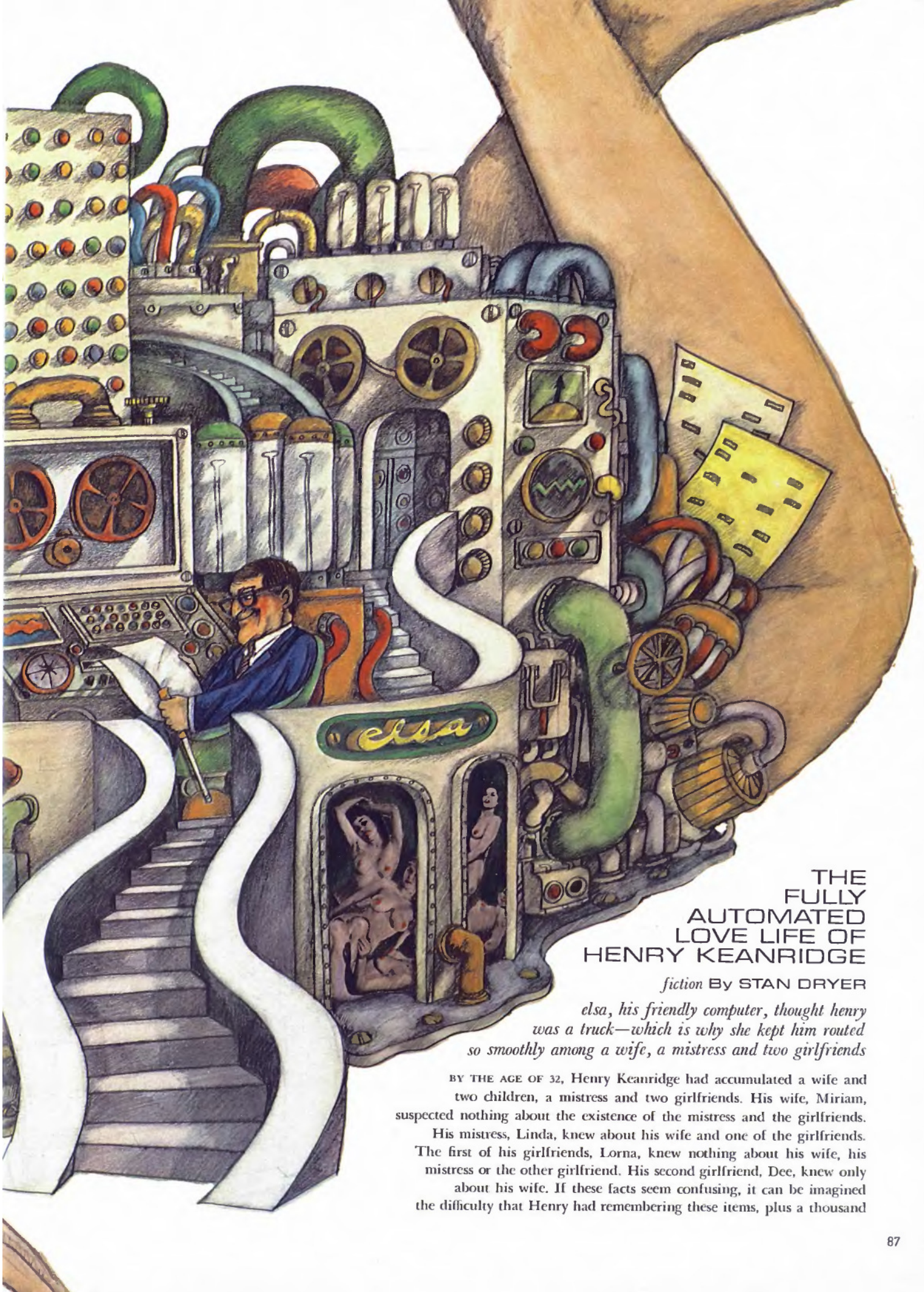




My Roth



THE FULLY AUTOMATED LOVE LIFE OF HENRY KEANRIDGE

fiction By STAN DRYER

elsa, his friendly computer, thought henry was a truck—which is why she kept him routed so smoothly among a wife, a mistress and two girlfriends

BY THE AGE OF 32, Henry Keanridge had accumulated a wife and two children, a mistress and two girlfriends. His wife, Miriam, suspected nothing about the existence of the mistress and the girlfriends.

His mistress, Linda, knew about his wife and one of the girlfriends. The first of his girlfriends, Lorna, knew nothing about his wife, his mistress or the other girlfriend. His second girlfriend, Dee, knew only about his wife. If these facts seem confusing, it can be imagined the difficulty that Henry had remembering these items, plus a thousand

other necessary details of the intimate lives of these four women. Fortunately, Henry had the assistance of ELSA, the Electronic Logistics Systems Analyzer.

Henry was input monitor for the ELSA installation at the main office of the Acme Trucking Company. All day he sat at his Teletype console on the 12th floor of the Acme Building, feeding data and questions to ELSA in her basement vault far below. ELSA held in her memory banks all of the pertinent data on the far-flung operations of the Acme Trucking fleet. She knew the current location of every truck and driver. She kept track of all of the shipments stored in the Acme warehouses and of those in transit. In short, she knew every detail of the operations of Acme Trucking and could, in a few seconds, provide the answer to any question concerning these operations.

