

## Telehell . . . So it Goes

by Jason\_Love

At the wild animal park—a real one, not the high school—our tour guide whispered for dramatic effect: “As you can see, everything is in its natural state, completely unaffected by society.”

At which point his cell phone went off. Beethoven’s “Für Elise” in C-minor. We all groaned, and the guide turned redder than a baboon’s tongue.

The whole world is beeping and buzzing and ringing. Everywhere we turn is a talking phone-head. That must be why they call us Babble-on. For all the good technology has wrought, it has stolen our dearest resource: silence. Nothing murders peace like a Motorola.

Rrrring.

“Who is it?”

“I’m Cindy, the talking robot. Did you know that you can refinance your home?”

My ex-friend Bob called at five in the morning, and no one was even dying! He just felt that it was time for me to wake up. I am building a device that electrocutes people who call between midnight and sunrise. I call it The Bobifier.

My wife is unable to resist a ringing phone. She must know who's calling, and it doesn't matter how close to climax we are. Can you see her shrink in therapy? I'm going to dial your cell phone now, and I want you to abstain from picking up. Bite the towel if you have to!

I get claustrophobic on the phone, as one trapped inside a phone booth. My heart races, and I get that hot syrup feeling in my forehead. It is especially bad when I talk to my mom, who has trouble with goodbye. She nears the end of a call and, faced with the possibility of silence, backpedals!

It was nice talking to you and I'm glad things are going well and we'll talk more often and hey did you see that show on separation anxiety?

My wife makes me take the cell phone on the road. That way she can track me on her radar screen. I tell her that I'm at the post office, and she says, "No, Jason, I see right here that you're going in circles." I'm shackled to civilization, helpless even to pretend that I live in a pre-beeping world.

In the deli I stood behind a woman who couldn't pay for her meal because her phone-head was all used up. She cradled the receiver to her ear as she fished through her purse but then forgot where she was and had to start over.

I told the clerk, "She must have read the sign backwards. It says pay here, not yap here."

He chuckled like a man on camera.

Same day no kidding a guy snared me in Aisle 10 of the supermarket. He was facing a crisis but, thanks to science, found refuge in his phone:

“There are three types of peas here. Which one do I get? Can you hear me? Iâ€™LL TALK LOUDER!”

The problem is that we accept the commotion. In a crowded lobby, you can talk yourself silly on a cell phone, but everyone takes exception when I read out loud.

Is it time for legislation, some exam we must pass to carry a phone? You need a license to sell lemonade, but anyone, regardless of I.Q., can buy a phone. Unlimited phones. With unlimited minutes! The first question on the test can read: When is the best time to call someone at home? (a) five in the morning, (b)

Perhaps we could ban phones from public buildings as some states have smoking. Science can only guess at the evils of second-hand conversation. The movie theater would be a good start. The other night I sat beside a kid who was making calls so that a blonde could see him on his cell phone.

Note to self: set The Bobifier to shock anyone under the age of 15.

Later in the show, somewhere near the exact center of the climax, a phone went off and the whole theater sighed. It went on and on until I wondered if we shouldnâ€™t form a posse and killâ€wait a minute. It was me. My wife wanted me to stop at the store and call her from the soup aisle. So it goes.