and stalked, and she claimed he had published it in order “to damage my professional reputation as an independent artist.” What’s more, she told the judge, the results had been particularly severe: Since Gjoni’s initial blog post, “I have received numerous death and rape threats from an anonymous mob that

last time they had sex over the summer, just before their breakup, while she was at a conference in San Francisco. Judge Tynes told Quinn he wanted to help, but stumbled to

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Though Gjoni stubbornly suspected Quinn had cheated on him while they were dating, he hoped to salvage their relationship. In a moment of weakness, she gave in and bought him a plane ticket from Boston to come see her in San Francisco, where she was at a games conference. They had enjoyed San Francisco before; just four months earlier, in March, they'd attended the annual Game Developers Conference, where Gjoni sat in the audience while Quinn spoke on a panel about the sexist harassment she'd suffered as a female developer and discussed ways to counter online abuse. But now, supposedly reconnecting, they spent little time together. After flying across the country, Gjoni sequestered himself in a public library and sat hunched over his laptop for an entire day exchanging Facebook messages with Quinn, trying to convince the woman he had idealized to confess to an infidelity that she had repeatedly denied. He demanded that Quinn let him pry into her personal emails and social-media accounts.

The relationship was doomed, but they slept together one last time. Quinn says that's when Gjoni turned violent. Scared and unsure what to do after Gjoni left, she called her friend Bill Zoeker, a video producer, and asked him to rush over. "I could clearly see bruises on her arm, and suddenly the whole situation became very real to me," he says. Though Gjoni denies the incident, Zoeker says, "I've never seen anybody so afraid in my entire life than Zoe in that moment."

Their relationship status: game over. And in any normal universe, that would be that. But Gjoni was just getting started.

On the flight back to Boston, Gjoni began drinking heavily. He'd lost Quinn, but he had gained something else: a simulacrum of their relationship, a complete record, from beginning to end. In some other era, a man like Eron Gjoni would have been forced to reconstruct the details of his obsession from snapshots of memory. Thanks to technology and an increasing culture of surveillance, our every purchase, movement, and keystroke is stored somewhere, recoverable and replicable. Gjoni had already collected enough material on Quinn—personal Facebook messages, texts, and email chats—to fill a bible. What's more, he had an inkling about how to get back at her—how to weaponize the metadata of their relationship. He wouldn't even need to touch her. In fact, he already had the goods to destroy Quinn if he wished. But it wasn't enough. He wanted more.

THE VIDEO-GAMING BUSINESS WAS A bastion of old-fashioned sexism long before Gjoni came along. As the industry grew into a \$100 billion behemoth—rivaling Hollywood, bigger than pop music—it maintained the atmosphere of a teenage boy's basement den, and stayed hostile to women. In 2007 anonymous attackers leaked prominent game developer Kathy Sierra's social security number and sent her death threats, forcing her out of the business. Feminist critic Anita Sarkeesian received rape and death threats in 2012 after launching the video series *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games*, in response to such games as *Grand Theft Auto*, which encourages players to murder prostitutes with impunity. Nina Huntemann, an associate professor of communication and journalism at Suffolk University and the co-organizer of Women in Games Boston, says harassment has become so ingrained in gaming culture that there is a script gamers follow when talking to colleagues online: "You say you're going to murder the men, and sexually violate and *then* murder the women."

Gjoni, a software engineer, had set out to construct a machine to destroy his ex. Every written word Quinn had ever entrusted with him—all of her flirtations, anxieties, professional grudges, and confessions about her family and sex life—would serve as his iron and ore. He scoured their entire text and email history, archiving and organizing Quinn's private information on his laptop and cell phone. Then he typed it all in black and white—minus, of course, the tones in their voices, their laughter and tears, and any context whatsoever.

Of course, Gjoni could have just deleted the document, along with Quinn's phone number and email address, and tried to woo one of the millions of other women on OkCupid or joined any of the roughly 5,000 other dating sites. He could have posted his thoughts on a blog and omitted her name. After several days, though, Gjoni decided to go through with it—after all, he was protected by the First Amendment, right? Gjoni has sometimes claimed that he simply wanted to warn people about his ex-girlfriend. But over the course of several months, he described to me how he painstakingly crafted "The Zoe Post," a post that detonated with ruthless force and efficiency, for maximum pain and harm.

