

FFF GmbH

by **Armagan Tekdoner**

Any Casanova might have guessed there was something fishy about our ad, when it showed up among the personals, on the net. However, even the real insider could not have envisaged its catastrophic consequences at all.

Man seeking his woman, New York City. Amateur science-fiction screenwriter from Manhattan, 29, is in search of a special soul mate to share his future. Well, this is me, the Lufthansa pilot in the picture. As for you, adventurous character is a must.

In fact, I was regularly seeking women. The science was true, the fiction was false, the writer was me and there was nothing amateurish. I owned a Manhattan apartment but most of my time was spent on a pacific island, busy with production. I was not 29. One cannot be 29 at the age of 61, but my multipurpose assistants were young. Beauty was a prerequisite, as underlined by "specialty". "Sharing future" was the job description informing the candidate that she would be everybody's soul mate thereafter. That damn good-looking man in the picture, Raymond, was the pilot of my private plane. The "adventurous woman" clause was a must for all our traps. After all, is everybody not a cheater to some extent? Our ad was almost veracious.

Please first try to understand what FFF GmbH is for. FFF (Friendly Femmes Fatales) is our company. Its chief executive officer is me, the brightest sophomore of Humboldt Institut für Management, too brilliant to be graduated. The company operates in the field of production and marketing of women. (We copied only the marketable ones of all races.) Distribution and pricing, both wholesale and retail, are handled by the products themselves. There are no annual dividends; all profits are deposited directly in my Zurich bank accounts. The staff consists of Professor Stumpf and 20 Raymonds. The original Raymond applied to our ad as a pilot, but no one knows which is which now. Professor Stumpf called what we did science; I called it business. Reactionaries could bore you stiff with moral lectures; humanists would name it murder. I was saying, the ad...

Various women answered the ad. First, our software deleted the texts without photos, and then we manually sent the pictures not conforming to our unspecified specifications to the recycle bin. Among the remaining few, only two responses did not contain the symptomatic keywords of mental retardation: hot, cute, great sense of humour, intelligent, responsible, true man, Mr. Right, etc. Those two received one character from us: "?"

Both were eager and fast. We loved the response containing the useful data: "212-252-1543 @ 20.30 ext 3244". A perfectly digital female!

Ray called her at half past eight o'clock sharp, jumped into my recent BMW 7.50iLA and the couple were in front of my Park Avenue residence. When offered delicious grapes, why do women not inquire of the vineyard?

Chet Baker's velvet voice and the colourful spotlights were all activated by the magnetic card Ray used to open the door and the romantic Park Avenue night commenced. Then? Here are the keywords to summarise: lovers, Dom Perignon (we were offered an attractive quantity discount by a distributor of Dom Perignon) and pills.

Professor Stumpf and I worshipped the subject, observing her reactions through the monitors downstairs. Not all wonderful and stupid women were necessarily models. 23, 5'9", black hair, green eyes, clear diction, pink lipstick, black nail-polish, loud soprano laughter, and this raw material was wasting herself for an MBA degree at MIT. Another devotee of abbreviations visiting NYC! Violet must have foreseen a happy ending as she stepped into the car.

We at FFF beautified the human race while conveying affordable happiness to many men in the world. Better-looking future generations would be our accomplishment.

Violet, in a suitable package, left Park Avenue with us and when came round in my plane, did not panic at all. Instead, she chatted with me on the global economy, sharing a lot of drinks during the flight. She did not give a damn for Raymond, unlike a typical victim who would beg him for mercy while proudly refusing all drinks, actually fearing harmful pills!

The Lear Jet landed at the island the next day, ending the best journey of my life. I went to

see Professor Stumpf in his office and the Raymonds started the preparations. The operating theatre would be waiting for Violet soon. I shall describe how I have flown off the handle, right after providing some essential information about the production stages.

The main and initial operation was the removal of the subject's original brain to erase her past, followed by the plantation of a pre-programmed digital brain. (These brains were designed to work in exactly the same bitchy way an ordinary female brain did, excluding one alteration: an extra function of systematically transferring any revenue to my accounts. The copy would neither be conscious nor would store any data about such transactions.) Then came retouches such as, renewed virginity, phosphorescent polished legs, fluorescent lips, etc. After the copying process – this stage was automated and our copy machine was as easy-to-use as a fax machine – the product headed to shelves. So, these are the copies that generate pleasure for a healthier society, and income for a wealthier me. And why are new originals continuously needed?

