

WHEN HEARTS ARE YOUNG

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It's easy to forget that Scott is a youngster. Towheaded, bright and 5'11", my godson's maturity has been shaped not only by four much older siblings, but by experienced parents whose empty nest he filled in middle age. Scott can discuss national politics or the ingredients in a complex soup at a fine restaurant, participating quite adequately in adult conversations. Every now and then, though, that Xbox comes out, reminding everyone that he is just 12...and a half. *Bzzzow!* The tank locks on to and shoots an alien, whose purple blood spreads all over the screen, and Scott smiles with delight.

Valentine's Day this year found us in Park City, Utah, on a ski vacation with Scott and his parents and another couple, friends of mine from college. Each of the three couples awoke the morning of the 14th to find stickers with hearts and baskets of flowers adorning our bathroom mirrors. Scott had gotten up extra early and extra quietly, and snuck around to place the stickers before we arose. We oohed and aahed – how thoughtful of a 12-year-old boy to think of this.

After breakfast, off we went to the slopes at the Canyons, one of Park City's ski areas, with Scott instructing us as to who should lead on each run. "Aunt Gloria, you go first." "Mom, you go first." He kept us well organized throughout the day.

But all the while, Scott debated whether he should go out to dinner with us that evening. "It's for couples and I don't have a date," he hesitated. But even more on his mind was how to communicate with the apple of his own eye. Just a little bit sheepishly, he told us the story. Her name is Colette, and he's known her since kindergarten. Scott's mom works as a telecommunications executive, and when he was little

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he would stay at Colette's house and her mom would watch them both until his mom came home from work. They became best friends. They talk all the time, and see each other just about every day.

When the eighth-grade dance comes around later this year, with his parents' approval Scott plans to invite Colette to go with him – the first date for each of them. So, Scott wondered, how could he let Colette know on Valentine's Day that he was thinking of her? "Will you help me send an e-mail, Aunt Gloria?" He wanted to make sure it arrived in New Jersey in time for Colette to pick up the e-mail while it was still Valentine's Day.

Back at the condo, Scott and I sat down at my laptop,

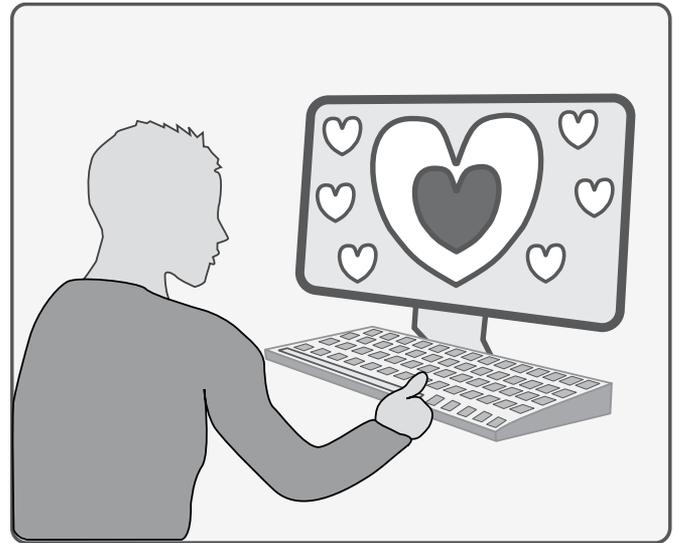


Illustration by Kazuyo Okudaira

logged him on, and he decided he would send her an e-greeting card. He went to an e-card web site, and chose one with red hearts raining down on a teddy bear, sending a "shower of love." He signed it from Scott. And we sent it off to Colette.

Then Scott happily joined us for dinner – we told him all six of us would be his dates. This young foodie happily munched a dinner of Kobe beef and lobster, perhaps making up a little bit for his solo status for the evening.

I know couples who met the loves of their lives in high school, or even junior high or grade school. I think of Vic and Joan Corsiglia, friends of ours in San Jose who are approaching 80 and have been together since junior high. I always have a warm feeling, knowing these lucky folks have stood by each other and loved each other for so many decades, building their lives and families together.

My fantasy about Scott is that he and Colette will remain friends, and at an appropriate time when both are ready for it, become sweethearts and then walk down the aisle together and create a family and go sweetly through life until, as octo-

genarians, they can look back on that e-mail valentine as one of their first expressions of feeling.

I know that this future I am spinning out for Scott is overly romantic. Scott and Colette will probably be separated by developing different interests, attending different schools, a parent whose job is transferred elsewhere, or more alluring members of the opposite sex as their feelings go through teenage emotional evolution.

Still, Valentine's Day is a time to dream of romance, and I think Scott's feelings for Colette, so healthy and so easily expressed by a 12-year-old boy, are notably mature, and promise a solid future in matters of the heart. Ω