From the start, it seems, Gjoni wanted to make certain that his blog about Quinn would connect with a large base of people

in the gaming community, some of whom he already knew were passionately predisposed to attacking women in the industry.

As Gjoni began to craft "The Zoe Post," his early drafts read like a "really boring, really depressing legal document," he says. He didn't want to merely prove his case; it had to read like a potboiler. So he deliberately punched up the narrative in the voice of a bitter ex-boyfriend, organizing it into seven acts with dramatic titles like "Damage Control" and "The Cum Collage May Not Be Accurate." He ended sections on cliffhangers, and wove in video-game analogies to grab the attention of Quinn's industry colleagues. He was keenly aware of attracting an impressionable readership. "If I can target people who are in the mood to read stories about exes and horrible breakups," he says now, "I will have an audience."

One of the keys to how Gjoni justified the cruelty of "The Zoe Post" to its intended audience was his claim that Quinn slept with five men during and after their brief romance. In retrospect, he thinks one of his most amusing ideas was to paste the Five Guys restaurant logo into his screed: "Now I can't stop mentally referring to her as Burgers and Fries," he wrote. By the time he released the post into the wild, he figured the odds of Quinn's being harassed were 80 percent.

As he wrote, Gjoni kept pressing Quinn for information. About a week after their final breakup in San Francisco, Quinn finally stopped responding to Gjoni's barrage of texts, Facebook messages, emails, and calls. He interpreted this not as a surrender or a retreat from his unwanted advances but instead, paradoxically, as a kind of attack. As he wrote at the time and later posted online, "GOD FUCKING DAMN IT. SHE'S AVOIDED ME EVER SINCE THIS CONVERSATION BECAUSE SHE IS PARANOID I MIGHT GO PUBLIC." From this circular reasoning emerged a twisted justification: By withholding information, Quinn was somehow forcing Gjoni to "go public." Eventually, Gjoni would come to see himself as the victim. "I was panicking at the thought of not publishing ['The Zoe Post']," he told me. "I didn't care what the outcome was for Zoe."

After crafting the post for weeks, Gjoni shared his polished draft with about a dozen friends—mostly female game developers—as well as his mother, and asked them to weigh in on whether he should unleash it. He says about 10 of them gave him the green light.

His mother, he claims, reluctantly approved, but was "very worried that I was going into it overly emotional." One Gjoni friend I spoke with, who wished to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal, said, "I felt it was healthy to get it out there.... What harm would it do to get his feelings out?"

Others who later read the post saw something much more deliberate and malicious. Jesse Singal, an editor at NYMag.com, said it clearly "followed a script" of "these sad, specific ideas that a segment of the gaming community has about women being duplicitous and breaking men's hearts." *Slate's* Arthur Chu told me, "He's an articulate, well-spoken guy who knows how to put together something on the Internet. That's the kind of weapon guys like that have...the 'crazy bitch' story. It's a very potent trope to use.... It's a very nasty, very calculating train of thought, and it worked."

By August 16, Gjoni had assembled his semantic pipe bomb. He first planted it on two video-game sites, Penny Arcade and SomethingAwful, and it quickly found its way to a third, 4chan, whose online communities had a history of harassing women gamers. But moderators at the first two sites deleted it almost immediately. Gjoni had anticipated that might happen, so he moved to Plan B: He posted it himself, on a WordPress blog. Gjoni visited his friend Rachel Martin, a freelance designer, and sat at the edge of her bed as she proofread it one last time to make sure that "The Zoe Post"—which was packed with Quinn's personal information—didn't violate the website's terms of service. At 12:42 a.m., on August 16, Gjoni clicked "publish."

For the next several hours, he sat enrapt by the glowing screen before him, watching the bedlam he'd created explode and explode and explode.

