



Random Strangers

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN RYAN BRUBAKER



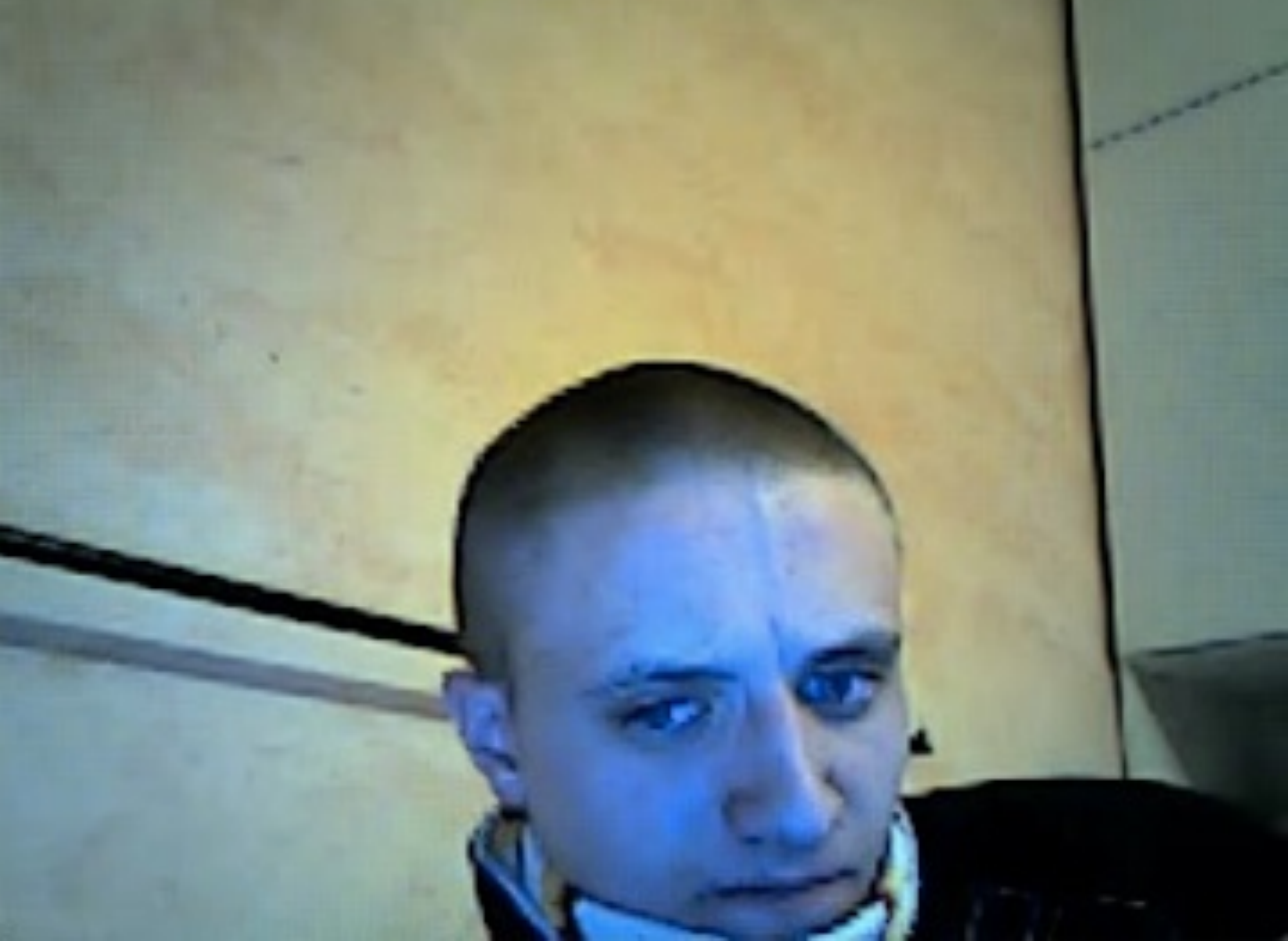






















