

The man who mistook his wife for a hat

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In this story, Dr. P, a teacher at a local School of Music began to notice that over the years that he was becoming progressively worse and worse about mistaking people for objects and objects for people. Eventually it came to the point where he couldn't recognize anybody until they spoke, his ears would not deceive him like his eyes did. Because of this obviously strange and debilitating condition Dr. P decided to go see Dr. Sacks, to diagnose and help him with his problem.

However, there is no name for the condition that Dr. P has, in fact there is no good explanation for why this happens to him at all. Dr. Sacks in one of his meetings with Dr. P gave Dr. P a glove and asked him to identify what the object was. Dr. P was able to describe the glove and feel it and look at it, yet he was not able to name the object as a glove. Much like the British man with a 15 second memory span, Dr. P loved music and sang no matter what he was doing, about what he was doing.

What was so odd about this unnamed disorder is that the Dr. P had normal vision, he was not blind, so what was wrong was not his eyes but was how his brain perceived what his eyes saw. Somewhere along the line between his eyes and the part of his brain that recognizes what he is seeing something goes haywire and he is helpless. He sees a human yet cannot identify one, it is extremely bizarre. This disorder is very interesting, it is difficult however, to understand how this man can see what everyone else sees yet cannot interpret what he is seeing the way other do and the way that he did for the most part of his life.

I would like to know what it was exactly that may have started this deterioration of that part of his brain and when he first started to notice it. This story is a perfect example of how sight only begins with the eyes and what one sees is really decided by the brain. The Disembodied Lady This story is about a 27 year old woman named Christina. Christina loved being outdoors and especially loved playing hockey, she was a mother of two and worked as a computer programmer. One day after experiencing abdominal pains she went to her doctor and discovered that she had gallstones.

In order to help her she was going to have to have her gallbladder removed. As is usual with this procedure she was admitted into the hospital three days before the procedure. The day of her surgery she could not stand without looking at her feet, she could use no part of her body without looking directly at that body part. She lost all muscle, tendon, and joint sense from head to toe. This condition has been documented before and is known as "sensory Neuronopathies". It is a condition in which one generally cannot make use of body parts without looking at that body part.

The only cure or help for this condition is learning to deal with the condition and retraining ones body to move in the new way that it can. This is a very interesting story to me. Something in the human body, or the nervous system, goes wrong and the only way that someone can move there body is to focus on the part they want to move. It seems like the problem is a simple matter of loss of concentration, because it seems so me that looking at a body part only makes one concentrate more on that body part. Cupids Disease Natasha K. a 90 year old lady went to the clinic one day soon after her 88th birthday.

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She told the doctors that she had been feeling so well in the past year that she had taken on a new lease in life. She was acting like a flirty teenager almost. She enjoyed this new her for a while but then once her friends began to notice it more and more and soon label it as inappropriate for her age she began to think that she was physically ill and that this illness was the cause of her new found euphoria. She correctly diagnosed herself as having a case of neurosyphilis that had been dormant for about 70 years from when she first contracted it in a brothel that she used to work at.

She did not want it cured because she liked her new self however, she did not want it getting any worse because that could obviously cause serious damage to her. So the doctors gave her penicillin which allowed her her wish. She was able to keep her young feelings and stay the flirty fun teenager in a 90 year old body yet it would not get any worse. This story is amazing to me. I know all std's are bad for you however, I did not know that a mild form of syphilis if treated correctly can make the host feel almost rejuvenated and euphoric.

The Possessed In this story Dr. Sacks describes a severe form of tourettes syndrome in which the patient with tourette becomes essentially possessed by the tourettes attack. He calls this form of tourettes, Super Tourettes, a very rare and very serious form of the tourettes syndrome. This super tourettes, which is 50 times rarer than normal tourettes syndrome can cause a break down or disintegration of the personality of the patient with this syndrome. Dr. Sacks describes a women who had this super tourettes syndrome.

He had seen her walking around the streets of New York City and her spasms were incredibly intense, as he drew closer to her he noticed that her tics were caused by people walking by. Whenever a new person walked by her she would in an instant impersonate them, capture their identity in that moment almost. She would exaggerate passerby's every movement and gesture, she would capture them completely in a split second. After 60 seconds of this she retired to an alley where she seemed to be dry heaving, or expelling every identity she had just taken as her own. Dr. Sacks placed this woman in the Korsakovian category.

Unlike a normal touretter who is aware of his or her actions a Korsakovian has no realization of what he or she is doing or even of who he or she really is. She took on the personality of everyone who passed but could not retain her own identity, if she ever had one at all. This lady most definitely lives in a constant day to day struggle to discover who she really is. To me it is incredible and horrible shocking that this kind of syndrome exists. Sadly I believe this fate to be worse than death to the extent that people of this category have no idea who they are and what they are doing.