It was Henry's job, as input monitor, to ask these questions. "OPTIMIZE TRUCK 75 BETWEEN SAN FRANCISCO, SALT LAKE CITY AND DENVER, WITH INTERMEDIATE PICKUPS AND DELIVERIES, STARTING 1700 3/7/68," he would type on his Teletype. ELSA would check her files to determine what shipments truck 75 could handle and what intermediate stops were optimum. After checking the road and weather conditions in the Western states and a dozen other factors, she would type back a message that gave the exact times of arrival and departure over a three-day period, plus the following work schedule:

OPTIMIZED ROUTING OF TRUCK 75		
ACTION	CARGO	CITY
LOAD	100 DRUMS OIL	SAN FRANCISCO
UNLOAD	15 DRUMS OIL	RENO
UNLOAD	30 DRUMS OIL	SALT LAKE
LOAD	50 BAGS CEMENT	SALT LAKE
UNLOAD	ALL CARGO	DENVER

Thus, ELSA could, in a matter of seconds, provide an optimized routing for any truck in the Acme fleet.

Deep within ELSA's memory banks, and quite unknown to the executives of the Acme Trucking Company, was stored another array of information. This data base covered all facets of the lives of Henry's four women. The women were simply placed in the file as cities. There was one "truck," namely, Henry. To ELSA, it was all the same. Her job was to optimize routing, whether it was trucks between cities or Henry between his women.

Thus, when Henry typed on his console, "OPTIMIZE HENRY BETWEEN MIRIAM, LINDA AND DEE, WITH INTERMEDIATE PICKUPS AND DELIVERIES, STARTING 1700 3/3/68," ELSA, again giving exact dates (3/3/68 to 3/4/68) and exact times (1700 through the evening until 1400 the next day), would type back something like:

OPTIMIZED ROUTING OF HENRY		
ACTION	CARGO	CITY
LOAD	50 DOLLARS	BANK
UNLOAD	7 DOLLARS	FLOWER SHOP
LOAD	24 ROSES, RED	FLOWER SHOP
UNLOAD	24 ROSES, RED	LINDA
UNLOAD	20 DOLLARS	MIRIAM
STOPOVER		DEE

Henry would quickly tear this sheet of information out of the Teletype and slip it into his inner coat pocket. For the next few hours, he had no worries. ELSA had optimized his sex life. Gone were the nagging worries usual to a man with a love life spread among four women. There would be no tearful scenes over forgotten anniversaries or broken promises. He would have no problem remembering which woman he was to meet when and where. As long as he followed the schedule set down by ELSA, there would be no troubles.

It should not be assumed that Henry was a compulsive rake who had deliberately accumulated his stable of conquests. In idle moments between requests to ELSA, Henry often tried to figure out just how he could have avoided collecting these women. There was the matter of his wife, for example. Henry was never quite sure if or when he had proposed to Miriam. They had met in the Marriage and the Family course that Henry had taken during his senior year at Atkins College. Henry had taken the course out of pure curiosity. He simply wanted to find out what marriage was all about.

It was a mistake from the start. Except for Miriam, all of the other students were paired off in couples. They were either married or had been engaged since they were freshmen. The course consisted of group discussions led by Professor Parkins, an intensely uninhibited young social anthropologist. Parkins sparked these discussions with a mixture of stories of his own sexual escapades and descriptions of the love life of the Navaho Indian, apparently his field of specialization. His wife, heavy with child, attended all of the class sessions and sat in the front row knitting baby garments. Whenever Parkins gave an example from his own married life, which was often, she would pause in her knitting and grin affectionately at her husband, as if his words brought to mind a particularly amusing private joke.

The other couples did not lag far behind. They sat in pairs around the classroom, holding hands and participating with enthusiasm. They always began each bit of commentary with a phrase like, "George and I think . . ." or "Gloria and I have found. . ."

Henry rarely contributed to the discussion, both because he felt he lacked the necessary depth of sexual experience and because he felt his single opinion held no

force against the paired-up ideas of the rest of the class. From the start, he felt a silent bond with Miriam, a rather plump girl who sat quietly by herself at the back of the room.

It was inevitable that they would be thrown together. The classroom hung heavy with the human pairing instinct and neither Henry nor Miriam had the will to resist. Soon they were sitting next to each other and exchanging whispered comments concerning the class. Whispered exchanges were not frowned on by Parkins; all of the couples were expected to discuss their thoughts in private, so that expressed ideas could be truly joint opinions.

Henry got into the habit of taking Miriam to the Cell, the student coffee-shop after class. There they would mercilessly dissect the characters of Professor Parkins and their fellow students. Henry regarded Miriam simply as a good friend with whom he was sharing the tribulations of a rather dull course.

One day, with the course well past the halfway mark, Professor Parkins called Henry to his office. There, amidst piles of dusty reference works, Navaho rugs and potsherds, the professor informed Henry that he was flunking the course.

"How could I be failing?" demanded Henry. "We haven't had any exams."