According to the microeconomic theory, when a product's marginal selling expenses exceed its marginal revenue, the product completes its lifecycle. Our working copies were becoming unprofitable, because of either aging or simply passing away. Therefore, their amount did not maintain itself. Without marketable items on the shelves, which company could survive? Still FFF had its principals, and limited the supply to a maximum of twenty duplicates of each woman, to avoid falling prices and unpleasant coincidences. As there is no corpse, it should now be clear, those know-alls who mention murder are talking nonsense. The only residue is a brain, to be recycled as a fresh appetiser for Raymonds afterwards. If this much background is adequate, let's go back to the island.

I was in Professor Stumpf's office. Violet's mysterious eyes, reflecting our fertile and green island, were increasingly covering my horizon even though she was not present. A Raymond approached to inform Professor Stumpf that the operating theatre was ready. I heard my voice informing Professor Stumpf that Violet would leave the island the next day, without passing through any operations. A brief silence followed, then Professor Stumpf exploded. What was I after? Did I not have rare copies at my exclusive service? He tried a bribe: the very first copy, which would be a tightened double-density virgin, and would be in my bed that night. I refused this for private reasons. Finally, he played his trump card: "Das original will tell alles und die Amerikaner will execution you mein freund!"

"Her name is Violet, and call me boss."

I knew it was crazy to order the Raymonds to dismantle all the machinery, when I did. All operations were cancelled for good, and Violet and I were dining on my wooden balcony, in the golden glow of the sunset. The ocean, the wild birds, her sparkling eyes, and her voice were intoxicating. Why did she ask so few and so pointless questions? Dining with a guy like me could make no woman smile so beautifully. To hell with logic! One cannot be suspicious when stars are being so brilliantly lit one by one. She seemed to understand my virtues. The moon was ascending like a crazy fireball and my inflammable heart was about to catch fire because of her expanding aura. Her mouth looked like a volcanic crater between two radiant lips; for the chance to thrust my tongue between those lips, I would not hesitate to die.

I found myself in a prone position on the table, my shirt touching the codfish, my mouth trying to touch hers. She was neither approaching nor receding, was still smiling and her dark hair was brushing my greasy bald head. I raised the reddest glass of wine her hands had just filled, to say, "Please leave tomorrow and forgive me," and not to say, "To your health Violet." She answered, "To ours, my love!" I immediately lost my talking ability; fell from the chair while perceiving her legs, then died without hesitation. Even contractions had no time to torture me. When offered delicious grapes, men do not inquire of the vineyard.

That was how my only copy died of poison. Even Professor Stumpf never knew I copied myself; no one saw more than one of us at any time. It was I who wrote from the very beginning. Naturally, a dead person could not have described his death scene. Anyway, what if I acted on behalf of my copy for a while, in a world of copies? A bit complicated? Actually, the vital missing piece of the puzzle causing the complexity, was an untold detail: Upon their arrival at the island, my copy left Professor Stumpf in the office and rushed at me to settle the issue. He said he loved Violet; we should terminate the business, etc. He suggested setting Violet free, but I intended to keep her for myself. Even the same brains, under the same conditions, can arrive at different conclusions. Telling him he

was nothing but my copy would not work, since he thought I was his, so we decided to toss a coin.

He said tails, I tossed the coin and it came up heads. I quitted the stage to become the audience of my copy's last supper. When I close my eyes, the indelible image of the balcony shines on my retina: the coconut tree in front of me, some wine in a canteen, jealousy pouring through my throat. I did not blame my copy when he drank that wine, Violet's mouth would have persuaded anyone, sooner or later. His mistake was dying too soon, before kissing her. But let's skip these details.

My copy remained motionless and Violet left the table. I was a distant shadow of Violet, through the paths of our moonlit island. Shiny silver legs were dragging me down the path; I was struggling against being hypnotised. The legs eventually led me to Professor Stumpf's cottage! She entered; I took shelter outside.