ON A FREEZING-COLD NIGHT IN LATE FEBRUARY, Quinn agreed to meet me for dinner at Van Shabu, a sushi joint in Dorchester. She was in Boston to report Gjoni for yet again violating the restraining order and brought her boyfriend, Alex Lifschitz, a game producer with red hair and black glasses who is shorter and more muscular than Gjoni. Since "The Zoe Post" was released, dozens of journalists and bloggers—from the *New Yorker* to *Wired* to the BBC—have written think pieces about Quinn, but she has given few interviews, saying, "published

information invariably puts me in danger of further attacks."

Quinn and Lifschitz began dating a week before Gjoni published "The Zoe Post." Lifschitz was about to start a job in France, and on a whim, Quinn had decided to join him. The same night Gjoni published, they were saying goodbye to friends at a bar in San Francisco when Quinn's phone began buzzing uncontrollably. Angry emails from strangers flooded her inbox, calling her a "slut" and linking to a blog she'd never seen before. She didn't suspect Gjoni could be capable of such a thing. "I didn't think it was going to be Eron," Quinn told me. "He's a vegan, for fuck's sake." Then again, she adds, "I didn't get to know him well enough to know what he was capable of."

Within minutes, a friend warned Quinn that someone had altered her biography on Wikipedia. It now read, "Died: soon." When the friend deleted it, someone else immediately wrote, "Died: October 13, 2014"—the date of Quinn's next scheduled public appearance. Quinn's friend futilely worked to counter the attacks all night. Strangers sent Photoshopped images of her covered in semen. There were hundreds of tweets demanding she kill herself. They went to bed at 7 a.m., Lifschitz remembers, thinking that maybe it would blow over.

The next day, the real horror began—and it has continued, without pause, every day since. One person wrote, "If I ever see you are doing a pannel [sic] at an event I am going to, I will literally kill you. You are lower than shit and deserve to be hurt, maimed, killed, and finally, graced with my piss on your rotting corpse a thousand times over." Another blasted, "We have to rape Zoe Quinn and take everything from her. We have to ruin her life." Gjoni had been right about the burger quip: Strangers created thousands of Five Guys-themed images—Quinn covered in semen inside the restaurant; French fries arranged to spell "Hi Zoe"—and tweeted thousands of jokes with the hashtag #burgersandfries. Someone hacked into her voice mail and recorded a new message: "Hello, you've reached Five Guys Burgers and Fries." Her social security number and other private information were stolen and broadcast over the Internet. Harassers threatened Quinn's father. They threatened Lifschitz's future employer in France until the company backed off from his job offer. Together, Lifschitz and Quinn decided on a new plan: hide.

Born in 1987 as Chelsea Van Valkenburg,

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Quinn was raised in the backwoods of the Adirondack Mountains. No money, no siblings, no neighborhood, she says, just “running around the woods and beating sticks” and occasionally loafing in her father’s motorcycle shop. When she was 12, Quinn’s dad gave her a used video-game player and she immediately fell in love with the science fiction game *Star Control II*. “I went from having this incredibly tiny world,” she says, “to having this whole other galaxy.”

After high school, Quinn remained at home for six years, periodically suffering from depression and cycling through a series of odd jobs, including stripping, working at a Game-Stop, and singing in dead-end punk bands. At 24, she moved to Toronto on a whim, took a workshop for first-time female game developers, and has been designing and writing independent online games ever since. After she moved to Boston in 2012, Quinn’s depression returned. She locked herself in her room for two weeks, and finished writing and designing a narrative video game that simulates living as a young adult with depression. On Valentine’s Day 2013, she released *Depression Quest*. “And that,” she says, “is when everything completely fucking changed.”

Depression Quest raked in independent game awards and turned Quinn into a minor gaming celebrity. It was also through *Depression Quest* that Quinn first encountered the mob mentality of the gamer community. Since the game’s release, Quinn has tried to save every piece of harassment she’s received to a folder on her desktop titled “Just Another Day at the Office.” Before Gjoni’s post, she had received 16 megabytes of abuse. When she stopped saving threats last December—because she couldn’t keep up with the bombardment—she had 16 *gigabytes*: 1,000 times more.

Lifschitz has never been able to bring himself to read the entire “Zoe Post.” Quinn read it all that first night. “It is domestic abuse that went viral, and it was designed to go viral,” she says. Quinn is embittered by Gjoni’s assertions “that I was somehow this perfect goddess,” calling his fixation on her an “I’m-going-to-wear-your-skin level of creepy.” After all, she points out, “All of my work is about being fucked up, and being a fuckup.”