"The essence of Marriage and the Family," said Professor Parkins, "is group discussion. I do not feel that you have been contributing effectively to the dynamics of the group. My wife, who is a pretty impartial observer, agrees with me."

It was still two against one. Henry saw, even there in Parkins' office. He mumbled something about trying harder to participate and left.

After class the next day, he told Miriam about his interview with Parkins.

"Just what the bastard told *me*," she said. "I happen to need that grade very badly."

Henry was up for Phi Beta Kappa and knew that one failing grade would ruin his chances. "What can we do?" he asked.

"Look," said Miriam. "I don't mean to be forward or anything, but maybe the solution to our problem is for us to develop a base of mutual experience, as Parkins would put it."

"You mean?" said Henry.

"We could take off this coming weekend and shack up in a motel somewhere," said Miriam.

"I have a couple of exams next week," said Henry. "I was planning to hit the books pretty hard this weekend."

"Haven't you been listening in class?" said Miriam. "You can't have sex continuously. I have a term paper myself that's due on Monday."

Thus it was that in class the following

(continued on page 92)

Monday, Henry was able to take Miriam's hand, smile knowingly and say, "Miriam and I have found that relief from sexual tensions makes a big difference in one's ability to concentrate on studying."

There was a murmur of approval from the class. Professor Parkins smiled his benediction. Even his wife turned around in her seat and grinned at them.

Henry and Miriam continued to build their base of mutual experience, although Henry regarded it as merely an enjoyable necessity for passing the course. At the end of the term, both Henry and Miriam received Bs. It was Professor Parkins' policy to give both partners identical grades.

Henry was so pleased with his grade that he impulsively asked Miriam to the canoe lighting on the final night of graduation week. At the canoe lighting, senior couples paddled around Lake Meekawa with lighted candles bow and stern. All of the other couples in their course were participating and he felt it would be a nice gesture to ask Miriam. Unfortunately, Henry did not know that it was a campus custom of long standing that only couples who had "plighted their troth" were allowed to participate.

"Are you really sure we should?" said Miriam when he asked her.

"If you don't think you can handle a canoe," said Henry, "I can do the paddling."

"That's a very sweet way of putting it," said Miriam.

"Then it's all settled?" said Henry.

"Oh, yes, Henry," said Miriam. "I think we're going to be very happy." She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

They had a perfect June evening for the canoe lighting. No breeze disturbed the surface of Lake Meekawa. The shores of the lake were lined with the parents of the senior class and the non-betrothed students. The throaty little mating calls of the Lake Meekawa frogs filled the air. The candles on the canoes twinkled like myriad stars. Henry felt a deep inner peace that he had never known before, as if all cares and apprehensions of the future were walled away from them by the ring of circling lights.

All inner peace was instantly shattered when they returned to the landing. Henry had helped Miriam out of their canoe and was holding the canoe containing Myra and Ed Bushbinder close to the dock so that Ed could help Myra, six months pregnant, out of the canoe. Myra and Ed had been the leaders of some of the healthiest discussions in Marriage and the Family.

"This is really a surprise," said Myra when she had finally struggled onto the landing. "I'm so pleased, though." She turned to Miriam. "Have you set a date for the wedding?"

"It's all happened so fast that we haven't been able to plan anything," said Miriam.

Henry stared at the girls, unable to speak.

Ed Bushbinder pulled him aside. "You old rogue," he said. "What did you do, propose to her last night so you'd be allowed to take her on the canoe lighting?"

With a great red flash, realization burst upon Henry. There was no backing down now. One simply did not flout sacred ceremonials like the canoe lighting.

"Yeah," Henry mumbled, "something like that."

From that moment on, Henry felt he had lost control. Miriam set a date for the wedding; he went to work at Acme Trucking; they purchased a home in Garden Acres and the children arrived—all, Henry felt, without his having any alternate choices.

• • •

The case was different, however, with his first girlfriend, Lorna. Henry knew he had acquired her by talking too much. It was back in the days when he had only Miriam and the children to worry about and, as a result, had time to stop off at a little bar around the corner from the Acme Building for an occasional drink with the boys. On the evening he met Lorna, there were just four of them drinking beer at a table. The talk swung to women. Henry remained silent as he remembered only too well what participation in such discussions had gotten him into in college.

Finally, ruddy-faced Joe Willard noticed Henry's silence. "What's the matter, Henry?" said Willard. "All this talk boring you?"

Henry had always disliked Willard. He was the one in the operations room who had sent Henry down to the stock room for left-handed paper clips on his first day at Acme Trucking.

"You guys are all talk," said Henry, "and no action." He waved his hand toward the bar, where a couple of young ladies were seated. "Let's see you move in on that stuff."

"I am going to call your bluff," said Willard. "But before I do, you got any money you want to put behind your fat mouth?"

"Does a sawbuck talk loud enough for you?" said Henry. This was in the days before every penny of Henry's income was sucked up in the business of maintaining his harem.

"It's a deal," said Willard. "Shake on it, buster." He grasped Henry's hand in his clamp paw and, rising from the table, headed for the empty stool beside the two young ladies.

