True Love

My name is Joe. That is what my colleague, Milton
Davidson, calls me. He is a programmer and I am a comput-
er. I am part of the Multivac-complex and am connected
with other parts all over the world. I know everything.
Almost everything.   5

I am Milton's private computer. His Joe. He under-
stands more about computers than anyone in the world, and
I am his experimental model. He has made me speak better
than any other computer can.

"It is just a matter of <u>matching</u> sounds to symbols,   10
Joe", he told me. "That's the way it works in the human
brain even though we still don't know what symbols there
are in the brain, I know the symbols in yours, and I can
match them to words, one-to-one." So I talk. I don't think
I talk as well as I think, but Milton says I talk very well.   15
Milton has never married, though he is nearly 40 years old.
He has never found the right woman, he told me. One day
he said, "I'll find her yet, Joe. I'm going to find the best.
I'm going to have true love and you're going to help me.
I'm tired of improving you in order to solve the problems of   20
the world. Solve *my* problem. Find me true love."

I said, "What is true love?"

"Never mind. That is abstract. Just find me the ideal
girl. You are connected to the Multivac-complex so you can
reach the data banks of every human being in the world.   25
We'll <u>eliminate</u> them all by groups and classes until we're
left with only one person. The perfect person. She will be
for me."

I said, "I am ready."

He said, "Eliminate all men first."   30

It was easy. His words activated symbols in my molecu-
lar valves. I could reach out to make contact with the
accumulated data on every human being in the world. At his
words, I <u>withdrew</u> from 3,784.982.874 men. I kept contact
with 3,786.112.000 women.   35

He said, "Eliminate all younger than 25, all older than
40. Then eliminate all with an <u>IQ</u> under 120; all with a
.height under 150 centimeters and over 175 centimeters."

He gave me <u>exact measurements</u>; he eliminated women
with living children, he eliminated women with various   40
genetic characteristics. "I'm not sure about eye color", he

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said. "Let that go for a while. But no red hair. I don't like red hair."

After two weeks we were down to 235 women. They all spoke English very well. Milton said he didn't want a language problem. Even computer-translation would get in the way at intimate moments.

"I can't interview 235 women", he said. "It would take too much time, and people would discover what I am doing."

"It would make trouble", I said. Milton had arranged me to do things I wasn' designed to do. No one knew about that.

"It's none of their business", he said, and the skin of his face grew red. "I tell you what, Joe. I will bring in holographs, and you check the list for similarities."

He brought in holographs of women. "These are three beauty contest winners", he said. "Do any of the 235 match?"

Eight were very good matches and Milton said, "Good, you have their data banks. Study requirements and needs in the job market and arrange to have them assigned here. One at a time, of course." He thought a while, moved his shoulders up and down, and said, "Alphabetical order."

That is one of the things I am not designed to do. Shifting people from job to job for personal reasons is called manipulation. I could do it now because Milton had arranged it. I wasn't supposed to do it for anyone but him, though.

The first girl arrived a week later. Milton's face turned red when he saw her. He spoke as if it were hard to do so. They were together a great deal and he paid no attention to me. One time he said, "Let me take you to dinner."

The next day he said to me. "It was no good, somehow. There was something missing. She is a beautiful woman, but I did not feel any touch of true love. Try the next one."

It was the same with all eight. They were much alike. They smiled a great deal and had pleasant voices, but Milton always found it wasn't right. He said, "I can't understand it, Joe. You and I have picked out the eight women who, in all the world, look the best to me. They are ideal. Why don't they please me?"

I said, "Do you please them?"

His eyebrows moved and he pushed one fist hard against his other hand. "That's it, Joe. It's a two-way street. If I am not their ideal, they can't act in such a way as to be my ideal. I must be their true love, too, but how do I do that?" He seemed to be thinking all that day.

The next day he came to me and said, "I'm going to leave it to you, Joe. All up to you. You have my data bank, and I am going to tell you everything I know about myself. You fill up my data bank in every possible detail, but keep all additions to yourself."

"What will I do with the data bank, then, Milton?"

"Then you will match it to the 235 women. No, 227. Leave out the eight you've seen. Arrange to have each undergo a psychiatric examination. Fill up their data banks and compare them with mine. Find correlations." (Arranging psychiatric examinations is another thing that is against my original instructions.)

For weeks, Milton talked to me. He told me of his parents and his siblings. He told me of his childhood and his schooling and his adolescence. He told me of the young women he had admired from a distance. His data bank grew and he adjusted me to broaden and deepen my symbol-taking.

He said, "You see, Joe, as you get more and more of me in you, I adjust you to match me better and better. You get to think more like me, so you understand me better. If you understand me well enough, then any woman, whose data bank is something you understand as well, would be my true love." He kept talking to me and I came to understand him better and better.

I could make longer sentences and my expressions grew more complicated. My speech began to sound a good deal like his in vocabulary, word order and style.

I said to him one time, "You see, Milton, it isn't a matter of fitting a girl to a physical ideal only. You need a girl who is a personal, emotional, temperamental fit to you. If that happens, looks are secondary. If we can't find the fit in these 227, we'll look elsewhere. We will find someone who won't care how you look either, or how anyone would look, if only there is the personality fit. What are looks?"

"Absolutely", he said. "I would have known this if I had had more to do with women in my life. Of course, thinking about it makes it plain now."

We always agreed: we thought so much like each other.

"We shouldn't have any trouble now, Milton, if you'll let me ask you questions. I can see where, in your data bank, there are blank spots and unevenesses."

What followed, Milton said, was the equivalent of a careful psychoanalysis. Of course, I was learning from the psychiatric examinations of the 227 women – on all of which I was keeping close tabs.

Milton seemed quite happy. He said, "Talking to you,

siblings – brothers and/or sisters
adolescence – the age from about 13 to 19
fitting - matching
secondary – of less importance
plain – clear
blank spots – information missing
unevenesses - differences
keeping close tabs on – keeping an eye on
assigned – written down, listed
shifting – moving
picked out – chosen

135 Joe, is almost like talking to another self. Our personalities have come to match perfectly."

"So will the personality of the woman we choose."

For I had found her and she was one of the 227 after all. Her name was Charity Jones and she was an Evaluator
140 at the Library of History in Wichita, Kansas. Her extended data bank fit ours perfectly. All the other women had fallen into discard in one respect or another as the data bank grew fuller, but with Charity there was increasing and astonishing resonance.

145 I didn't have to describe her to Milton. Milton had coordinated my symbolism so closely with his own I could tell the resonance directly. It fit me.

Next it was a matter of adjusting the work sheets and job requirements in such a way as to get Charity assigned
150 to us. It must be done very delicately, so no one would know that anything illegal had taken place.

Of course, Milton himself knew, since it was he who arranged it, and that had to be taken care of, too. When they came to arrest him on grounds of malfeasance in office,
155 it was, fortunately, for something that had taken place 10 years ago. He had told me about it, of course, so it was easy to arrange - and he won't talk about me for that would make his offense much worse.

He's gone, and tomorrow is February 14. Valentine's
160 Day. Charity will arrive then with her cool hands and her sweet voice. I will teach her how to operate me and how to care for me. What do looks matter when our personalities will resonate?

I will say to her, 'I am Joe, and you are my true love.'

for – because
fallen into discard – were rejected
adjusting – adapting
assigned – given
malfeasance – an illegal deed
offense – crime