Though the attacks take place online, the real-world consequences are chilling. Whenever someone at an arcade or a restaurant or on the street asks Quinn, “Do I know you?” she firmly replies, “Nope, you

do not.” She panics, thinking, *Is this one of the people that’s been sending me threats for the last six months? Are they going to tell people where I am?*

On August 18, after the release of “The Zoe Post,” Gjoni worked overtime to make sure readers would keep coming back for more. Stoking the mob, he joined 4chan discussion boards and released additional information online, including Quinn’s supposed location and baseless theories on her sex life. Despite tacking a disclaimer onto his post—“I DO NOT STAND BY THE CURRENT ABUSE AND HARASSMENT OF ZOE QUINN OR FRIENDS. STOP DOING THAT. IT IS NOT IN ANYONE’S BEST INTEREST”—Gjoni taunted Quinn directly over Twitter and claimed online to be acting as a puppet master. When someone tweeted, “eron youre the pope of gamergate why don’t u help us,” he replied, “I am actually doing a lot more than you know in the background.”

In September, after a month of this, Quinn called Gjoni and asked him to stop egging on her harassers. “[He was] completely unrepentant,” she says, and claims he told her, “I did this for your benefit.” Then he tweeted, “Just had a private conversation with Zoe. It was trite, exhausting, and totally in bad faith. Ah the good old days.” That’s when Quinn filed a police report and secured a restraining order.

THE ATTACKS ON QUINN STARTED A WAVE THAT kept on rolling. Within a week of “The Zoe Post,” strangers threatened to kill other women in the industry. Jenn Frank, who wrote for the *Guardian*, ultimately felt forced to quit writing games criticism. In short order, Gjoni’s post had become the basis for a savage online movement that came to be known as GamerGate. GamerGaters cited “The Zoe Post” as evidence that women were ruining the video-game industry’s boys’ club. Attacks fanned out against any woman the mob labeled an “SJW”—short for “social justice warrior”—and GGs began a witch hunt against anyone involved in breaches of so-called ethics in video-game journalism. In October, Anita Sarkeesian canceled an appearance at Utah State University after an anonymous email promised “the deadliest school shooting in American history” if she spoke. The attackers continued to release troves of women’s, and some men’s, private information and coordinated threats for months. A few even “swatted” their victims, tricking police dispatchers into sending SWAT teams

to raid women’s homes.

“GamerGate has ruined my life,” said Brianna Wu, founder of the Boston-based game studio Giant Spacekat. The target of relentless harassment since “The Zoe Post,” Wu was forced to flee her home in Arlington after anonymous attackers leaked her address. Over the past six months, she’s received dozens of death threats, including a YouTube video during which a man wearing a skull mask speaks to the camera: “We’ll stop at nothing to bring back the way it used to be in the 1950s [when] there weren’t any bitches in video games,” the man, wielding a hammer, said, calling for “the death of Brianna Wu.”

The recent explosion of online abuse has exposed the limits of law enforcement’s ability to police the predators and abusers as their behavior migrates online—and as social media amplifies the ability of online harassers to inflict damage on their victims. Wu claims she loses at least a day each week “explaining the Internet” to the police, saying that she’s had to convince numerous officers that Twitter isn’t “just for jokes,” but is in fact her primary means of marketing her business. In February, Wu pulled Giant Spacekat from the

mammoth PAX East conference in Boston after police declined to beef up security, even though she’d shown them death threats she’d received via email and social media.

When Quinn has spoken to police, she says she’s had to print out the threats and explain what a user name is. She regularly hears suggestions that she simply stay offline. “In 2015, that’s like saying, ‘Oh, there’s an angry mob camped outside on your sidewalk, just don’t ever go outside again,’” she says. Quinn also wants to change the vocabulary we use to describe online abuse. “These aren’t trolls,” she says. “And it’s not online bullying. Bullying is something that gets you a pink slip in high school. These are people stalking, sending death threats, trying to get the cops to raid homes. These are criminals.”

