

What if this is what you were and you didn't even know it?

A fantasy by TODD STEBBINS

After a few beers downtown and a half-hearted attempt at romance, I made my way back to the dorm. Remembering that I still had half a pack of Tums at the room, I stopped by Hector's for a late-night cheeseburger. Once inside the dorm, something drew me to the television room. The set was on, but no one was watching. Johnny's guest host had just signed off, but Tom Snyder offered some

Lights came up slowly in the back, to Michael's left. A screen was visible and within moments a home movie appeared. The movie showed a young woman acting embarrassed and smiling a lot. She was joined by Michael Trulick. They hugged and went through little kissing antics.

Michael's reaction, sitting on the stool with his eyebrows crumpled toward the center of his face, mouth curled perplexed, led me to believe that he really did not know what the hell was going on.

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semblance of entertainment. I was settling stupor-like into a comfortable chair when Tom was interrupted by the strangest broadcast I have ever witnessed, surpassing even Jane Curtain ripping her blouse open on national television.

A nervous-looking young man sat on a stool under a bright spotlight. The surrounding set was dark. An announcer said, "Ladies and gentlemen, meet Michael Trulick." Michael's head jerked up as he looked around, shifting his head and eyes in quick movements. He was a nice-looking young executive type, with short blond hair that, wet with sweat, stuck in dark strands to the top of his forehead. He appeared to be of average height, though he sat on the stool with his legs propped up and his forearms resting on his thighs. Slumped slightly forward, his average-looking build suggested better-than-average power in his chest and shoulders.

"Michael Trulick," the announcer said, "this was your life."

"Michael, here's the star of your movie now, your fiancée, Sue York. Come on out, Sue, and join your future husband."

Lights came up to Michael's right. The young woman from the film stood in front of a microphone smiling, but avoiding a look in Michael's direction. Michael turned on the stool to face her, but did not get up.

"I used to be his fiancée," Sue said. "But one day I changed my mind. I decided that I didn't want to marry him. Why should I? Look at him."

The camera shifted back to Michael's stool as the background lights faded. Under the spotlight, sitting on the stool in Michael's very position and wearing his clothes was a huge green monster. Its skin was scaly and shone with a gloss, suggesting that it had just come from a late-night swim. It was something straight out of an old Samuel Z. Arkoff movie. The clothes were much too small for the monster, who studied them in

disbelief. The monster stood slowly, still looking at himself.

"Surprised?" The announcer's voice startled us both. "Well, we've decided to change your life. We've cancelled all your plans: marriage, kids, sales managership, the works. Your destiny has been changed. You are our pawn, and we have decided to alter your reality. Excitement mounted in the announcer's voice. "You are no longer what you think you are."

There was applause while Michael stood there, ugly green mouth hanging open, looking pitiful.

"Bring out the Trulicks, please."

A shy-looking couple stood in front of the microphone when the lights came up again. The man smiled a sheepish half-smile.

"These are no longer your parents, Michael Trulick, or whatever you decide to be called." The announcer's voice nearly cracked with excitement. "You are now a twelve-foot-tall ugly green monster. The Trulicks no longer love you, in fact, they find you disgusting."

"You thought that you were five-eight and handsome. A human being...Wrong!" The announcer was nearly shouting from enthusiasm. "You're really a twelve-foot-tall, ugly green monster. Cope with that!"

The man and woman nodded, smiling. "They aren't really your parents. What's more, you are really from France."

"That's right, Michael," Mr. Trulick said. "Your mother and I are not really your mother and I."

"Right, son," Mrs. Trulick said quietly, clearing her throat. "You came to us twenty-three years ago, just a small ugly green monster. No bigger than this." She

held her hands about two feet apart. "They made a deal with us. If we promised to raise you as our son and pretend that you were human and would grow up to be only five-eight and handsome, then they'd give us \$5,000 each when you were 24."

"That was a lot of money then, son," Mr. Trulick said.

"And they promised we'd get on TV too," Mrs. Trulick continued. "Right, dear?"

Mr. Trulick nodded, smiling.

"Well, there you have it, whoever you are. You thought that you were five-eight and handsome. A human being. One Michael Trulick, son to Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Trulick, who was loved by and about to marry Sue York, girl of your dreams. Wrong!" The announcer was nearly shouting from enthusiasm. "You're really a twelve-foot-tall, ugly green monster. Cope with that!"

The ugly green monster slumped onto the stool, wiping tears from his eyes.

"And what's more," the announcer added, "you smell atrocious."

The audience applauded as the spotlight faded and the stage darkened. A feminine hygiene deodorant spray commercial came on. I turned off the set and went up to bed.

Todd Stebbins is a senior English major from Gastonia, which undoubtedly explains things.

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