



## Flame Lily

When he got back from his first sales call he had just enough time to get everything set up.

First his new MacBook Air laptop. He centered it at the front lip of his desk, sliding his finger along the beveled front edge to make certain it lined up with the edge of the desk. On the left side, connected to the computer by cable, he placed his iPad, slightly angled; ditto his iPhone on the right side. He flipped open the laptop and synced up the devices, then poked at the iPhone to check the time. Still thirty minutes before he would leave to meet Gina for lunch.

*GINA SAMPSON! Holy crap!* He still couldn't believe it. First guy in the office to talk her into meeting outside of work. *Imagine Emma Stone's stunt double, but even smarter and funnier.*

He looked over the edge of his cubicle. Everybody was staring at screens and the managers were in a meeting in the third floor conference room. He was safe to start through The Checkdown: Facebook. Twitter. Google Plus. Pinterest. Then a quick run-through to make sure the links on his blog were working. *Badabing, badaboom.* He brought up the blog on his iPhone. The new WordPress theme he was using was supposed to be optimized for mobile devices, *so why was there a freaking ? where the photo for his last post should be?*

*Dammit!* He logged-in to his Admin page and combed through the HTML. *What the hell was keeping the photo from loading?*

Time to go. NOW. He spotted it: he'd left off a period in the URL. He made the correction and checked the post on all three devices. *Bingo!*

He gently lowered the computer lid and unplugged his iPhone. He was already five-minutes late and it was a ten-minute walk to Dingo's Diner. He got there in five. Before barging through the door he used his sleeve to mop his forehead. *Should it be this hot in April?* As he was about

to glide through the front door and stroll smoothly through the dining room looking for Gina, chin up, chest out, like he was The Dingo himself, his iPhone chimed. *Oh, great. A text from Gina.*

*“Where were you? See you @ work. WTF?”*

He sat down on the bench in front of Dingo’s picture window and thumbed out a reply.

*So sorry. Had to take a phone call before I left. Couldn’t shut the guy up. Rain check?*

He waited ten minutes for her to reply. Twenty minutes later, back in his cubicle, there was still no reply, but there was an iPhone on top of his computer. It was the phone he’d given Gina, who hadn’t owned a cellphone before he gave her one, not even one of those antediluvian flip-things. Giving her an old iPhone, and teaching her how to text, had been his *modus operandi* for bagging the lunch date. There was a note.

*Thanks for the phone, Sean, but “No Thanks!” I spent three hours last night trying to figure out how to take a photo and send it to my email at work. I probably told you, I don’t have a computer at home. This phone makes me glad I don’t. I didn’t even have time to water my garden before sunset!*

He left his cubicle and jogged down the hallway to the HR department, where he knew Gina would be stationed at the receptionist desk. She was on the phone and didn’t look up when he parked himself in front of her. After a long while she glanced up at him, grimaced and shrugged her shoulders. She twisted around so she was facing away from him, still talking.

He finally got up and walked back to his cubicle.

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He laughed at the sign over the counter at Henri’s House of Cards:

*We have the ORIGINAL “text messages.”*

For an hour he scanned the racks. *People get paid to write this cornball crap?* Finally he found one that didn’t make him nauseous. It showed a puppy on the front, squatting next to a puddle, little head lowered, shamefaced. Inside it said:

*“I get it. Timing is everything.”*

Next stop, Flower Power.

Inside it was cool and the air reminded him of the first time he'd de-planed in Honolulu, the first place he'd ever been where he could imagine living outdoors. *Tie a few palm fronds together for shade, sleep on warm, fragrant sand, filch mangoes and plantains right off the tree, drink coconut milk and pineapple juice.*

He knew nothing about flowers. He pulled out his iPhone and googled "flowers as symbols", which turned up a link to "the language of flowers".

He jumped and spun around when he felt the tap on his shoulder.

*GINA!*

She laughed at his discombobulation, then crossed her forefingers in front of his phone. "Away with you, devil's tool," she said, pulled the iPhone from his hand and looked at the screen. Then she reached over and squirmed it into a front pocket of his slacks.

"Is that your cellphone or are you just happy to see me?" she said, and grasped his empty hand. "Follow me. I speak fluent flower. I want to show you a *flame lily*."