So far, police have made no arrests in the cases of Wu, Quinn, or any other woman associated with GamerGate. In December, the FBI confirmed it had an open case on GamerGate abuse, but it hasn’t commented since. In February, Twitter CEO Dick Costolo admitted in a companywide memo, “We suck at dealing with abuse and trolls on the platform and we’ve sucked at it for years.”

Instead, Wu has taken her case to Capitol Hill, meeting with Massachusetts Representative Katherine Clark. In March, Clark urged the Department of Justice to increase its efforts against online abuse. Clark has had her own experience with online harassers, and even *she* has been told by the authorities to just ignore it. “There’s not an understanding yet of how quick and powerful the Internet can be for destructive purposes,” she told me. “We shouldn’t have to wait for the case where someone is killed.”

In response to the harassment, Quinn and Lifschitz have formed Crash Override Network, a free support service offering social workers, lawyers, and security experts to online abuse victims. Since launching in January, they have helped more than 400 clients.

With trepidation, Quinn returned to GDC this past March. She knew some of the 26,000 attendees had harassed her over the past six months—she just didn’t know how many, or which ones. On the third day, with police guarding the auditorium, Quinn took the podium for the second year in a row and detailed the harassment she has suffered. Unlike the previous year, Gjoni was 3,100 miles away.

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THREE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS, GJONI AND Quinn entered a Dorchester courthouse for a private meeting with the clerk magistrate to discuss Gjoni's latest violations. Among the numerous items on the docket were accusations that Gjoni had posted a message of support to Quinn's harassers and given an interview to a podcast, during which he claimed *he* was the one who suffered emotional abuse, but then discussed how he used Twitter to reveal that Quinn was dating Lifschitz. When they reemerged 20 minutes later, the clerk

had dismissed all the violations except the podcast, which the court will decide on at a later date. Wearing a wrinkled oxford and skinny jeans, Gjoni smiled for the first time since we'd met.

Quinn was solemn. She felt helpless and frustrated with the legal system, as "yet another person who doesn't get my world was deciding my fate."

The restraining order, which still stands, requires Gjoni to remain 150 yards away from Quinn, so he peered out the courthouse

window, waiting for her and Lifschitz's cab to peel away toward the airport, where they'd be off to another undisclosed location. Gjoni has attended enough arraignments and magistrate hearings here to know that the Spanish market across the street will store his cell phone while he's in court. Outside, he lit a cigarette and opened his phone to check the balance of his legal account, crowdfunded by Quinn's attackers and First Amendment advocates. To date they have donated some \$13,000.

Despite losing his job at MGH amid the backlash in September, he happily spends his days coding in a coffee shop, building an animation program called A Gifted Apprentice. His friend Benjamin Hitov said, "The funny thing is, he's done so much better with girls since that blog." Gjoni even has a new girlfriend now. "All of it has very much been worth it," he tells me. "I was very uneasy about putting in the Burgers and Fries thing. But it *is* hilarious."

Gjoni knows that talking to any media outlet, including this one, could land him in jail. But he is also cognizant of reforming his image. In October, he tweeted an apology to Wu—though that hasn't stopped strangers from continuing to send Wu an onslaught of death threats.

Gjoni, however, has no plans to apologize to Quinn. In fact, he has something else in mind.

Over the past several months, Gjoni has been working on a sequel to "The Zoe Post." When I spoke to him in February, he had created a quick-and-dirty follow-up, which he described as "a full unminced explanation of why" he wrote the original, perhaps packed with even more of Quinn's private information, and God knows what else. He was worried that he'd get thrown in jail for violating the restraining order, and so had set the sequel, like a time bomb, "to auto-publish if I don't disable it 24 hours after any court date."

When I emailed him recently, Gjoni said he'd been having second thoughts. "I don't know that I'll publish it anymore," he wrote. "I'm finding it increasingly difficult to be concerned about people who think I'm a monster. Which is wrong of me, I know. But the last eight months have been taxing. I just want to code, and hang out with my friends and my girlfriend, and I guess just hope people figure it out on their own."

Still, he wishes he'd put even more detail into "The Zoe Post." "I was too much of a wuss," he wrote, "to not say everything I should have said." □