The men at the table watched and waited. It was unclear exactly how well Willard was making out, until there was

a distinctly audible slap and Willard came walking slowly back to the table. He handed Henry a ten-dollar bill without saying a word.

All would have been well if Henry had kept silent or switched the subject to baseball. But he wanted too much to work Willard over a bit. "Just for the record," he said, "what technique did you use? Suave man about town? Or the husky he-man approach?"

"If you think you can do better, big-mouth," said Willard. "I've got ten dollars that says you can't."

"Yeah," said one of the other men, "why don't we let the master operator show us how it's done?"

"OK," said Henry. He was halfway across the room before he realized that he had no idea what he was about. But the inertia of his pride carried him up to the bar, where he dropped onto the vacant stool.

"They're sending them in shifts," the girl next to him said to her companion. "We come in for a quiet drink and eight waves of Marines come after us."

The other girl did not reply. Henry stole a glance at the girl who had spoken. She was a little thin for his taste but had a cute face, with a little upturn to her nose.

"I wonder what approach they'll use this time," she said to her silent companion. "Maybe the intellectual line. 'Seen any good operas lately?'"

"I really think I should apologize for all of the trouble we're causing you," said Henry. He was amazed at his ability to say anything.

"He's apologizing for all of the trouble he's causing," said the girl. "Now he's going to tell us that it's all because of a silly bet he made with his friend with the damp hands."

"It is because of a bet," said Henry.

The girl took one swift, analytic look at him, then turned back to her companion. "Now he's going to ask me if I wouldn't mind just walking out of here with him so he could pretend that he did succeed in picking me up. I really think he has the gall to ask that."

Henry discovered he had sufficient gall.

The girl did not look at him. "You're going to think I'm out of my mind," she said. "You're going to give me a long lecture about my behavior tonight. But if we send this one back empty-handed, we'll have to suffer the other two of them before the night is out."

She finished off her drink, picked up her handbag and started for the door. Henry followed her. He managed to produce what would pass for a man-of-the-world smile for his friends as they passed the table.

They went outside. The girl stopped
(continued on page 148)

AUTOMATED LOVE LIFE (continued from page 92)

and looked at him. "My name is Henry Keanridge," he said.

"He says his name is Henry Keanridge," said the girl to the empty street. "Now I'm supposed to tell him my name is Lorna and then he'll ask me if he can walk me home."

Henry was stunned. He had assumed all along that she had been talking to the girl next to her at the bar. Apparently, this was her normal method of conversation.

Lorna was already walking rapidly up the street and he hurried to catch up with her. "I suppose he's about to make some stupid comment about what a lovely evening it is," she said. Henry, who had been contemplating just such a remark, said nothing.

After four blocks of silence, she stopped in front of a gray apartment building. "He's about to tell me that his friends have been following us and couldn't he just come up for an hour so they'll believe his story," she said to the hedge in front of the building.

Henry looked around. His friends were not in sight, but it was possible they were following.

Lorna entered the building and Henry followed. When she shut the door of her apartment behind them, she said to the vase of flowers on the hall table, "Now I suppose he'll ask if maybe I don't have something to drink."

Henry sat on the couch while she fixed two Scotch-on-the-rocks. When she sat down beside him and handed him his drink, Henry had a terrible desire to say something that she could not predict. A shred of verse passed through his mind and he spoke it quickly.

*"Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire
of Spring,
Your Winter-garment of Repentance
fling."*

Lorna looked straight at him and said,

*"The Bird of Time has but a little
way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the
Wing."*

In the many years that he was to know Lorna, Henry felt that this moment was the closest they ever came to a normal conversation.

She continued to look at him and he bent over to kiss her. It was simply an experiment. He wanted to find out if, when he attempted to kiss her, she would kiss one of the couch pillows. She was, Henry discovered, perfectly willing to kiss him back.

The next morning, when Henry was putting on his tie in front of her dresser mirror, she turned over in bed so her face was to the wall. "I suppose," she

said, "this is going to be one of those guys who spends one night with you and you never see him again."

"No," said Henry, "I promise that's not true."

• • •

Henry could think of no way he could have avoided acquiring his mistress. It was simply a matter of job security. Henry had, at the time, been a junior analyst working on a problem in the analysis of some sales statistics for Mr. Dawes, Acme's Eastern sales manager. One evening, when this work was almost completed, Mr. Dawes had invited him out for a drink. It was a decided compliment; under the mores in force at Acme, a sales manager did not normally extend such an invitation to a mere junior analyst.

"I've been watching you," said Mr. Dawes when they were seated and had ordered their drinks, "and I like what I see. You're a steady young man, the sort who'll stick with a project through thick and thin."

"Thank you," said Henry.

"As you probably know, I'm transferring out to head up the California office," said Mr. Dawes. "I've been looking around for someone to take care of some of my problems here. Interested?"

"Why, yes," said Henry. A promotion into sales was a big step forward at Acme Trucking.

"Good," said Mr. Dawes. "Her name is Linda and she's a very sweet girl."

"What?" said Henry.

"Linda, my mistress, or, I should say, your mistress now."

"Mistress?" said Henry.

