Leg and Leg and Another Leg

by Shawn Misener

A toddler sidles up next to me and wraps her chunky arms around my leg. She's trying to move me somewhere, possibly Montana, but I'm not going anywhere until I finish programming this robot.

It occurs to me that, not unlike the grunting child, I've also got my arms wrapped around a leg. The robot is taller than a modest oak. I wonder if something has its arms around the toddler's leg, something I can't see. And if *that* thing has something attached to its leg, and so forth, down into cellular levels. The other way, too: The robot may be grabbing onto something so big I'm mistaking it for the countryside, or the sunset. I could just be one cog in an infinite chain of leg-attachment, stretching from the cosmos to the sub-atomic. And, if I manage to finally program this robot, and he begins his prescribed itinerary to most distant pharmacies, how will that affect the toddler's plans for me?

Never mind, the job is done. I slap one more button into place, press it down for exactly three seconds, and the robot's motor kicks into gear. “Let's go,” it booms. I forget to let go, and suddenly I'm swinging back and forth as he trudges across the prairie. It reminds me of those pirate ship rides at the fair, except I'm not strapped in and at any second I could lose my handle and fall to my death.

The toddler's grip on my leg is tourniquet-tight. “Hang on!” I scream down to her. She seems to be gaining distance on me, my leg is psychedelically stretching down a thousand yards to the ground. I look up for the robot and only see the sun... Or is that his crotch? Suddenly I am unsure, existentially unsure. Am I the robot, being built? Or am I the toddler, hanging on for dear life to the adult who seems to be made of taffy?

Regardless, legs are swaying, and everybody is moving. Just keep hanging on, I tell myself. Hang on, go, arrive.

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