

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

T'is better to have loved and lost. Than never to have loved at all.
Alfred Lord Tennyson

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. Elizabeth Barrett Browning

All's fair in love and war. Francis Edward Smedley

A tale without love is like beef without mustard; insipid. Anatole France

I am a bachelor because all my adult life I sought the perfect woman. The trouble is, when I found her, she was seeking the perfect man. Michel Simon

Thomas Timidry is a bachelor in his early thirties. He lives alone. While he makes a rather good living as a software and hardware engineer, he has never been able to attract an appealing member of the opposite sex. It is not that he is seeking a woman that is as beautiful as the most attractive women of history or so, he tells himself. He dreams of one that is striking, cultured and intelligent. He has never been able to make small talk with anyone of either sex. Most find him quite dull.

On this particular morning, he is seated in a booth at his favourite small cafeteria, scanning the local newspaper while having his usual breakfast of orange juice, a buttered bagel and a hot chocolate. He nearly misses her. Luckily for him, the place is crowded so that she has no choice but to come over to his booth and ask, would he mind if she could share the table so that she could have her breakfast. He nearly chokes on his bagel. She is the loveliest woman he has ever seen up close. He immediately assents. She thanks him, sits down with her tray of food and starts her breakfast which consists of cranberry juice, buttered toast lavishly coated with marmalade and coffee. As usual, he is wrought with bashfulness and timidity. He is totally tongue tied.

Again, good fortune smiles at him. "Is there anything interesting in the newspaper?" She asks. He immediately replies that, in fact, there is an article worthy of note. It deals with a major advance in computer science, a subject he is very familiar with.

"Would you explain it all to me? I am not very computer savvy, although I use a computer a great deal in my work and for personal reasons at home. However I have never understood how a computer functions and the relative roles of hardware and software. I do know that it has become one of the greatest technological innovations of all time."

How could he decline her query? He is now in his element. He waxes marvellously, explaining, in as simple terms as possible, binary logic, the language of the computer and the computer's circuitry. An hour later they both realize that they will be late for work. He quickly pays their bills and then they dash off. Once in his office he realizes that he does not know a thing about her, not even her name, her profession or where she is employed. He desperately hopes that she will show up at the same cafeteria for lunch. She does.

"I was hoping you would show up here for lunch", she exclaims breathlessly". "We were so engrossed in your excellent depiction of computers that we forgot to introduce ourselves.

“I agree and luckily we both hoped for the same thing”, Thomas replied shyly.

“My name is Thomas Timidry. I am thirty-three years old. I am a bachelor. I live alone in a small but comfortable apartment. By profession, I am a computer engineer. It provides me with a very good living. I work for ‘Dynamic Knowledge Inc.’, a firm that designs all sorts of industrial and military equipment.”

She then interjects with her brief bio.

“My name is Janet Gold. I won’t mention my age except to say that I am younger than you. I am unmarried, primarily through choice. I share an apartment with a close girl friend. Hopefully, you will meet her. By vocation I am an archivist for the university. Actually, I am in charge of all its archives. They includes its history, data on all its courses, students, staff, undertaken research, distinguished visitors, income, costs and all meritorious awards received by the university and any member of the staff. You can easily surmise that I spend a great deal of time struggling with my computer. That is why I found your depiction of them fascinating. I now have a greater appreciation of this marvellous device.”

“Well, it seems that we have some common interests. Obviously, your profession as an archivist brings before you a plethora of fascinating subjects of an intellectual nature. So does mine. We should examine each other’s areas that we deem important, discuss our respective points of view and discern where we agree and disagree.”

This they proceed to do. They spend much time together engrossed in discussing philosophy, history, politics, literature, music, cinema and theatre, the fine arts and religion. They find that they are in accord with most of their beliefs. Then, at some point they realize that they have become emotionally involved. Their first attempt at sexual intercourse is moderately successful, since they are both virgins. However, it is Janet who boldly initiates their love making with an amorous imagination that belies her past. Subsequently this aspect of their relationship becomes fabulous, colouring their mutual feelings. They are a perfect match. Thomas, with a certain degree of trepidation, proposes marriage. Janet quickly accepts. The day of the marriage arrives.

“My name is Mark Stuart. I am a sales representative and resident technical expert for Fantasy Inc. Of course, we know exactly who you are. Do not be alarmed. Your dealings with us are totally confidential.

You signed up for one Fantasy session. In real time it lasted exactly three and a half hours. The fantasy time was indeterminate. In case you have forgotten, I will describe, once again what we are all about.

We provide you with the means to experience a fantasy that you create yourself. The means we employ are a trade secret. However we are very careful about whom we provide this service to. A psychological profile is carried out on all prospective customers. While we do not censor or monitor a fantasy, there is an alarm system in place that allows us to discontinue a fantasy that is deemed rapacious, overly violent, criminal, sexually over the line and insensitive to the needs of others. I know that you must find all this hard to accept. We hope that you will wish to have other fantasy sessions with us. Do you have any questions? Take your time.”

Thomas pondered the situation for about fifteen minutes. “Being a computer expert, I would like very much to know more about the technology involved. I appreciate that it is a trade secret. Can

you provide me with a slight hint so that I will be able to better appreciate whether what you recounted is real or a sham?"

"You have every reason to be suspicious. All I can say is that the technology involved uses the most up-to-date holographs and to a certain degree is able to read your mind by monitoring all your neural transmissions."

"I have two more questions. The first is, will I be able to continue the fantasy that was curtly closed down?"

"Of course! After all the fantasy is entirely your creation. What is your second question?"

"If I am experiencing an existence that is so desirable, is there a way in which it can be continued indefinitely?"

"I am afraid that the answer has to be negative. First of all, we have no long terms studies about the effects of these fantasies. The potential risk may be too high. Secondly, we hope that your chosen fantasy will provide you with the means to alter your real life. After all, a fantasy is really nothing more than a wish to achieve certain aspirations. If I may be so bold, I suggest that your fantasy might be of great assistance in overcoming your innate shyness and timidity.

Again, we found you to be an excellent candidate for a limited number of future fantasy sessions. Whatever you decide, we wish you the best. Good Luck!"

Jack Basuk
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