

Mildred Johnson and the TV Man, or What Is Love?

by Peter Cherches

Mildred Johnson was in love with the TV Man. She had never met the TV Man, but she knew that she was in love with him. She just knew.

The TV Man did not know of the existence of Mildred Johnson. Naturally, he was also unaware of Mildred's love for him. He only knew that the city was full of broken TVs, and he was the man to fix them.

Mildred Johnson bought a TV and broke it. Maybe the TV Man will come now, she thought. Maybe the TV Man will come now, she hoped.

On the few TVs that still worked, newsmen spoke of the rash of broken TVs. As a public service they relayed a message from the TV Man: Please be patient. I am only one man, and there's just so much I can do.

Mildred Johnson cried when she heard the news. She heard the news from her friend Mary, who still had a working TV. She heard the news of the broken TV epidemic, she heard the news of the TV Man's plight, she realized it would be quite some time before the TV Man got around to her, and she cried.

Meanwhile, the TV Man was busy night and day, fixing TVs. He was too busy to think about food or sleep. He was too busy to think about love.

Mildred Johnson could think of nothing but the TV Man. All she could do was eat, sleep, think about the TV Man, and cry.

Taking a short break, the TV Man said to himself: I've already fixed ten thousand TVs, and there are thousands more to go. Thousands more to go.

Mildred Johnson asked her friend Mary for the latest news on the TV epidemic.

"I'm totally in the dark," Mary said. "My TV is on the blink."

The TV Man kept fixing TVs.

A few days later Mildred got a call from her friend Mary. "Come on over, Mildred," Mary said. "The TV Man is going to make a speech in fifteen minutes."

"But I thought your TV was broken," Mildred said.

"So did I," said Mary, "but all of a sudden it went back on like nothing happened. Come on over."

The TV Man came on as promised. He made a speech. "Let us be thankful. In the past few days thousands of TV's have miraculously recovered. We may never learn what was wrong with them in the first place, but let us be thankful that the ordeal has ended."

The TV Man is so handsome, Mildred Johnson thought. I love that TV Man. And my TV is still broken. Maybe now he'll finally be able to come.

The TV Man finally came to Mildred Johnson's house. "I hear you have a broken TV," he said.

"Yes, TV Man, I do," she said, her heart a-flutter.

He examined her TV. "You broke this TV yourself," he said. "I can't fix it."

"I did it because I'm in love with you," Mildred Johnson said.

"No, Mildred Johnson, you're not in love with me," said the TV Man. "You're in love with the idea of the TV Man."

"No no, it's you I love. You!" Mildred Johnson pleaded.

"I have to go now," the TV Man said.

"Don't go," cried Mildred Johnson. "I love you!"

"What is love?" the TV Man asked.

Mildred Johnson didn't know what to say. She just stood there, frozen, speechless.

"I have to go," the TV Man said again, and without looking back he left the home of Mildred Johnson, never to return.