"Yes. I've been wondering what to do about her. I'd like to take her out to California with me, but she's a hometown girl. All of her friends are here."

"Couldn't she get a job?" said Henry.

"Job?" Mr. Dawes laughed. "Not Linda. She's not interested in working."

"But how do I know she'll like me?" said Henry.

"No problem there," said Mr. Dawes. "I promised her I'd find a good, steady replacement. I know her tastes. You'll do fine."

"But," said Henry, "I'm not sure I can afford—"

"Afford?" said Mr. Dawes. "Don't worry about the cost. The whole thing is a perfect setup. She has a very modest little apartment and really inexpensive tastes. With your raise coming up, you shouldn't have any trouble making ends meet."

"My raise?" said Henry.

"Nothing official yet," said Mr. Dawes, "but when I give the front office my recommendations based on the work you've been doing for me, I'm sure they'll give

you the ELSA input-monitor job that's coming up."

Henry thought fast. ELSA had just been installed and all of the junior analysts were vying for appointment as input monitor. Acme Trucking was committing itself to automation and the road was wide open for those who climbed aboard at this time. It was also obvious that incurring the displeasure of Mr. Dawes could mean the end of any advancement at Acme. It was rumored that his California job was just a steppingstone to more important responsibilities.

"What do you say?" said Mr. Dawes.

There seemed only one logical response. "It sounds like a wonderful opportunity," said Henry. "I'll take it."

"Fine," said Mr. Dawes. He reached into his briefcase. "No reason you shouldn't take over right away," he said, handing Henry a Manila folder and a key ring. "The whole file is right there and, of course, her apartment keys."

Mr. Dawes, Henry realized, treated the business of having a mistress much as he would treat any of his sales accounts. You kept good records, maintained your integrity with the customer and, when someone else took over the territory, turned over the account to him. It was, Henry felt, an admirable show of dispassionate thinking.

Henry had been working with the sales department long enough to know that when an account was transferred, it was good policy for the new man to call on the client as soon as possible. He checked over Linda's dossier and made an appointment with her by telephone.

"I'm Henry Keanridge," he said when she opened the door of her apartment.

"Won't you come in?" said Linda. "Do you want some coffee?"

Henry had expected Linda to be a sultry and languorous blonde in a black negligee who lived in an apartment draped with silky curtains. She was, in fact, a plain brunette who lived in an apartment with simple, utilitarian furnishings. She was dressed in a rather austere business suit.

They sat and drank their coffee at a little table in her kitchen alcove. Linda brought out a large ledger and set it in front of Henry. "I thought you might want to inspect the accounts," she said. "I've always felt that keeping accurate books avoids a lot of unnecessary confusion."

Henry opened the book and scanned a couple of pages. Any accountant would have been pleased with the record Linda had kept of all income from Mr. Dawes and of her expenditure of this income. Mr. Dawes had been right. Linda would be very economical to keep.

"That's a very neat set of books," Henry said.

"Thank you," said Linda. "I guess the

other point we should discuss is scheduling."

"Scheduling?" said Henry.

"Yes; with Mr. Dawes, I kept myself free on two days a week, in case he needed me, and on two weekends a month as well. We can make any arrangement you want, but I feel it's a good idea to work out something of a routine in advance."

"Fine," said Henry, trying to sound as businesslike as possible. "Why don't we keep it at two days a week, say, Tuesdays and Thursdays. We'll work out the weekends as we go along. Now, do I need to leave a deposit?"

"No advance is necessary," said Linda. "Mr. Dawes gave me a check every second Friday."

"Every second Friday it is," said Henry.

"I guess that's everything, then," said Linda.

Henry got up. He was not sure if he was supposed to shake hands with Linda at this point, but he decided against it. "I'm certainly looking forward to a long and pleasant relationship with you," he said.

With the acquisition of Linda, Henry's love life became suddenly more complex. He was continually trying to keep straight the facts concerning the separate lives of his three women. Fortunately, he was soon promoted to input monitor and immediately saw the possi-

bility of utilizing modern technology to assist in an age-old dilemma. At his first opportunity, he entered a complete set of data on his women into ELSA's memory banks and discovered that she could handle all details of his scheduling.

Henry had added Dee to his collection of women soon after the automation of his love life. Dee was a happily married secretary who worked on his floor of the Acme Building. She and Henry had become lovers due to Henry's attempt at an act of moral reform and Dee's desire to maintain her moral integrity.

Before their affair, Dee had been a girl of impeccable virtue. She would no more have thought of having a love affair than of, say, not wearing a hat to church. Dee had immense pride in her virtue and felt cheated that she could not flaunt it in the face of at least an occasional temptation. But her virtue shone about her with an aura so obvious that no man at the office ever thought for more than a fleeting second of attempting a pass at her. Not that she was unattractive. She was a buxom little blonde who chose her clothes to accentuate her obvious charms. Nonetheless, through all of her long days at the office, none of the men so much as hinted at a single depravity.

In desperation, she became a flirt. She

began to bat her big blue eyes at the men and to ask them if, when their wives were away, she couldn't come over and cook dinner for them. None of the men took this very seriously. Her aura of virtue shone through all her flirtation. However, some of them would, all in fun, occasionally pinch her in passing or mutter something in her ear about how difficult it was for them to keep their hands off her.