There I stood to witness the cursed scene of many Violets and Professor Stumpf, all together! Professor Stumpf had obviously played a dirty trick, introducing a copy nobody knew about to my copy. His sack like body was undressed. His 10" long steel-belted artificial attachment was instantaneously copulating with one after the other naked copies, while three other sexily dressed copies of Violet were serving the group drinks. The real Violet joined them. As a remedy to his deafness, Stumpf always played the hi-fi set at peak volume. The black velvet curtains in his bedroom were too thin to hide the infernal game inside, illuminated by more powerful lights than those of Hollywood. Needless to mention how quickly the matter was handled, and how effective were the machine-guns in the hands of the Raymonds, as I activated the emergency security management system. All the nudes stayed still in the quadruple bed, the waitresses ran like hell to the door, to be met by other Raymonds, and died seconds later than their precedents. They broke valuable vases here and there; a bamboo basket caught fire. I was dancing under the dark blue tropical sky, watching the final act from a safe distance. The choreography was inspired by the rhythmical thunderbolt the defective copies and Professor Stumpf caused, while being written off.

"Fire!" I was shouting, to the outer planets. The orange sky guided poor snakes to their holes, thousands of spiders were burnt. I sang a martyrdom march for suffocated mosquitoes. (I was an environmentalist, a proud donator to WWF.) There was no immortality for immoral soul mates.

That night, FFF GmbH and its personnel reached the end, on that island.

Now I am back again, ich bin ein Berliner at heart! That entire nightmare was long ago. To rescue my soul from God, I spent exactly two days in a monastery, and went out as a perfect puritan. Raymonds? They need my pin entrance regularly for their survival, and I have forgotten all pin numbers. I closed my dirty Zurich accounts today, to open clean ones in Lausanne. It is never too late for moral improvement of the self!

A café in Kreutzer housed the beginning of my decent career, thanks to a Turkey Turk I met there. We soon became partners in the country of my ancestors: at once a hell more grim than Auschwitz, and yet a Woodstockian paradise of limitless freedom.

I am the partner/director of an escort service in Istanbul now, specialising in authentic virgins, fresh and delicious soul mates, available at very high rates. I frequently go to the mosque despite having had a pair of my Versace shoes stolen there, both to secure myself with another religion in case of the first one's failure, and to expand our clientele. Thank you my God for this happy ending.

Comments About the Story

In many ways Armagan's story and style remind me of Stanislaus Lem. Sometimes we as readers get stuck in ruts and only continue to read stories that are built around a common theme, style or set of characters. Not to say that all those other Science Fiction stories weren't good in their own way, but Armagan's story is so original to me.

In such a short span of words he describes to us greed and lust with such a great mix of science fiction, that I had to publish this at Writer's Hood. He shows that not all stories must be of a certain type and style to be considered Science Fiction. I truly look forward to seeing more from this promising writer.

Scott HUMPHRIES

Posted by Chris Bonawandt on May 07, 2003 at 22:02:32:

That's funny--by the way the narrator in this story talks, I'd swear my fiance works for one of his doubles. Hey, Armagan, are you sure none of those clones escaped and is now in real estate?

Very witty story. One part reality, one part fiction, stir and serve first person. The perfect mix!

-Chris

Posted by Simon Owens on May 10, 2003 at 00:37:07:

FFF GmbH (two thumbs up)

Just wanted to write this to say that I enjoyed your story very much (more so than most the stories at Aphelion).

Posted by Robert Moriyama on May 13, 2003 at 10:52:15:

Well, you certainly can't say this is a Politically Correct story! I wonder if we'll see any heated commentary from the female readers and writers ...

Positive aspects: the cheerfully amoral protagonist and his Penthouse Letters attitude toward women (hey, as long as it's only the brain that's being discarded, it's not murder! After all, it's only the body that matters.) If you have to have an over-the-top villain, you might as well have one that enjoys his/her work. Negative aspects: a writing style that tends toward pulpish hyperbole (maybe deliberate? It *is* in keeping with the personality of the narrator / protagonist(s) ...); a cavalier disregard for scientific plausibility (the overall technological level seems to be early 21st Century (i.e., now), but the copying process and digital brains are likely decades if not centuries ahead); and that aforementioned mysogynism (in this case, contempt for women-as-people rather than hate for women in all senses). Woman as monster, woman as zombie love slave -- gee, I hope this isn't a trend.

Robert M.