

# laughter is fueled by moonlight

I know the funniest man in the universe. Do you? Were you there at night, the only time when Walmart parking lots exist, and saw him walking by? Six rounded strands, sprouting from a circle of negative space. A flower, an idea sparking. You know this image, yet you do not know the funniest man in the universe. Well, I do. He is a sauntering beast of unpredictability, a cloud in a parting sky of laughter. He is a man with enough power to engross an audience of chuckling cars and three kids, three kids in an eggplant car. He is the comedian of the stars.

Mr. Plumbine whose blood is black keeps us close with amethyst arms and circular legs and protects us from tentacled monsters. He ensures our safety while my best friends' mom runs errands, and life is feeling ethereal, as it does when you wait for someone in the night. Slow conversation stirs, syrup in our mouths. It is me, my best friend, and his brother, waiting until the low hum of Mr. Plumbine will warm our words into tart bites of salt. Waiting for the shopping to end. How long will she be? Do you think she got lost in the toy aisle, or the cereal? What is the grossest cereal flavor ever? What about ice cream? One day I will be old enough to have a cell phone and there will be answers to my questions. Until then I wait in a silk glow and turn my head to every passerby.

Oh, there are so many ice cream flavors that would be gross if they existed. Can you name a few? Where is the woman with the swinging ponytail? And strength that could lift a planet, that carries the groceries she buys to keep her kids fed? We do not know this, but the same amount of strength is needed for both those things. We do not know this, but when my head turns, so do the other two heads in the cars. Three of a mythical beast turn at the exact same time, and that is when a man in a coat painted with silence and the loudness of a neon sun strolls. Two eyes on the ground, six on him.

The comic I see before me, like a singer when they hit a pause before belting the ending note, attains a moment of silence before his audience reacts to the great joke. When we do, we become molten lava in a purple volcano that is rooted in the parking lot of a Walmart. He struts, sidesteps, tiptoes, or crawls past Mr. Plumbine, and our breath becomes the air outside of our bodies. My stomach sears with fiery pain as if someone was using it as the foundation for a great rock wall. The more time passes, the more rocks are stacked.

Oh, how it hurts. Is part of this hurt because soon we are old, soon we will never laugh like this again? Soon, will Mr. Plumbine go away, and maybe a car red and nameless will replace him? You do not know, because you were not there when the funniest man in the universe walked by. You do not understand my words because you have made this joke before, and spend most of the day making it. But maybe it is the thick moonlight glazing the late night, maybe it is the other two heads of the mythical beast that give this man his title. The funniest man in the universe has long walked away now. We do not notice this, because our laughter is the only thing we are really laughing about. We do not worry about the future because now only laughter exists, and not even the stars.