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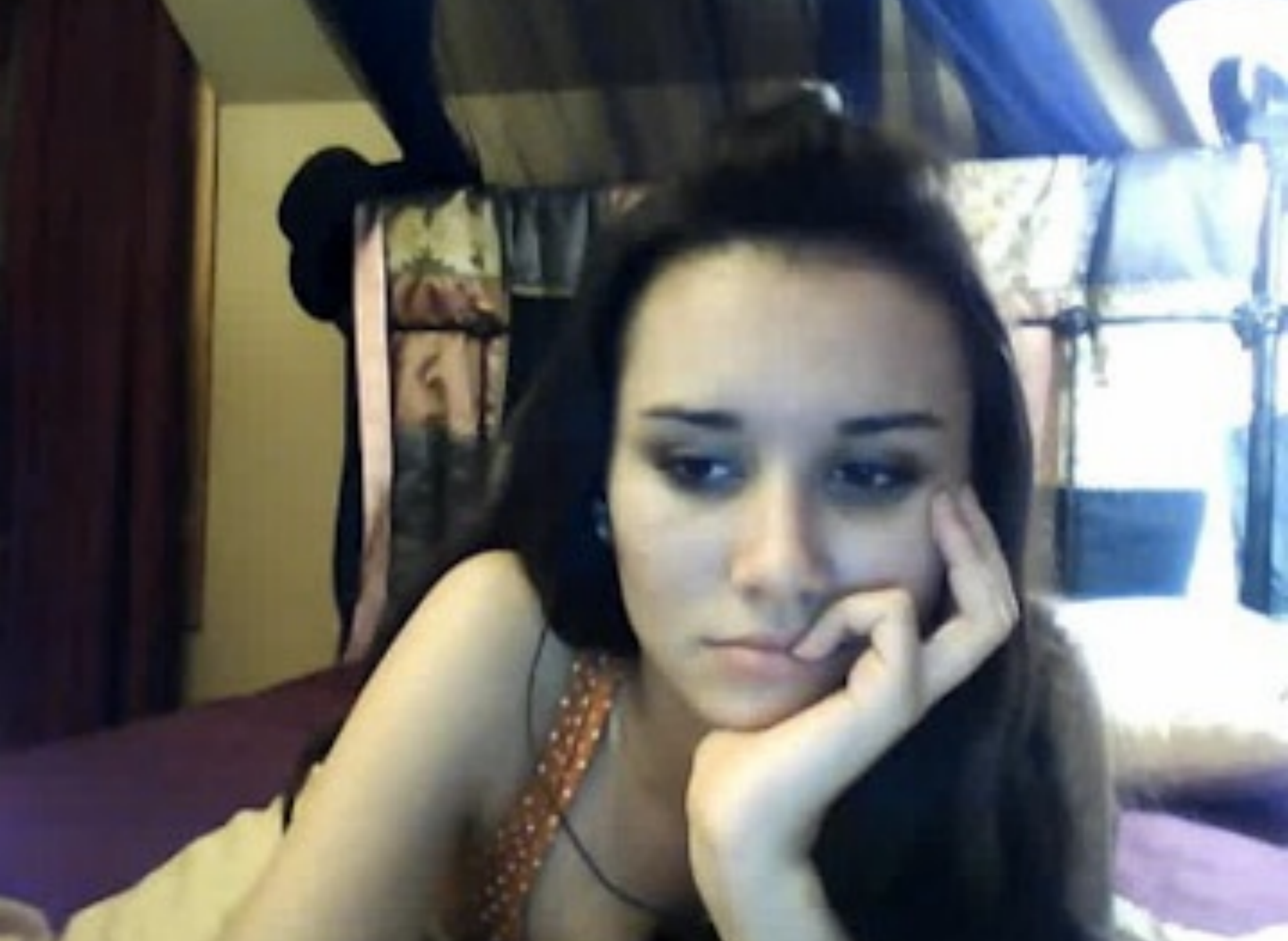






















