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Surfaces

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SURFACES

“The best laid schemes o’ *Mice an’ Men*” (and Martians, evidently, if this issue of *Eerie Adventures* from 1953 is any proof) “Gang aft agley”: which might indeed have been in highland Martian to Corinna when I quoted it, but when I undeciphered it (go oft astray), she nodded with a weary recognition, Nathan having (*drumroll*) wakened only days before to fervently announce that he was leaving her, that what he *really* wanted was to be a woman (*cymbals-crash*): and no, she hadn’t planned on this upheaval seven years ago in the midst of their traded I do’s.

As for the Martian, he’s just landed with a “ray machine” that makes “slave zombies out of every living human being on the face of the Earth!” Now *there’s* a scheme. And “face”

is what I want to consider—“face,” the me we choose to show the world, whatever shriek or stoic shield we construct for public viewing, while the minions of the *real-me* conduct their saturnalia on some mizzle-hidden hummock in the brain’s back ranges several zillion subjective miles away. Jung says he analyzed “2,000 dreams per annum” and here, in his detailed journal notes, they are: the seven-petalled rose, the wolfman pulled like a tide by the full of the moon, the slinkily sheath-hipped snakegirl, the grail, the words that leave the mouth on rainbowed wings, the butchered heart, and the rest. Ascending now from Nathan’s deepest, longest-lost identity wells, is the tiny ivory figure of a woman, and it won’t be denied, it twists, persists, and *surfaces*

—that is, it comes up into the face. (And with, I should add, a convert’s overzealous use of blush-on and strident viridian lipstick.) He appears fulfilled: appears, on most days, wonder-filled. Corinna, however, is flying ever farther, and smaller, into her sky-blue anti-depressant capsules. This, the “plan-a-sensible-life” instructional tapes on the *Self Help* shelf at Mindfood Books & Video never prophesied, and neither did the actuarial stats; or the priest; or Madame Mystica’s Psychic Line. And as for the Martian... it turns out Marilyn and Dan are oceanographers in a bathysphere experiment, surrounded by the weaving deep-sea beasts

of the Atlantic, when that would-be conqueror rakes his numbing ray across the landscape: in a sense, they *aren't* "on the face of the Earth," so don't succumb. We see them rising

from the planet's most primordial hold and, over the panels of eight tumultuous comic book pages, battling to avenge and restore us all. The scene where they first emerge.... I can't help but remember a night, it must have been about 3 a.m. one summer, I saw a couple come out of the subway staircase, so imbued with *subwayness*, so stained with the sense of a far-away and preexisting darkness, that they seemed to be shambling out of a lair, and making their way by feelers, like a roach. Great roils of energy steamed visibly from their bodies. He was covered in coal and clay, and maybe dung for all I know, and she was wreathed in pliant seaweed. Or it might be I imagined them, and that they nodded in passing.