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THE ORIGINAL  
**SCIENCE  
FICTION**  
STORIES

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..... They were rebels against a tyranny that only a small minority considered oppressive at all — the Medarchy, where every citizen was a patient, and the doctor's word was law. And if they were captured — they'd be "cured" rather than executed. But to Cyrus Tarn and Virginia Carling, this was worse than execution!

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# PERFECT MARRIAGE

by George  
H. Smith

**Dr. Arthur seemed to welcome problem cases — and Joe Faber, the millionaire playboy who'd already beaten Tommy Manville's record, was certainly a problem case — if there ever was one!**

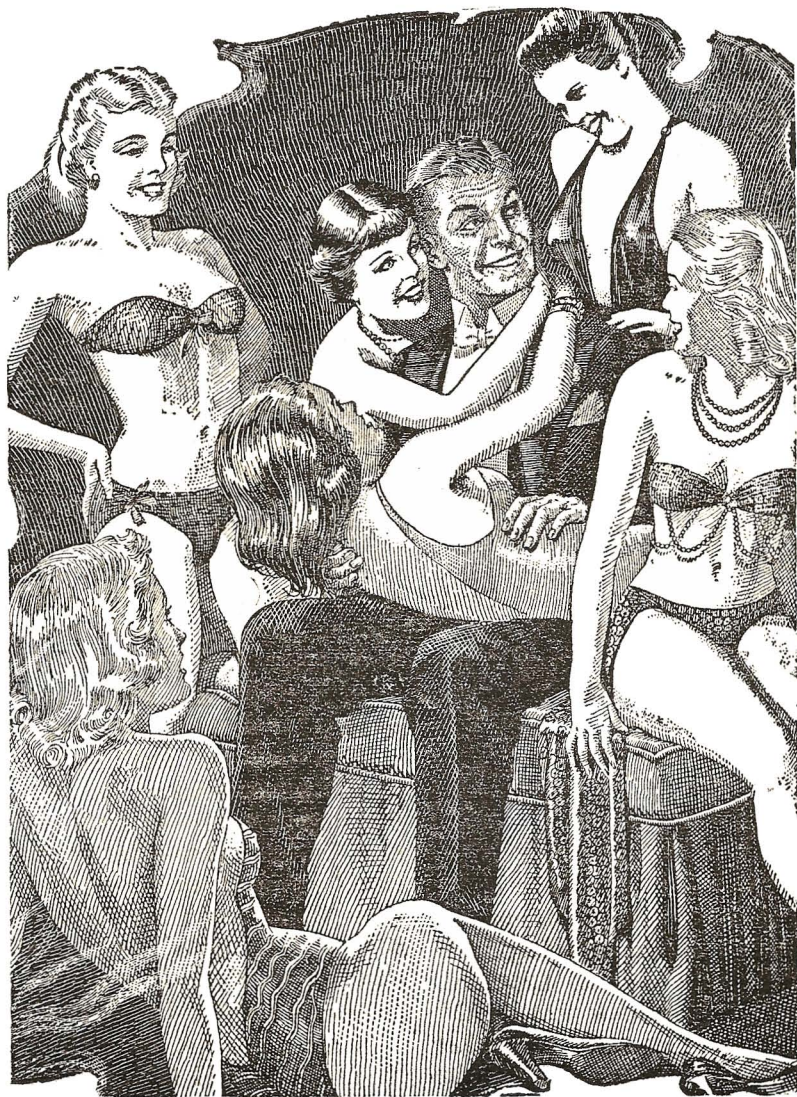
**T**HE TALL, dark-haired man had the profile of a 3-D idol. "Is this the place where they guarantee marriages?" he asked.

The welcoming smile on the face of the willowy blonde receptionist-secretary deepened. "Yes, it is, sir. Come right in."

The man returned the smile as he looked her over carefully. "Well," he observed, "if all the girls this outfit gets are as satisfactory as you, I'm sure that only perfect marriages can result."

Under his frank appraisal the girl blushed. He certainly wasn't the timid type, like so many who came to the clinic. In fact, he turned from her to admire himself in the big mirror which hung on the wall to the right of her desk. Relieved to have his eyes off her, she said primly, "I'm sure you'll find our marriage partners more than satisfactory, sir. Now, if you'll just give me your name, I'm sure that Dr. Arthur will see you in a few minutes."

He turned from the mirror and made himself comfortable



Carol thought that finding a woman to whom Joe Faber could stay married would be too much even for Dr. Arthur's setup...

in a chair before he said casually, "I'm Joe Faber."

Carol Jonson the receptionist blinked and stared. She almost dropped her auto-pen as she asked, "Joe Faber? Not *the* Joe Faber?"