This super tourettes completely destroys the patient's identity and personality so that they become a walking drone that is completely at the mercy of these tics that cause them to be thrown into a miming frenzy that they are completely unaware of. Incontinent Nostalgia In this story Dr. Sacks tells of the effects of L-Dopa on the brain, specifically of the effects of L-Dopa on the brain of a 63 year old patient with progressive postencephalitic Parkinsonism since the age of 18. This lady had been institutionalized and was in a constant 'trance' for 24 years.

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When given L-Dopa, she was immediately relieved from her Parkinsonism and was able to speak and move normally. This also came with an increase of libido and energy, much like the 90 year old lady in the story 'cupids disease'. The woman she requested to be tape recorded and she sang songs and told dirty jokes and talked about being with her friends and with men and many other memories that had left her long ago in the throes of her parkinsonism. However, when the doctors reduced her L-Dopa dosages the woman forgot all about her prior experiences and memories she had when on a higher dosage.

This is very fascinating to me. It is true that everybody has dormant memories that are not altogether forgotten, just not remembered. The L-Dopa has an effect of a sort of forced recollection of these dormant memories. I would like to have a dose of this L-Dopa, if it was entirely safe, and see what possible dormant memories I have not remembered. A Passage to India In this story a 19 year old Indian girl named Bhagawhandi had a brain tumor that had been dormant since the age of seven. At that time it was small and not malignant.

However, when she had turned 18 the tumor had recurred and was now more invasive, malignant and inoperable. The doctors gave her steroids to reduce swelling or cerebral edema, and pain. As the tumor grew nearer to her temporal lobe she began having more frequent seizures, different from the grand mal seizures she had been having before. These seizures were described as being more lucid and calm. During these frequent seizures that began taking up the majority of the day the doctors and medical staff described her as being in a trance.

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Her seizures would cause her to have involuntary reminiscence of her childhood in India. She would remember the fields and festivals she had in India, at times she would dance and sing and in others she would lay silently in a trance like state with her eyes either open or closed but with a faint smile, remembering bygone times. When the medical staff would ask her what was happening she would reply quickly and politely. And once when Dr. Sacks reluctantly interfered with her seizure and asked what was going on she replied " I am dying- I am going home.

I am going back where I came from- you might call it my return. " Another week passed after that incident and she no longer responded to external stimuli, she was completely enveloped in her trance like seizures. Three days later she died. When she had her visions of home during her seizures she enjoyed them, they gave her comfort. I believe these were a series of near death experiences almost. Her condition was certainly terminal and she knew it and therefore I think that these seizures could be explained as being near death episodes where her mind was taken back to times happy to her.

Rebecca Dr. Sacks first saw Rebecca when she was 19 years old. She had lived with her grandmother for most of her life because when she was a child she was orphaned due to her parents sudden death. Her grandmother described her to Dr. Sacks as still a child, she could not read or write and had almost no motor skills. However, she was a very loving young lady who loved nature, theater, dancing such as ballet and being read to. She had attended workshops to help her with her motor skills and reading and such. However, when her grandmother died, she was devastated.

She lost the will to continue with any of her workshops and was only interested in being in theater. Dr. Sacks in turn enrolled her into a special theater group where she did amazingly well. No one in the audience would have guessed that she was in anyway challenged with the way she sang and danced and performed. This story is kind of interesting to me. It is amazing the effects that a lot of trauma can have on an individual. Trauma in her life caused her to give up o everything except the one thing that was very important to her, theater.

It was as if theater was the only thing she had left worth living for. A Walking Grove This is a story about a man named Martin, he was admitted in Dr. Sacks 'home' at the end of 1983, he was 61. He had mental retardation, impulsiveness, and seizures. Although Martin had all of these things wrong with him he was incredibly musically talented and bright. He told Dr. Sacks that he knew over 2, 000 operas by heart, there scenes, the actors in them, and even their costumes.

He had even memorized the entire Groves Dictionary of Music, all 6, 000 pages. He was an idiot sevant of music. He had a mental handicap yet was exceptionally bright in the field of music. I have heard of idiot sevants memorizing phonebooks, like in the movie Rain Man. However being at the home for sometime Martin began acting like a child, spitting and snarling and blowing his nose in his clothes. Soon he admitted that he needed to go back to church and sing in the choir, that he needed that structure in his life.

So Dr. Sacks allowed him to start to go to church and after sometime his whole image began to do a 180 degree turn. He was happy again and began

acting more mature and like a normal adult. This is one of the most amazing things to me. That someone with such a mental handicap or disability can excel to such measure in a certain field, in this case music. It is also interesting to me that something as simple as church, something that he was familiar with could cause such a drastic turn around in his personality.