

Phantom head syndrome

by James Knight

The Bird King suffers from phantom head syndrome. Ever since his decapitation by a critic, he has felt pain where his head used to be. Sometimes it wakes him in the night. It's so excruciating, he fumbles for a saw. But alas! there's nothing to chop off.

He's seen every specialist imaginable. The worst was the phantom head shrink, who proposed a one-size-fits-all Oedipal diagnosis. "The imaginary pain in your no-longer-existent head is an expression of castration anxiety. Your head symbolises your penis," was his theory. The Bird King was about to explain that he didn't have a penis either (having lost it in a bet), but thought better of it.

In his desperation, the Bird King even tried a homeopathic remedy, which involved listening to a bald man talking very slowly and sipping lots of water. The sipping proved tricky, of course. He was obliged to pour the medicinally useless liquid down his gaping stump.

Even the mystic couldn't help him. It soon became apparent that the combination of powerful narcotics and human sacrifice lacked the efficacy the Bird King had been lead to expect.

So his agony continues. Like a headless chicken, he staggers in circles, inconsolable. Passing children laugh at the spectacle, but secretly they pity him.

