



**ERIC
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Jarrood wants to be your friend

If you're on Facebook, you've probably gotten a friend request or message from an old high school classmate you didn't quite remember.

For one woman, that experience turned into a yearlong nightmare.

Out of the blue, Jarrood Ramos, who lives in Laurel, wrote and thanked her for being the only person ever to say hello or be nice to him in school.

She didn't remember him, so he sent pictures. She Googled him, found a yearbook and realized they apparently did go to Arundel High together.

He was having some problems, so she wrote back and tried to help, suggesting a counseling center.

"I just thought I was being friendly," she said.

That sparked months of emails in which Ramos alternately asked for help, called her vulgar names and told her to kill herself. He emailed her company and tried to get her fired. She stopped writing back and told him to stop, but he continued.

When she blocked him from seeing her Facebook page, he found things she wrote on other people's pages and taunted her with it, attaching screenshots of the postings to some of his emails.

She called police, and for months he stopped. But then he started again, nastier than ever.

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All this without having seen her in person since high school. They never met until they came to court a couple of months ago.

Last week, Ramos, a 31-year-old federal employee, pleaded guilty in District Court to a misdemeanor harassment charge.

Judge Jonas Legum, who called his behavior "rather bizarre," suspended a 90-day jail sentence and placed him on probation, ordering him to continue in therapy and not contact the victim or her family in any way.

The case is extreme. But it provides a frightening look at the false intimacy the Internet can offer and the venom that can hide behind a computer screen.

"I read about this all the time, where Facebook conversations, email conversations, start out fine and then take a turn where they become nastier over the course of time," said Ramos' lawyer, Christopher Drewniak. "And this is apparently one of those situations."

The victim, who asked that her name not be printed, said she lived in fear for her safety for months.

The emails started in late 2009 or early 2010 — she can't remember exactly, because it was only a few months later that they grew disturbing and she started documenting things.

At first, she felt bad for him, so she shared some personal information and offered advice.

"But when it seemed to me that it was turning into something that gave me a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach, that he seems to think there's some sort of relationship here that does not exist ... I tried to slowly back away from it, and he just started getting angry and vulgar to the point I had to tell him to stop," she told the judge.

"And he was not OK with that. He would send me things and basically tell me, 'You're going to need restraining order now.' 'You can't make me stop. I know all these things about you.' 'I'm going to tell everyone about your life.'"

An email in April 2010 said, "Have another drink and go hang yourself, you cowardly little lush. Don't contact you again? I don't give a (expletive). (Expletive) you."

Later that month, the woman was suddenly put on probation at the bank

where she worked. She said a supervisor told her it was because of an email from Ramos and a follow-up phone call in which he advised them to fire her.

She said she was laid off in September and believes, but can't prove, it was because of Ramos. She's since gotten another job.

When she learned what Ramos had done, she called police. He stopped contacting her for a while and started counseling in November. Still, the silence was not comforting.

"That just left me to feel like he was stewing," she said. "For all that time he was silent, he's collecting things about me. And then comes back at me, like, 10 times worse than he had before."

The messages resumed in January, referring to friends' Facebook profiles and postings about her and about Ramos himself.

His messages rambled, calling her "a bipolar drunkard leading a double life" and saying "Expletive you, leave me alone" though she hadn't written to him in months. He told her she was afraid to let a man get close to her and discussed her family, friends, job and Rotary Club involvement — all information gleaned

from the Internet.

In January, the victim went to court to get a peace order and file charges. Finally, he stopped for good.

Ramos, a tall, thin man with long hair he wears in a ponytail, did not speak at the hearing and did not return a call for comment left with his attorney.

He has a degree in computer engineering and has worked for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for six years, Drewniak said. He had no previous criminal record.

Detective Rob Cremon, who handles domestic violence cases in the county police Southern District, said sustained harassment like this is rare.

Facebook and networks like it offer the chance to reconnect with old friends. But they also can invite unwanted attention. Many people don't realize how much information about them is on social networking sites and elsewhere on the web.

"It's kind of a double-edged sword," Cremon said.

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