



Source: Karen DeYoung and Peter Baker, 'White House gives Iraq mixed marks in report', *Washington Post* online, 12/07/07.

Tags: corporeality, dreams

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It wouldn't do to try to scratch the itch, the spot where he felt the itch didn't actually exist anymore. A moment of clarity—that would have been good—like the moment when the stove is checked and definitely off. Later, that look can be remembered because it was sure and definite and clear and the mind can rest assured that the flame is out. In the case of the itch, the leg would have been assessed or made note of before its removal or even after its removal—maybe a moment to acknowledge the separation: there is the leg and I am here. We are two separate items. And maybe one good last scratch all around. There is a canyon between now and then but still the signals are getting through.

Now the leg is gone and the itch remains. The signs of normal life outlast the normal life itself. If you drive a car on the left and are used to reaching out with your right hand to shift gears you still reach with your right even when you are driving in a, say, a British car. You reach with your right even though the edge of the car is there and you bang your arm against the inside of the door. Some things become automatic. This allows the part that deals with routine to take it over. It is about economy. So are legs, and in this case, two legs are more economical than one.

But the real problem is this itch. And less, in this case, is so much more. And the economy brought about by habit is that if a spot on the leg itches or tickles one doesn't make a decision to scratch it, one simply reaches down and scratches it. This becomes a problem when the itch cannot be scratched, as in the case of amputation. As in a case like this.

As his mind looks for occupation he is thinking about another brain trick, the jerk that awakens the sleeper as he falls to sleep. It is the jerk that wakes the body when the neurons are misfiring, or so they say. And now he needs an explanation as to why then there is an accompanying dream that explains the jerk? Is this to calm the mind? If so, how does the mind know to make the dream? He remembers being woken up with a jolt from a dream of falling or stepping off a step that was higher than he thought. And he has been wondering.

He told Delta about this quandary. She guessed that the mind worked so fast it worked backwards. The jerk happened and then the mind essentially rewrote the past. A blank spot of sleep oblivion now filled with an explanation for the jerk. That's why he liked Delta. She was crazy. Can it really be all this so that the mind doesn't waste sleep time trying to find the source of the violent involuntary impulse?

There was still a spot saved in his brain for that leg. That was her explanation for why he still felt that itch. His brain was refusing to rewrite the area. He wasn't letting go. He knew there was something sensical in her words but they aggravated him. She wasn't troubled by such questions. She found solutions and moved on. Sometimes, he thought, there was room for further consideration. He couldn't figure how the same brain that could rewrite the past in order to explain with a story the jerk in his body caused by loose chemicals in a response left over from hunter-gatherer times to stop him from getting up from his cozy sleep couldn't now rewrite the existence of his right leg. He was tired of thinking about it. But the itch was still there. It had been for days now without cease.

He was on the verge of telling her to come in here and cut off his leg it was itching so much. If only he had the leg to lose he would lose it now to lose the itch. He was putting the words together in his head, lining them up in the right order, taking a breath to boost them into the next room.

And just then she comes in and she looks at him and she sees that look in his eye and she herself looks determined and as if she has a plan and she sits herself astride his chair with one leg behind him and she places her other leg where his should be and she doesn't say a word. It doesn't look like his own leg but then as he looks and looks he begins to accept that it could be and slowly, falteringly, he reaches his hand toward it and toward the spot that itches, that spot that has been itching now for as long as he can remember, a constant itch so complete it has become a pain, he scratches at first lightly and then a bit harder and the spot begins to redden but she doesn't move. She closes her eyes. Maybe she is far away. Maybe she doesn't even feel it. He continues to scratch and scratch and it is constant and steady now. He feels a rising sensation a kind of rush. And before he is fully conscious of what is happening he feels a great sense of relief, a burst, a blossoming, a kind of strange itch climax that resolves in a rush of release and a kind of internal light explosion.

As she gets up and walks away he notices that her legs are perfectly articulated from her hips and the only movement in her pelvis is a slight shifting from left to right. As her weight shifts both hip bones remain parallel with her shoulders. It occurs to him that she is beautiful to watch. And he doesn't ask himself whether she's cured his itch but he'll be asking himself later.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Karen Christopher.*