

# happily -ver after

by Kimberly Gadette

***When he leans over to whisper a flirtatious word in her ear, do his lips brush up against the hard plastic of her ear-bud headset?***

***When she impulsively reaches for his hand, has she been preempted by a BlackBerry® that's clutched tightly in his fist?***

***Given the current mobile, home office-based, open-all-night work environment, though we attempt to keep the lines of e-communication wide open, is all our open accessibility ... closing us down?***

***"My ex-girlfriend turned me into a 'reformed' cell phone junkie"***

Michael K., 24, political specialist and self-described e-communications guru residing in midtown Harrisburg, ran into love trouble with his girlfriend the first week they were dating. "I made the mistake of answering my cell phone once while we were eating at a restaurant. I was so used to be immediately available by cell phone (I don't have a home line), email, text message, and at one point even by two-way radio, that it seemed completely natural to answer the vibrating device in my pocket. We nearly broke up over that. She is a very particular girl—my attention is on her, or she isn't there." During their year and a half relationship, Michael had to juggle his answerability to a virtual career as well as a real live girl. "I would be interrupted in



the middle of shopping, eating, reading, etc., with an urgent email requiring my attention. My ex eventually got to the point of being able to put up with it, but you could always see her roll her eyes when it happened."

Though Michael states that "my ex-girlfriend turned me into a 'reformed' cell phone junkie," it seems that post-relationship, he's now fallen off the wagon and back onto the 24/7 virtual highway. "Now that I am single it is much easier to be fully absorbed in my work, taking calls at all hours of the day or night, no matter if I am at a bar, shopping at the Broad Street Market, or just taking a walk/working out. I don't particularly enjoy rolling out of bed at 3 a.m. to answer a call from a client, but ... " He hopes that in the future, when his current career stranglehold lessens, things can change. "For a relationship I am willing to give up most anything." Followed by, "If I have the financial capability to limiting my work to focus on a relationship, of course I would do it."

First dates often seem to be make-or-break situations. Take Danny Akacki, 25, a computer technician from Lancaster who tried his best to go with the flow, swing with the ring. "I was having a lovely dinner with a young lady who seemed intent on answering every single text and phone call she got! The first call was okay, it was a cute pretext of having her friends look in on her—but four more times was just weird. We did end up dating for a month or so, but with that kind of first impression, I almost didn't call her back." *Almost?*

Between snazzier camera/music/video phones, BlackBerrys and Treos outfitted with text messaging, instant messaging (IM), broadband speed wireless network connectors and push email, it may be that the smarter our e-toys, the duller our sensibilities.

### Candy Hearts Then—Text Messages Now

Nothing is ever black and white. Or Valentine's Day pink. Many stories of technical alienation can be counterbalanced by Cupid's arrows flying fast and furious via e-space. Looking through rose-colored spectacles, AOL subsidiary Tegic Communications, a substantial provider of software for mobile data services, reports that texting love is definitely in the air ... and on our screens, which are growing wider with each new upgrade. Right on the tails of "Can you hear me now?" perhaps we'll soon see ads asking "Can you read me now?" In a survey conducted in early 2006, Tegic came up with the following results: 60 percent of those sending text messages used them to tell someone they loved and/or missed them, 27 percent sent flirtatious messages and 26 percent texted a "Happy Valentine's Day." Those little pink candy heart candies of yesteryear with their brief declarations of love etched into a chalky, sugary surface have nothing on today's NetLingo-ian string of nonsensical consonants that resemble Czechan surnames.

As for in-the-flesh meet-and-greets, seven percent chose texting as the means for asking someone out.

A New York Times article about the popularity of texting for the 35-and-under Washington crowd, "A BlackBerry Throbs, And a Wonk Has a Date," reports a story about how in some situations, texting wins out over the cell phone, literally hands down. Tripp Donnelly, wireless executive and former consultant to Senator John Kerry's (D-Mass.) presidential campaign, saw a romantic interest walk into a bar and quickly called her on his cell. "I saw her look at the phone and put me right to voice mail." Not ready to give up, he sent her a text message instead. First she laughed, then she walked over to talk to him in real time.