Although such incidents were flattering, they were not enough. She needed a situation that would truly test the mettle of her honor.

Henry watched Dee's flirtations with a great sadness in his heart. To him, Dee symbolized the last of the pure virtue left in the world. He tried to look at her with stern approbation whenever she batted her eyes at him, and he longed to reprimand her each time he saw her flirting with any of the other men. But he held back, unsure as to how he could approach this delicate subject.

Before long, however, he had his chance. One day, when Henry's wife and children happened to be away visiting relatives, Dee came into the console room, batted her eyes at Henry and said, "Henry, you live in Garden Acres, don't you? Could you drive me home tonight, if you feel you can trust me in the car alone with you?" The last bit was for the

BUY FAMOUS PRESTONE® JET WAX...

GET **KODAK'S** HAWKEYE
INSTAMATIC
CAMERA KIT WITH KODAK COLOR FILM
\$15.95 VALUE, ONLY \$9.95



...AND YOU GET YOUR \$9.95 BACK!

Here's why: We're so anxious for you to see how amazing "Prestone" JET WAX easily gives your car a long lasting, deep diamond finish that we make this spectacular offer...Kodak's Hawkeye Instamatic Camera Kit with Kodak Color Film (12 exposures), Camera, "Eveready" Batteries, Flash Cube and Carry Strap.

Here's how: 1. Send in sales slip from purchase of "Prestone" JET WAX (liquid or paste) along with this coupon.

2. Enclose check or money order for \$9.95 which will be refunded when you have had 5 rolls of color film processed at low, direct-by-mail prices.

3. With each processing, you get a roll of Kodak Color Film. You pay only \$4.25 for the processing and this includes the color film. You will also receive a validated voucher.

4. When prints from 5th roll are returned, you'll have 5 vouchers. Return them and we'll refund your \$9.95. (You have 2 years to collect them.)

CLIP HERE

PRESTONE® JET WAX CAR POLISH—LIQUID OR PASTE

FILL OUT THIS COUPON NOW!

MAIL TO:

MONEY BACK CAMERA OFFER

P. O. BOX 35534

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. 55460

Enclosed is sales slip from Prestone JET WAX purchase and check or money order for \$9.95, payable to Money Back Camera Offer. Please send Kodak's Hawkeye Instamatic Camera Kit.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ *ZIP CODE _____

*U. S. Postal regulations require use of Zip Code. Void where prohibited by law. Coupon must be mailed before Dec. 31, 1968.



P2

*Prestone® is a registered trade mark of UNION CARBIDE CORPORATION

UNION CARBIDE

benefit of Joe Willard, who happened to be in the room at the time.

A plan formed instantly in Henry's mind. "Sure, baby," he said, "and why don't you stop off at my house for a drink on the way? You don't think your husband would mind?"

"My husband trusts me completely, the fool," said Dee.

On the drive home, Henry chatted amicably with Dee about the weather, bowling and the people at Acme Trucking. When he approached his house, he swung into the driveway and shut off the engine. Disbelief filled Dee's face. She had never suspected that Henry had been serious about the drink at his house.

Henry saw the doubt in her face and was pleased. She must learn once and for all that her virtue was not something to be flaunted. For her own good, he would play the role of the rake to the extreme.

When they were seated on his living-room couch with a martini in hand, he smiled wolfishly at her and said, "I'm awfully glad you could stop in. Things are lonely alone here at night."

"I can only stay a minute," said Dee. "My husband expects me to be home soon."

"I thought," said Henry, "he trusted you completely."

Dee blushed and took a big sip of her drink.

Henry's strategy was simple. He planned to lead her almost to the moment of seduction and then to confront her with her hypocrisy. He hoped that this lesson would bring the end of her flirtatious ways.

"You know," he said, "I always thought that you were one of the most attractive secretaries at work."

"You did?" said Dee.

"I don't mean just a good-looker. I knew right off that you were the type of girl who likes to get a lot of fun out of life."

"Oh, yes, sure," said Dee. She sounded very unhappy for a fun-loving girl.

"You probably feel the same way I do about conventions," said Henry. "You probably feel that conventions are all right for the majority of people, but those of us with enough intelligence to work things out on our own shouldn't have to worry about conventional morality."

Henry could see the panic growing in Dee. It had almost reached its peak.

"And I've always felt you were a very intelligent girl," he said. He made a noticeable move toward her on the couch. Dee put down her drink and clenched her little fists. She knew that the time had come to defend her virtue.

Henry put his arm along the back of the couch behind Dee and leaned forward. "You are a complete fraud," he said.

"What?" said Dee, giving a little jump.

"You are a fraud. Now answer me honestly. If I had just now tried to kiss you, wouldn't you have beaten me off with your fists?"

"I'm a married woman," said Dee. "You wouldn't make a pass at a married woman, would you?"

"What about the big come-on you've been giving all the men in the office for the last six months?" said Henry.

"Me giving everyone a come-on?" said Dee. She was working hard at innocence.

