

"We were very fortunate to have found each other that way," says Beider (right, with Atwood, on steps to the subway where they met).

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When sparks fly but nerves fail,  
would-be soulmates go online for a  
second chance at

LOVE

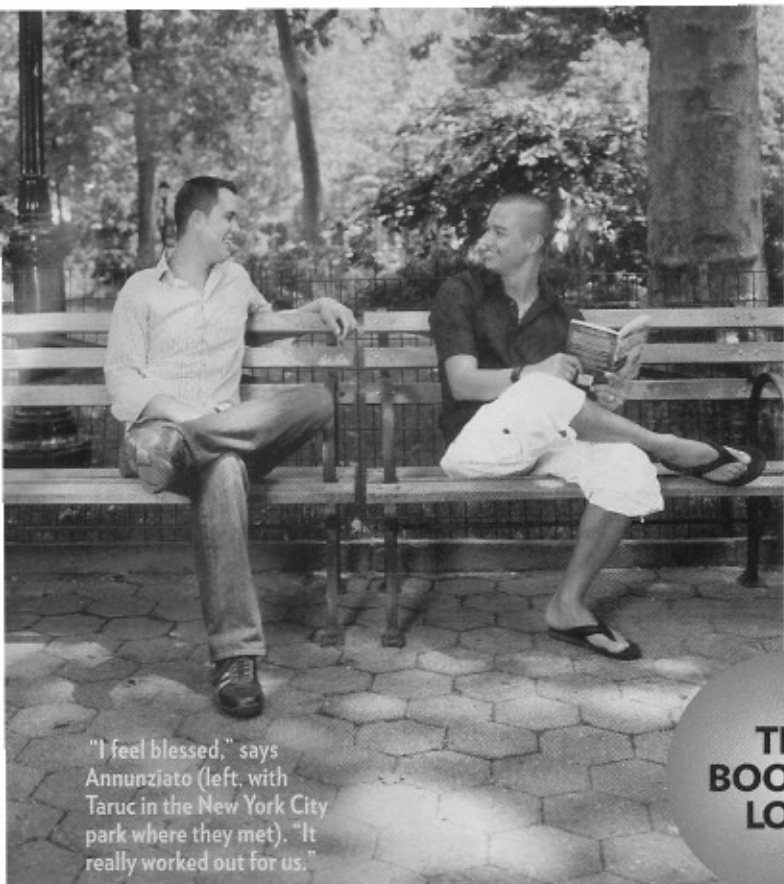
SUBWAY  
SWEET-  
HEARTS

On a chilly, overcast March Sunday in 2005, New Yorkers Daniel Atwood and Rachel Beider had places to go—he to Brooklyn, she to the East Village—when they wound up standing across from each other on the L train. “I noticed this really tall and cute guy, but I didn’t talk to him,” says Beider, a 22-year-old photographer. “Who talks to people on the subway?” Atwood, a 24-year-old paralegal, thought about striking up a conversation, but Beider seemed wrapped up in her iPod. “I never got that visual cue,” he says. Two stops

later she stepped off the train. “There goes a cute one,” Atwood thought.

Soon enough Beider began having regrets: “I went home and thought, ‘I should have said something.’” She decided to take action, hopping on the Internet and posting a query on Craigslist’s “Missed Connections” site. “To the Cute Blonde Boy on the L Train: I think you noticed me but I was feeling shy.” The next day Atwood was trolling the site when he spotted the posting. Shocked, he replied, “You had a great smile and you were beautiful.” From there things moved quickly. Beider asked

for Atwood’s picture and, after a flurry of e-mails and phone calls, the two met at a cafe. “He was very intelligent, charming and well-spoken, and I knew right away that he was a special person,” Beider says. “Plus, it’s really hard to find a vegetarian boyfriend.” Together ever since, they took a four-month tour of Southeast Asia and now share her apartment. Atwood is grateful the way it worked out for him but suggests that others seize the day: “Everybody has chances—where you see someone and wonder what would happen if you said something. Always take that chance.”



