

{(S)(K)(I)(N)}

By Iain McCurdy, St. John's – Senior Division Non-Fictional Prose

Mom told me it was genetic. She had passed it to me, and I could pass it on to my kids.¹ It was the first I'd heard about it. Just put cream on it every morning and every night, and don't scratch it.²

I don't know how to quantify itch, exactly. I have given it four categories. The first, the absence of itch (aka bliss, heaven, nirvana, shangri-la, paradise, etc). The second, mild itch, is something that looks or sounds itchy (like seeing an old wool sweater, or this essay probably) so that you feel generally itchy in its proximity. A moderate itch is like having a bunch of loose hair clippings down your back an hour after a haircut. Severe itch is the full blown force of an all-out itch that prevents you from thinking about just about anything else. This is the itch of the two-month old plaster cast; the itch of embedded sand in the crotch in the three hour long car ride home from the beach. Not to say that moderate itch is any picnic. It comes with the anxiety that a full blown itch is just around the corner, compelling you to scratch it, which can produce the full blown itch that you were worried about in the first place. I was told I had mild psoriasis, but when an itch is full blown I'm not sure that it matters how much of your body it is affecting. I have learned that with an intense focus (of the type of concentration you use to deal with, say, getting a needle) a moderate itch will go away on its own time. Eventually.³

The root of the word psoriasis is *psorian*, to have the itch, from *psora*, itch, mange, scab, related to *psen*, to rub. I am afflicted with The Itch; a two-month plaster cast grade itch that is never too far out of sight, for nineteen straight years...and counting.

-
- 1 Mom says the word *kids* the way mother's say it to childrenless offspring: equal measures hope, persuasion, and desperation.
 - 2 People say *don't scratch it* as if they were telling you not to drink poison, as if it were an easy and obvious thing to do, when they're really telling you something that's more akin to telling you, after walking through the desert for days on end and finally finding water, not to drink it.
 - 3 The upside to this is that I have developed great concentration skills. It's not so much useful for accomplishing anything productive as it is useful for tuning things out, like a ringing telephone, which is not an unhandy ability given my financial circumstances.