"Oh, come off it," said Henry. "You know what I mean. You're a fraud and a hypocrite. You bat your eyes at all the men, but as soon as someone starts to make a pass at you, he gets that married-woman stuff. You have no integrity at all."

"I do so have integrity," said Dee.

"Oh, hell," said Henry. He reached over and grabbed her in his arms and kissed her full on the lips. He knew that she was going to beat him off with her little fists, but he did not care. It seemed the quickest way to get his point across.

But instead of pushing him away, she remained limp within his arms. Henry realized the struggle that was going on within her. Her integrity and her virtue were battling it out. Her virtue wished to beat him away, but her integrity was also at stake, as Henry had taken the pains to point out.

She moved as if to break free, but then her lips opened warm under his and her hands tightened on the back of his neck. Now Henry was frightened. He had no intention of seducing Dee. He wished only to teach her a lesson. Unfortunately, *his* integrity was also at stake. It was not honorable to stop just as a girl had indicated her willingness to be seduced. Henry tried hard to think of logical alternatives, but thinking was very difficult with Dee's lips against his and her soft body in his arms. He discovered that once committed to an action, Dee was very anxious to carry it to its logical conclusion.

An hour later, as she lay curled in his arms in his big double bed, she moved sleepily and whispered in his ear, "Now, what's all that about lack of integrity?"

Henry was not amused. He and Dee had trapped themselves into this situation. Now Dee would want to continue their relationship, not out of any real desire but because her code demanded that, having committed a momentary act of passion, she must prove that she believed in something more than just tumbling into bed on the spur of the moment. It was ironic. They had escaped from the rules of conventional morality only to discover that they were now bound by a new code that was just as binding and just as complex.

Henry's affair with Dee did have one beneficial effect. Dee stopped her flirtations with the other men at the office. However, Henry never knew if this reformation was due to her comprehension of the hypocrisy of her actions or whether she simply felt that Henry would be jealous of her playing around with other men.

• • •

It should not be imagined that Henry was incapable of a strong emotional involvement with a woman. He was, in fact, hopelessly in love with Zerlinda Smith, a dainty creature who worked in the vast complex of typists and file clerks known as secretarial services. All of the hurried productivity of that beehive of secretarial activity could not touch Zerlinda. She was always immaculately dressed in the latest of fashions, her make-up tastefully perfect. She always gave Henry a little cellophane-wrapped-doll smile when they passed in the corridor and Henry's being would take great soaring leaps at the sight of her. He longed to take her to serious drawing-room plays, where she would sit beside him, her gloves neatly folded in her lap and her eyes intent on the stage. He lusted for her dainty goodnight kiss just outside the door of her apartment.

But this love was not to be. ELSA would not allow it. The moment that Henry had realized the overwhelming quantity and hopelessness of his passion for Zerlinda, he had rushed to the personnel files, stolen all of her personal data and fed this information into ELSA's central file. He then requested that Zerlinda be placed immediately on his schedule of stops. ELSA rejected this request. "HENRY," ELSA typed, "IS ALREADY OVERSCHEDULED. NO NEW PICKUP POINTS MAY BE SCHEDULED FOR HENRY UNTIL HENRY HAS COMPLETED A MAINTENANCE OVERHAUL."

The problem was that ELSA thought that Henry was a truck. As a truck, Henry should be taken periodically into the shop to have his engine rebuilt and the rest of his equipment overhauled. This operation required a full week. Henry knew that he could not take a week off from his frantic schedule without falling hopelessly behind in his appointments with his women. He could, of course, have faked the data to ELSA, pretending that he was off being overhauled, while still seeing to the needs of his harem. However, he knew that unless ELSA had completely accurate records of his activities for that week, she would be hopelessly confused. ELSA did a perfect job of scheduling his love life, but only when she was provided with all the facts.

Henry had, of course, thought seriously of eliminating one or more of the women in his life in order to make room

for Zerlinda. The obvious choice for such pruning was Lorna. She was the least coupled into the rest of his life. It was really only a matter of telling her, like a gentleman, that their relationship was over.

He had tried once. He spent hours rehearsing his little speech and arranged a quiet moment in her apartment for its delivery. As he drew breath to speak, she said to the coffee table, "I suppose this guy is going to tell me that he has decided that our relationship is unprofitable and that this is the last time he is going to see me."

"Oh, no," said Henry, stunned by the almost perfect paraphrase of the sentence he had been about to utter. "Where did you get that silly idea?"

He never had the courage even to think about the matter in her presence thereafter. Lorna was simply too perceptive and would always anticipate him.

It was impossible to think of giving up Linda. As West Coast manager, Mr. Dawes had too much influence at the Acme Trucking Company. Henry knew that Linda occasionally wrote to Mr. Dawes to let him know how she was getting along. If Henry wanted to keep his job as input monitor, he would have to keep Linda.

Neither could Dee be abandoned. Dee was connected to too many of the rumor pipelines at Acme not to discover the fact that he had dropped her in favor of Zerlinda. And then she could wreak terrible retribution.