"I feel blessed," says Annunziato (left, with Taruc in the New York City park where they met). "It really worked out for us."

## THE BOOK OF LOVE

Enjoying the sunshine in a Manhattan park in April 2005, Antonio Annunziato couldn't stop staring at the stranger on the next bench. Not only was the young man model-handsome, he was also deeply absorbed in the J.M. Coetzee novel *Disgrace*. "It's a tough book," says Annunziato, 32, a financial-services manager. "It's very depressing." In New York that made it a perfect icebreaker. Summoning his courage, Annunziato introduced himself to Chris Taruc, and a 20-minute conversation ensued. "He made me really comfortable," recalls Taruc, 28. "But I just didn't have it in me to ask for his number." Annunziato, too, mourned a missed opportunity: "There's a guy who actually reads. He's supernice. And I'll never find him again."

For two weeks Annunziato searched for his literate love interest. As a last gasp he placed a notice with the Web site Right Place, Right Time. Taruc, a college student working nights as a hotel manager, was browsing the site when he spotted the post. "I didn't feel like I had anything to lose," he says.

Drinks one night led to lunch the next day—then a weekend at the beach. Together ever since, they're apartment-hunting. "I believe in fate," Annunziato says. "But sometimes you have to help fate out a little bit."



"We knew right away we had found something really amazing," says Barry (left) of her fateful parking-lot meeting with Sen.

Lisa Barry was passing through Cincinnati in the summer of 2005 when she found herself struggling to attach her mountain bike to a car rack in a hotel parking lot. Sunil Sen, 23, who was relocating to the city for a job as an actuary, helped Barry with her bike, spotted her University of Texas bumper sticker and identified himself as a fellow grad. That kicked off talk about jobs, college, travel—but no names or numbers. Barry, 27, an opera singer and music teacher, drove home to Austin—kicking herself for the next 1,130 miles: "I was so disappointed I didn't have a name." So Barry posted a note on Missed Connections: "Austin misses you, Mr. Actuary." One of Sen's coworkers forwarded the message, and three days later Barry got Sen's reply: "You're the opera singer from the parking lot!" After five months of phone calls, Sen introduced Barry to his family, and in May, Barry moved into Sen's apartment in Cincinnati. Though they have had their ups and downs, like many couples, Sen and Barry hope that their second chance at romance is the charm.

## PARADISE —IN A PARKING LOT

“I think her name is Kristen. Bacchus, help me find her. I can't stop thinking about her”—MATT KIMMICH'S POST ON MISSED CONNECTIONS

“He had a great sense of humor and said all the right things,” says Egan (left) of Kimmich (in a vineyard in Sonoma, Calif.).



VINTAGE  
LOVE

**M**att Kimmich and his parents had stopped off at a winery on a 2004 trip through California's Sonoma Valley when a boisterous group of visitors threatened to ruin it all. When Kimmich, now 31, asked them to put a cork in it, they explained they were celebrating a friend's 30th birthday. In walked guest-of-honor Kristen Egan—and Kimmich was instantly smitten. “There was something about her smile,” he recalls. The

two started to chat, and Egan invited Kimmich to hop into her rented limo and join the party. Kimmich, a banker, declined. “Later my mother said I should have gone,” he says.

The next day Kimmich placed a post on Missed Connections—framed as a prayer to Bacchus, Roman god of wine. Two days later Egan's brother Sean stumbled onto the message. “He said, ‘That jerk from the winery posted about you,’ ” recalls Egan, now 31 and a mar-

keting manager in Oakland. Warily she had Sean e-mail Kimmich her number. A dinner date turned into a 48-hour whirlwind. They've been together ever since—and on Sept. 9 they'll be married. “When you know it's right, you just know,” Egan says. Kimmich is just grateful. The Web, he says, “gives you a second shot at love at first sight.”

By **Richard Jerome. Howard Breuer** in Los Angeles and **Sean Scully** in New York City