

# Afterword

## Itch

I used to say that the closest I get to writing fiction is journalism – certainly, the standards found in much of the popular press could lead you to believe that most journalists do not hesitate to simply make it up.

This was the very first short story of mine ever published; indeed, my first fiction of any kind to appear in print. The very first time that something where I had just made up got out there, as opposed to books and research papers which merely reported the truth, as I saw it, or some close approximation thereto.

I got, in the email, a suggestion to enter *Itch* in a competition to appear in the *Abaculus 2007* anthology. This turned up out of the blue, much to my surprise. The suggestion came from Danielle Kaheaku, Editor in Chief at Leucrota Press. She had apparently discovered the story browsing my web site.

As the editor of the anthology, and therefore presumably strongly influential in the final selection, it would be churlish not to put the story forward. Of course, I did enter the story, together with an early draft of *How to Impersonate a UFO*. The latter got nowhere, but *Itch* was selected to be one of twenty stories in the anthology.

I can still remember that moment in the closing days of 2007, being presented with a postal package which contained the volume itself. I was delighted – an excellent Christmas present.

After *Abaculus 2007* was published, and my author's copy had been delivered, I spend a few minutes comparing the text as published with the material I originally supplied. An insight into the mind of the editor, perhaps? There were a few words inserted, and a whole paragraph deleted – all of which meant that the story was altogether just a littlebit tighter.

Still, I was confused by a couple of substitutions: “pitta” was replaced by “pita” – presumably just one of those variations between British and American English – and “OK” was replaced by “fine”.

The latter still seems strange to me, but no explanation has yet been forthcoming.