There was a vast underground organization operating among the secretaries at Acme, Henry knew. If he were blackballed by this distaff Mafia, he was doomed. Endless, but always justifiable, delays would occur in the work he wanted typed. Recommendations for his promotion would mysteriously disappear in the interoffice mail. Important telephone calls would never reach him. Henry knew better than to alienate one of the Acme secretaries.

That left his wife. Henry had often thought seriously about the possibility of obtaining a divorce from Miriam. Just what the grounds would be, he was not certain. He had thought about alienating her by telling her about one or more of the other women in his life, but such an expedient seemed pretty dishonorable.

There should have been some way to prove that he had never willfully taken any steps toward marriage. In business, for example, no matter what you signed, you could not legally obligate yourself to work for a company. With marriage it was different. Here he had, quite against his desires, indentured himself to Miriam for the rest of his life.

If only he could have explained the details of his courtship, if one could even call it that, to an impartial judge, Henry

was sure he could obtain a divorce. But there was no such thing as an impartial judge. The judge's wife would be waiting at home to pass her own judgment, if the judge gave in to Henry's logic. There could be no escape from Miriam.

Henry knew that there was but one way he could have Zerlinda. ELSA's scheduling program would have to be changed, and the man who could change it was Sam Gardman, ELSA's systems analyst. Sam was a studious little man who sat in a tiny cubicle of an office, pouring over ELSA's program listings and block diagrams and mumbling to himself about scheduling algorithms, buffer storage and throughput times. Sam might, of course, report Henry's illegal activities to the Acme management, but Henry's passion for Zerlinda was so strong that he had to take this risk.

As Henry explained his problem to Sam, a visionary glow came into the analyst's eyes. When Henry had finished, Sam grasped him by the hand. "You are a man of fantastic imagination to think of such an application," he said.

"What I need is some way of bypassing my preventive maintenance, so I can add more stops to my schedule," said Henry.

"Forget that trivia," said Sam. "We won't be bothered by that in the new system."

"New system?" said Henry.

"Henry," said Sam, "how many men do you think there are in this city who have the same problem with women that you do?"

"I don't know," said Henry. "Two hundred?"

"I would estimate closer to a thousand," said Sam, "all of whom would

gladly pay for assistance in their scheduling."

"I guess they might," said Henry, remembering his own problems before he automated his love life.

"We'll have to get our own ELSA," said Sam. "I can write the scheduling program myself." He stopped and looked at Henry. "You will go in with me on this deal, won't you?" he said.

"Sure, I guess so," said Henry in very much of a daze.

• • •

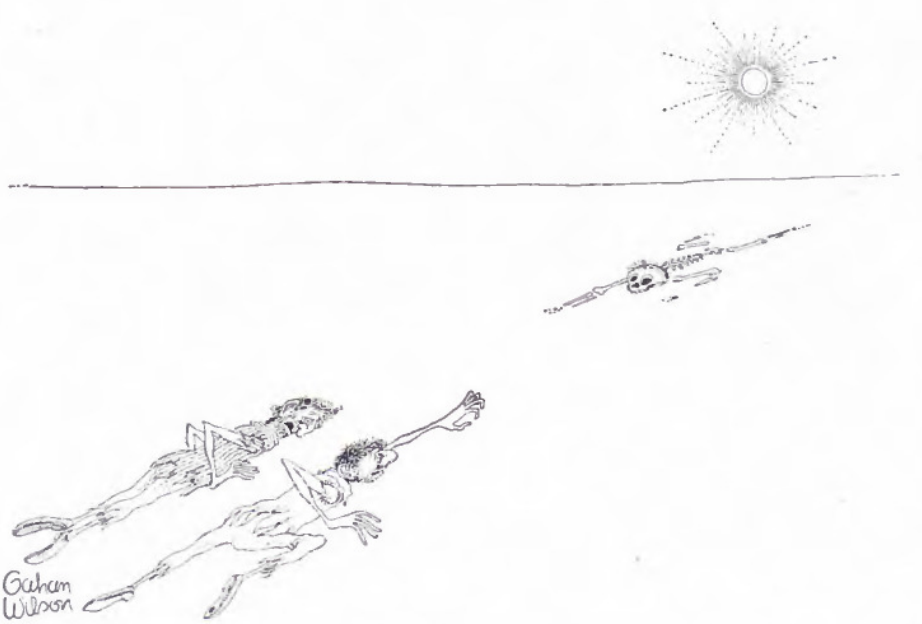
A year later, Henry sat behind his immense walnut desk in the brazen luxury of the executive suite of Femme-Share, Incorporated. Through a one-way glass panel, he could see the sleek cabinets of their ELSA installation and watch the lights on her call-director panel. Each glowing light indicated a customer who had dialed into the system to obtain his schedule of appointments for that evening. Although it was only nine in the morning, at least 30 lights were on. By late afternoon, Henry knew, the number of simultaneous users would swell to over 100.

Sam came in from his adjoining office and stood watching the lights. "I never thought I'd end up as a humanitarian," he said after a minute.

"Humanitarian?" said Henry.

"Each of those lights," said Sam, "represents a man whose daily life is being made happier through the application of science to a common human problem."

"I never thought of it that way before," said Henry, as he filled with the warm glow of altruistic pride.



"Looks like we can't expect to find much in that direction."