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To Itch, But Not to Scratch

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To Itch, But Not to Scratch

Ted Doty

Abstract

.....Oooh.... oooh,.... oh! What?....

To Itch,

But Not to Scratch . . .

. Oooh, oooh, oh! What? what
. oh! Oh, still here Oh, that itch. God, if I could
just reach down and scratch my knee. Itches just like a
loose scab. Damn it, if I could just even wiggle my leg a
little. Jeez, it's so hot too. If I didn't sweat so much it might
not itch so.

They don't care though. They don't give a damn. For all
they care I could be buried in itching powder. Jeez though!
It's just above the knee cap. Jeez, a guy'd feel better if he
was no, no, I really don't mean that. But, *Jeez* though!
If I could only rub it just a little.

Maybe the nurse would scratch it. Maybe she would. I
could call her and ask her and maybe she would. Yeah,
maybe. That would be a scream, wouldn't it? Start talking
now after three months and say, "Nurse, would you please
scratch me a little, just above the knee". What a laugh!
She'd know I was looney then. What the hell would she
think of me? Just another poor dumb sap off his rocker
after his ordeal.

Yeah, big deal. Ordeal orschmeal. I *will* go nuts if that
damn knee doesn't quiet down. It must be full of worms.
Yeah, only worms could make it itch like it does. A lot
they care though. I could be crawling with worms and
they'd just keep pumping the dope into me just to keep the
worms happy. They don't know that a scratch would do a
hell of a lot more good than dope. I wish I knew what
would stop an itch. I wish I knew. Concentration might!
Yeah, concentration. Concentrate on scratching it. Concen-
trate. A little lower . . . to the right a little . . . up a little
. . . no, back . . . concentrate . . . scratch . . . to the right . . .

What was that? Oh, the nurse again. That nice rustling dress. Look at her there in the mirror. A pretty white image in the mirror. Why don't they take down this curtain under my chin and let me look around without having to use this damn mirror. Pretty white picture in the mirror. Fixing another shot of dope.

Look at those arms. Oh, what beautiful arms. So strong and sure. Know just what they're doing. What lovely arms. She must have the most lovely arms in the world. If she only had a face to go with them. Her body is nice though. Oh, what a body. Jeez, she makes that uniform look like an evening gown. She's stacked! Most beautiful coordination in the world.

Hell-of-a-lot of good her looks are doing me. Jeez! I must be getting delirious from the heat. She's nothing but plain. Plain, with strong arms and a lot of bust. Just cause she's the only woman I've seen in three months. The only one since they carried me off the front and away from the wenchens of the war.

Yeah, 'an here she comes now with her needle loaded for me. Yeah, come on. Closer. Closer. Yeah, good old mirror takes over now. Lets me look at her and see only the arms and body without the face. Ha! Just the arms and body. Just the arms and . . . *Jeez!* . . . that damned needle.

Wonder why she didn't just go ahead and jab me in the head. High enough on the shoulder this time, she might just as well have. And now the ache of the dope going in. I can't see why anybody would want to get addicted to this stuff if it is always this much agony. Jeez, she could at least rub it a little after she pumps it into me. That's the least she could do for me with those arms of hers. But she doesn't have enough sense to know that the shot might hurt me. I could ask her to rub it in a little. But no, that would be as dumb as the itch. Oh no! I would have to think of that again. Can't I ever be satisfied with just one thing at a time. Jeez, if I could just rub or scratch. Just a little light scratch. Just even a little cool breeze. Oh, itch, itch, . . . itch. . .

. . . Well look here! Company's come to visit. On the ceiling no less. Don't even have to look through the mirror. Jeez, what a treat!

Look at the little marvel. Six legs. Six of 'em. And he can stand on the ceiling with them too. Six slender legs. Six black, hairy, stinking, filthy legs. And a pair of wings to boot.

Yeah, buzz around ya damn fly. Brag about your hairy legs. Drunk in your glory, aren't you. Going around in dizzy circles. Round and round. Showing off your legs. I could take off four of your legs and you'd still have two to drag along with. And a pair of wings to boot.

I wish you'd fly away and leave me alone. Bragging about your damn legs. Flying around here like you owned the whole place. You and your six legs, and wings to boot. Don't even have brains enough to appreciate what you got. I wish I could kill you. I'd just like to smash you into the little smear of filth that you really are.

But you just keep on flying, flying, flying. I can't hurt you. I'm no threat to you. I can't even look over the edge of this basket I'm in without a mirror. I couldn't smash you. I don't even have the arms to scratch the itch on my knee. I don't even have any knees. All I have is an itch that I can't scratch. Damn you, fly. Damn you.

—*Ted Doty, F.T.S., Jr.*



Incident

HUMAN LIFE begins at the instant of conception. One microscopic bit of matter penetrates a second and the merging sparks the chain of reactions which culminate in human life. Who can trace the ensuing movements of the many elements that combine and recombine, the devious and incalculable currents of genes and chromosomes which ultimately emerge as the organic form? Yes, this is mystery; but how much greater is the mysteriousness of the flaw which results from some infinitesimal misconjecture? For perfection exists only as an ideal which is the one projected image of a