"Right," the grin faded from his face as he continued, "The playboy who broke the record for broken marriages set by Tommy Manville back in the 20th Century. Not that I was trying to, mind you. It's just that I can't seem to find a wife I can get along with for any length of time."

"Well...well, I..." Carol faltered, at a loss for words. She finally lifted her wrist and spoke into the office intercom strapped around it. "Dr. Arthur, will you come out here, please?"

**A** FEW MOMENTS later, the door to the inner office opened and a roly-poly man in his late fifties, sporting little Van Dyke beard, appeared. "Yes, Miss Jonson, what is it?"

"Well...sir...we have what may be a rather difficult case here, sir, and I thought..."

"Nonsense, Miss Jonson, I'm surprised at you. For the Ar-

thur Marriage Clinic there are no difficult cases. You know that all of our cases are 100% successes."

"But Dr. Arthur, this is *Joe Faber*. I'm sure you've seen him on TV and read about him in *Newsfax* tapes. He's been married sixteen times and it has never lasted more than a month. He's...I mean...well..." she avoided Joe's eyes and tried to lower her voice so only the doctor could hear, "...he's supposed to be impossible to live with."

Joe Faber heard and grinned again. "Are you afraid to take me? Are you afraid that your perfect record will be ruined?"

"Not at all, Mr. Faber, not at all," Dr. Arthur said gently, rocking back and forth on his heels. "As a matter of fact, it's the problem cases—is you'll excuse the expression—like yours that have built up our reputation. Miss Jonson hasn't been with us long enough to realize that we particularly welcome people with unusual problems."

"Fine. Let's get on with it then," Faber said taking out a checkbook. "How much will it be?"

"Five thousand in advance

and ten thousand after one one year of happy marriage.”

“Okay, you got yourself a deal,” Faber agreed scribbling the check.

“Miss Jonson, please help Mr. Faber out of his coat,” the doctor said crisply. “And show him to the Emotional Diagnostic machine.”

CAROL HAD been with Dr. Arthur for only a week, and she watched with intent interest as Joe Faber entered the large black box that looked like a telephone booth at the rear of the inner office.

“This, sir,” the doctor said as he made adjustments on the control panel of the box, “is a little device I invented myself and it is the secret of our success.” He paused long enough to allow the other man to light a cigaret. “When I set the machine in operation, your every emotional need and desire will be recorded, and from the pattern established we will pick a perfect mate for you.”

“I hope it works,” Joe Faber said as he closed the door. “You have no idea how much alimony payments to sixteen women amount to.”

“It will. . . it will,” the doctor assured him, pressing the button that set the machine in operation.

A few minutes later, when Dr. Arthur let him out of the machine, Joe Faber asked, “When do I meet her, this perfect wife of mine? Do I come back here to pick her up?”

“Oh no, that’s not necessary. She’ll come to you. You make proper preparations for the ceremony, and three days from now she’ll come out to your place and you can be married.” Dr. Arthur led him toward the door as he patted him on the back. “All you have to do is come back after the stated interval, tell us how perfect your marriage is, and pay us the ten thousand.”

ONE YEAR later, when Faber returned, Carol Jonson was taking dictation. She had been dreading his return, because she was sure he would want his money back. Instead he tossed a check onto the doctor’s desk.

“There it is, Doc, and Linda’s worth every cent of it. I don’t understand how you do it but it’s wonderful. I’ve never

been so happy in my whole life. And this time it's *for* life!" the beaming playboy said.

He went out whistling happily, pausing only long enough to admire his profile in the mirror. The doctor smiled at Carol as he placed the check in his wallet.

"Well! I never expected to see that one satisfied with any one woman," Carol admitted.

"Ah, but Miss Jonson, you forget that young Mr. Faber is exactly the kind of patient we specialize in."

"I'm afraid I don't understand, Dr. Arthur."

"Let's see, you've been with us for over a year now, haven't you? You've proved very satisfactory, and I think that we can trust you with the real secret of the Arthur Marriage Clinic."

"The real secret?"

"Yes, Miss Jonson. Haven't you noticed that the people we turn away are the most normal ones, and that the ones we accept as clients are similar to Joe Faber?"

"Well...yes. And I have wondered about it."

"The reason, my dear," the doctor explained looking appreciatively at her crossed legs, "is that our little black box isn't exactly what we pretend it is. We call it an Emotional Diagnostic Machine but really it would be better named a Projected Force Image Integrator."

"A what?"

"A Projected Force Image Integrator. A machine that copies the personality of any given human being and then creates a projected force image of that person. In short, my dear, Joe Faber is married to an electronic image of himself but with emphasis on the female sex traits."

"Oh my..." Carol Jonson gasped.

"And I have never," Dr. Arthur continued, "Seen a more fully developed case of the Narcissus complex than Joe Faber's. That young man will be happy for the rest of his life."

