

Puerility

by David Backer

(n) the state or quality of being a child.

Scene: A thirteen year-old boy talks to a therapist. He squirms on a large couch, looking around. She clicks a pen, looks up at him, and asks the first question.

--So, why are you here?--Why am I here?--Yes. I ask every patient that.--Oh.--So?--I'm here because...no, you'll think I'm stupid.--No I won't.--Yes you will.--No I won't. It's my job not to think you're stupid.--Oh.--So. Why are you here?--Okay. I kind of have this, like, superpower.--Superpower?--Yeah, superpower.--And what's your superpower?--It's sort of hard to explain.--Try.--Okay. Like, when I see people sometimes I can, like, see them at different ages.--What do you mean by "different ages"?--See!--What?--You think I'm stupid.--No, I don't. I just want to know. It's my job to want to know.--Oh.--So, what do you mean by "different ages"?--So...I mean, like, I can see you right now when you were a little kid. Like what you looked like when you were little.--Really?--Yeah. And sometimes I can see people when they're really old, too. Like what they'll look when they're really old.--That's very interesting.--Interesting?--Yes, interesting. And so you're here because of this superpower?--Kind of. I'm here because I had this meeting with my teacher and my parents and the principal. They all said I had to come.--What, something happened at school?--Well. I don't know, I guess, like, my history teacher, Ms. Brin, she was teaching and she's like, really old, like eighty-something, but I saw her when she was really young and she looked beautiful. I guess I was looking at her weird and she made me stand up in front of the class and I was, you know...--Aroused?--Yeah.--Hmm.--So we had to have this meeting because everyone thinks it's really weird for me to think that an eighty-something old woman is beautiful. They think it's inappropriate. But it's really just

because of my superpower.--Do you think that it's inappropriate to be attracted to Ms. Brin?--I don't know. I mean, yes, like... it's weird. Of course it's weird. And inappropriate to like, go on a date with her. But I'm not gonna go on a date with Ms. Brin. It's just what I see. But people don't see it so they don't understand. Like sometimes I laugh at my parents because I see them as babies. They don't like that too much. --I could understand that. Parents need to feel like parents. All adults need to feel like adults.--You're right about that. --So, how do you feel about your superpower?--I don't think any adult ever asked me that.--It's my job to ask you that.--Oh.--So, how do you feel about it?--Well, I think it's okay. I mean, it makes me confused and angry sometimes because people don't understand. But it's cool. Like this one time I was babysitting my little brother, Alex. He's six. My mom and dad were working all the time so I had to look after him. Alex and I were on the couch watching the "Muppet Babies" on TV and my mom came home all pissed off from work. I know not to say anything to adults when they're like that, all stressed out, but Alex was really happy to see her. So when she came in he said "Hi mommy!" But my mom just kept walking without saying anything back and went into the kitchen. She didn't even look at him. After that Alex was quiet for like ten minutes, looking really sad. We watched the Muppet Babies for awhile and I looked at him, being all sad, and I saw him as a really old man, like really old. Then I looked at my mom. She was sitting at the kitchen counter drinking something and staring out the window. I saw her as a baby, like I do sometimes. She had her hand in her mouth and she was making all these baby noises. I laughed and I told Alex.--What did you tell him?--I told him that mom is a baby.--And what did he say?--Nothing. He smiled like he knew what I was talking about and got up from the couch and went over to my mom. He climbed up onto our kitchen counter and put his face really close to hers and said, "coochi-coochi-cool!!" It was so cool.--Why did you think it was cool?--Because to me it looked like a really old man was standing on a kitchen counter talking to a baby. And it totally was.