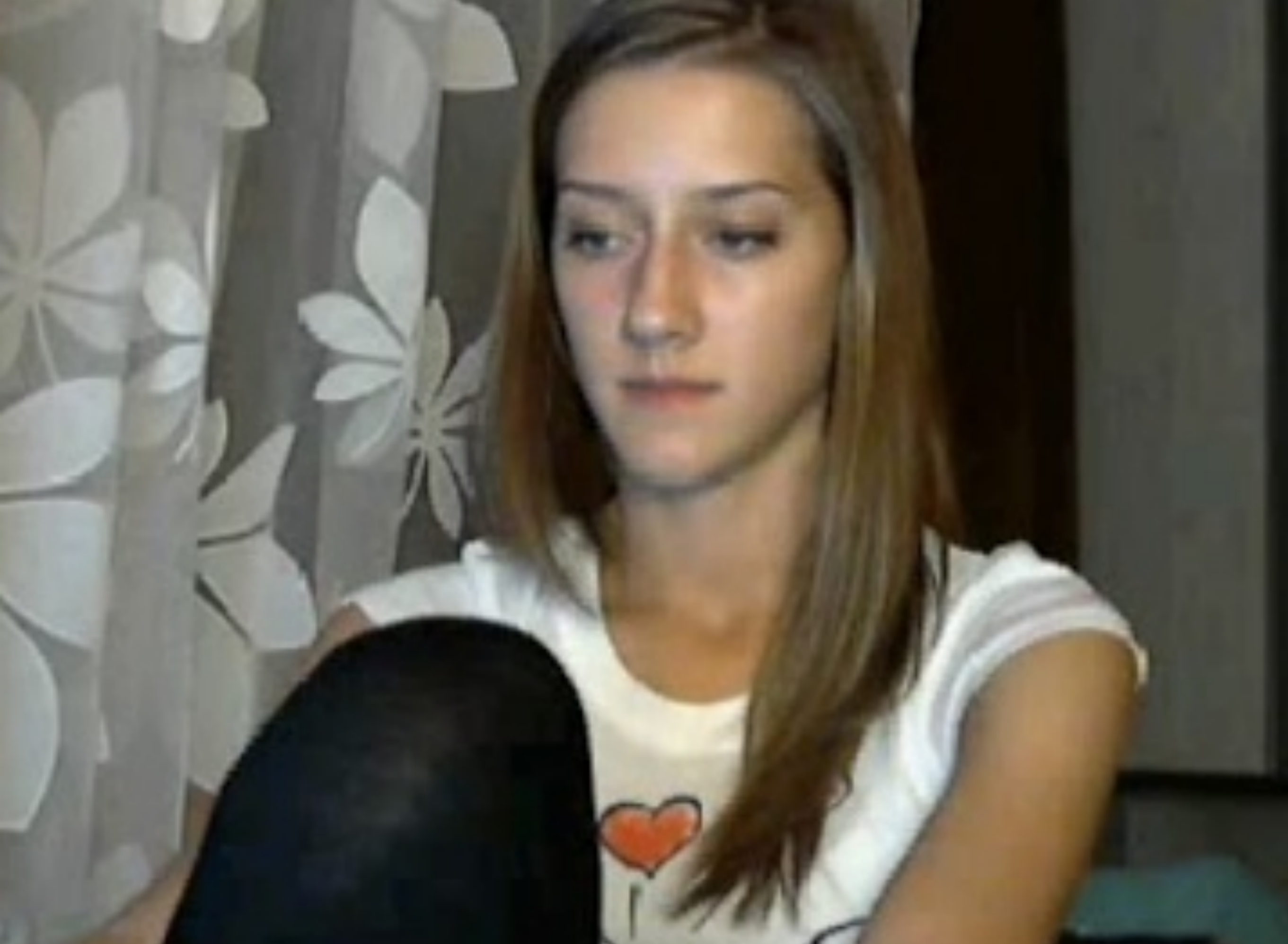




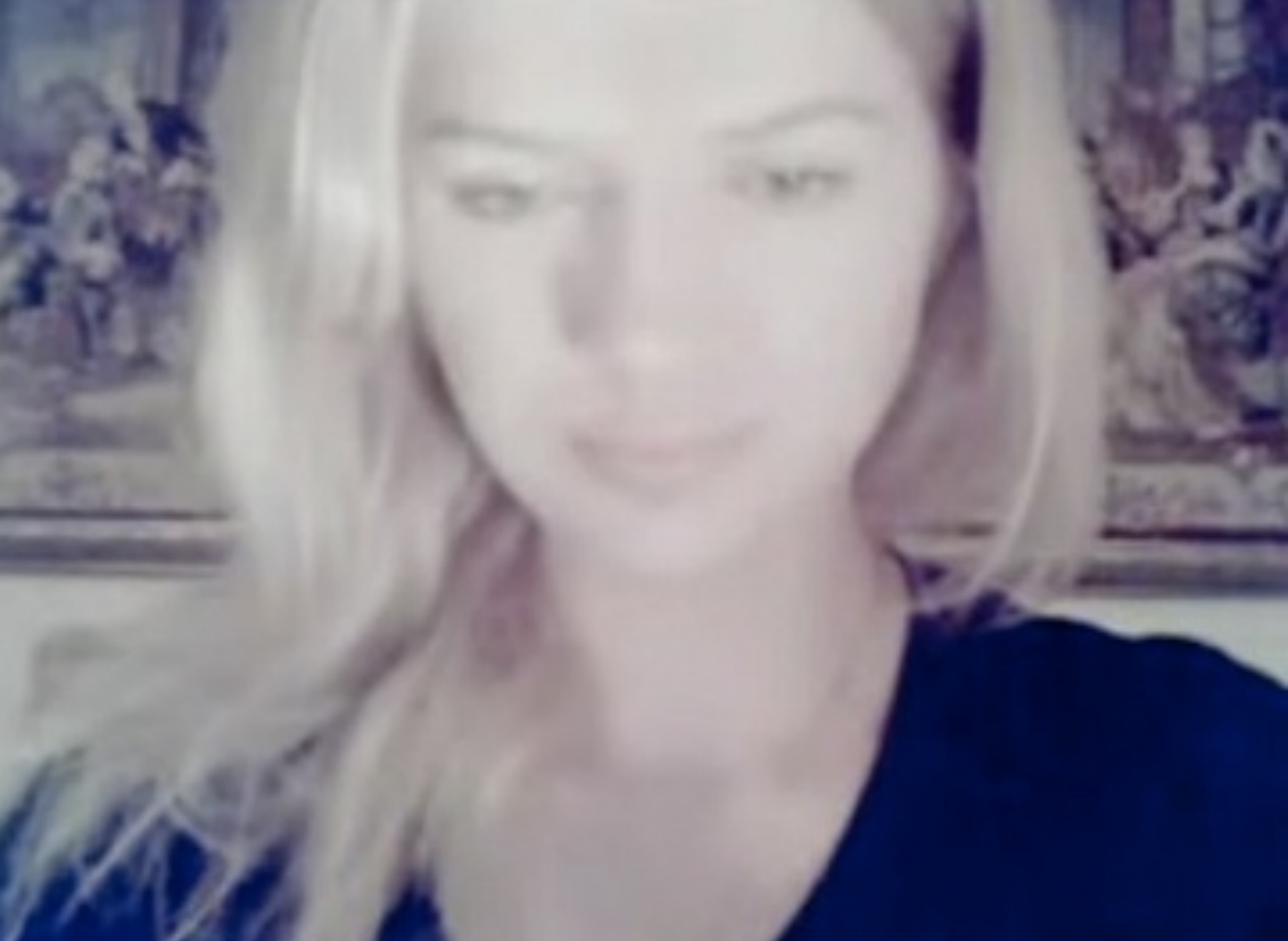












































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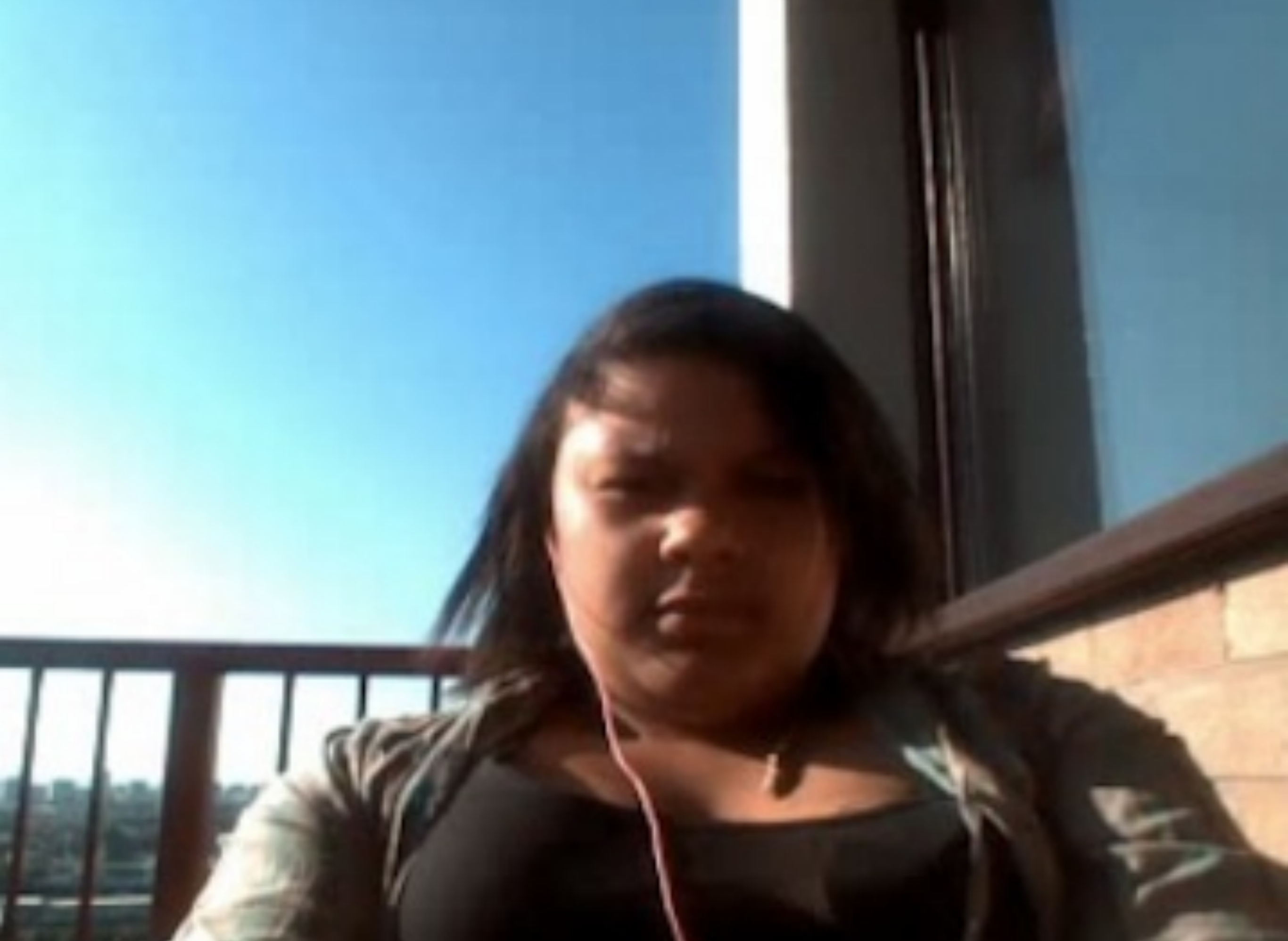








































































































































Afterword

Over the course of 2011 I spent many hours making photographs on Chat Roulette, a website on the fringe of the social networking frontier. The site connects a user with a random stranger, anywhere in world, via live video and audio link. My fascination with Chat Roulette stems mostly from an anthropology background that focused on new social interactions and concepts such as "space" vs. "place" in modern society. People have been spending time in chat rooms, forums and social networking circles for over a decade, but Chat Roulette's live video connection feels more like a "place" to me than a "site." The experience can in ways be compared to the city street or social event, where one cannot choose to simply observe, but must allow oneself to be seen. In certain ways it's more immediate, as the connection is usually between just two individuals, likely in their homes, sharing a view into each others intimate surroundings.

My primary mode of expression has long been photography, and the new visual perspective that came from this experience is what I found to be the most valuable story. I chose to capture still images of people as they sit on their computers, usually at home, alone, in their personal space.

We are so often looking at computers, but we rarely allow them to look back at us, let alone capture our expressions and surroundings. As culture becomes progressively digitized we spend increasing amounts of our time and attention in front of screens of all kinds. I find these images of faces, so close and engaged with the computer, a particularly relevant portrait of the individuals themselves as well as the society in which they are participants.

Colophon

Random Strangers is a series of photographs taken of strangers over the internet via webcam.

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