

Mr. William O. Cook decided that afternoon — it was raining and he was coming
5 home from work on the bus — that it would be pleasant to be two people. He was 41
½, 5'7", semi-bald, oval-bellied and bored. Schedule depressed him; routine gave him
a pain where he lived. If, he envisioned, one only had a spare self, one could assign all
the duller activities of life — i.e. clerkship, husbandry, parenthood, etc. — to the
double, retaining for one's own time, more pleasurable doings such as bleacher
10 viewing, saloon haunting, corner ogling and covert visits to Madame Gogarty's
pleasure pavilion across the tracks; except, of course, that, with a double, the visits
wouldn't have to be covert.

Accordingly, Mr. Cook spent four years, six months, two days, \$5,228.20, six
thousand yards of wiring, three hundred and two radio tubes, a generator, reams of
15 paper, dizzying mentation and the good will of his wife in assembling his duplication
machine. This he completed one Sunday afternoon in autumn and, shortly after pot
roast dinner with Maude and the five children, made a double of himself.

"Good evening," he said, extending his hand to the blinking copy.

His double shook hands with him and, shortly after, at Mr. Cook's request, went
20 upstairs to watch television until bedtime while Mr. Cook climbed out the window
over the coal bin, went to the nearest bar, had five fast, celebratory jolts, then took a
cab to Madame Gogarty's where he enjoyed the blandishments of one Delilah Phryne,
a red-headed former blonde of some twenty-seven years, thirty-eight inches and
diverse talents.

25 The plan set in motion, life became a song. Until one evening when Mr. Cook's
double cornered him in the cellar work room and demanded surcease with the words,
"I can't stand it anymore, dammit!"

It ensued that he was as bored with that drab portion of Mr. Cook's life as Mr. Cook
himself had been. No amount of reasonable threats prevailed. Faced with the
30 prospect of being exposed by the sullen double, Mr. Cook — after discarding the
alternate course of murdering himself by proxy — hit upon the idea of making a
second duplicate in order to give the first one a chance to live.

This worked admirably until the second duplicate grew jaded and demanding. Mr.
Cook tried to talk the two copies into alternating painful duty with pleasurable

diversion; but, quite naturally, the first duplicate refused, enjoying the company of a Miss Gina Bonaroba of Madame Gogarty's too much to be willing to spend part of his time performing the mundane chores of everyday.

Cornered again, Mr. Cook reluctantly made a third duplicate; then a fourth, a fifth.

5 The city, albeit large, soon became thick with William O. Cooks. He would come upon himself at corners, discover himself asking himself for lights, end up, quite literally, beside himself. Life grew complex. Yet Mr. Cook did not complain. Actually, he rather liked the company of his facsimiles and they often enjoyed quite pleasant bowling parties together. Then, of course, there was always Delilah and her estimable
10 charms.

Which was what, ultimately, brought about the disaster.

One evening, on arriving at Madame Gogarty's, Mr. Cook found duplicate number seven in the willing arms of Delilah. Protest as the poor girl would that she had no idea it wasn't him, the infuriated Mr. Cook struck her, then as it were, himself.

15 Meanwhile, down the hall, copy number three had come upon copy number five in the overwhelming embrace of both their favorite, a Miss Gertrude Leman. Another fist battle broke out during which duplicates number two and four arrived and joined in fiercely. The house soon rang with the cries of their composite battlings.

At this juncture, an incensed Madame Gogarty intervened. Following the breaking up
20 of the brawl, she had Mr. Cook and his selves trailed to their house in the suburbs. That night, a trifle before midnight, there was an unexplained explosion in the cellar of that house. Arriving police and firemen found the ruins below strewn with bits mechanical and human. Mr. Cook, amidst hue and cry, was dragged to incarceration; Madame Gogarty was, grimly, satisfied. After all, she used to tell the girls over tea in
25 later years, too many Cooks spoil the brothel.