### "Keep talking, I'm listening ..."

28-year-old, East-Coaster William Saxton, technical engineer, has been tethered to his e-toys for some time, and appreciates the positive while still very much aware of the negative. "I've definitely argued with dates when it comes to being beholden to their cell phones in a social setting. Almost every time someone gets texted, it seems whatever is going on (conversation, etc.) is put on hold in favor of finding out whom the text is from. Then, depending on the 'importance' of the text, things could be delayed further if she decides to respond. This is usually accompanied with "Keep talking, I'm listening..." as a good portion of their attention shifts away from the date to their device." As for the upside: "I reminisced with a friend just the other day about what we had to go through, pre-cell phone, in order to meet up with someone for a date. It took me a while to even remember."

As for his own e-havior, he confesses to sneaking off his computer under one screen name, and then signing back under another so that he can get his work done without constant IM's from his girlfriend. "She's great ... however, she's notoriously bad for not being able to figure out the proper way to end dialogues on IM or over the phone. For example, if we're IMing each other, casually, and then stop for whatever reason, she will feel the need to IM me explaining why she hasn't been IMing me, as if IMing requires constant communication." With the tortuously long electro-signoff between loved ones that can get more out of hand than our hands-free devices, CPA Helene Cohen, 45, adds, "I





5th Annual



# PENNSYLVANIA GARDEN EXPO™

of the PA Green Industry Foundation, Inc.

2007 Theme

## A Garden Party

Stroll through magnificent landscaped gardens of blooming flowers, ornamental trees and water features designed and built by top Central PA contractors.

Shop the Market Faire including Art Gallery and PA Preferred Products. Relax and dine in the Garden Cafe!

*"I like the overall high standards of the Show."*

Mark Whitmoyer, Conservation Concepts, Inc.



**FREE EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS HELD DAILY!**

**Thurs.—Sun. • March 8-11, 2007**

Thurs.-Sat. 10am-8pm – Sun. 10am-6pm

**PA Farm Show Complex New Exhibition Hall - Harrisburg, PA**



*You Have to See It to Believe It!*

Produced by PA Green Industry Foundation, Inc. Co-participant: PA Dept. of Agriculture

feel rude when I cut it off, but enough already. Let's come up with an appropriate number of love-you, baby-miss-you's and all agree on it."

### One Hand Not Knowing What The Other Is Doing?

Reports of text-sessive e-havior are flooding pop culture and the media as fast as a pre-teen's thumbs can text message the phonebook. Per a recent New York Magazine piece, "I Want Your Text," a 28-year-old gay yoga instructor named Molly discovered texting could help make the most of her leisure time. "I was on a date at a restaurant and was holding her hand across the table while texting underneath the table with the other hand to another woman I was dating." Hmm ... must be the energizing effect of all that yoga.

### BIBI & GL\*

(\* "bye bye and good luck")

With every upgrade of interactive communication, it seems the electro e-volution is counterbalanced by human de-volution. For those who have been pink-slipped in their past relationships with a cold "Dear John"/"Dear Joan" letter, abrupt text messages such as UR FIRD or D-VORS DOX ON WAY can be much harder to swallow. But given the limitation of 160 characters, there's no stalling for time. Like a band aid ripped off in rapid fire speed, maybe the texted QK DMP (quick dump) is a lot kinder than "Look, it's not you, it's me. But we can still be friends, can't we?"

CPA Helene Cohen received the slightly more civil e-mail dump, and decided to simply not respond. "He called a month later to see if I ever got his e-mail, or whether I'd stopped calling because I dumped him. Luckily, my cell was off and he had to leave voicemail." Maybe Mr. E-Dump is still wandering around Second Street today, wondering exactly who broke up with who first.

A @>-;- , Is A @>-;- ,  
Is A @>-;- , Is A @>-;-  
("A Rose is a Rose is a Rose is a Rose")

Love in '07 is far from love in grandma's day, with Valentines sent as e-cards and roses keyboarded from one screen to another in emoticon. But the upside: Even if he forgets until the actual day, he won't be late with a card. Even on a tight budget, he can afford all the e-roses he can copy, paste and send. Even better, they never wilt. Would that mean our relationships stay as fresh?

Yet whatever the operating system we use to reach out to each other, the impulse still originates from the heart. And as long as the heart continues to beat steady, a far more durable machine than anything Microsoft Windows Mobile can invent, we'll all have just as good a chance as always at finding love.

And one of these days, when he tells her he's going to give her a ring ... he'll mean the kind with diamonds. **HBG**

**"ZING"**  
went the  
strings of  
her heart.

Monday, February 12  
Re-opening to meet  
your Valentine needs.

# Mollie B®

Distinctively Different Fine Jewelry and Giftware

2017 Linglestown Road • Harrisburg • Beaufort Farms Plaza • 540.9040