

# Mr. Wazzeldot

*by* J.A. Pak

Mr. Wazzeldot has seven legs. He lives very comfortably. He likes to sit by the fire. There's a large cushion for a chair, and in the evenings, he sips his Bloody Marys. I know because I visit him quite frequently. Too frequently. Sometimes, Mr. Wazzeldot isn't very happy to see me. But he's a good host and invites me in and nods as I talk and talk.

Mr. Wazzeldot has no mother or father. He has no brothers or sisters. No relatives of any kind. No birth, no death, Mr. Wazzeldot has no beginning and no ending. I think this is very sad. But I'm sure I'm only being ontologically condescending.

When he speaks, the whole room murmurs. His voice comes from the many hairs on his legs. He speaks slowly, waiting for his voices to catch up. He would much rather listen than talk. He's very much entertained by stories. He doesn't differentiate between real and made-up, and when I try to explain to him the difference, it drives him crazy because he doesn't understand why I make the effort. Truth and fiction — it tastes the same to him, it looks the same to him, it feels the same to him — all stories. I'm the one being difficult in insisting there is a difference. And when I try to explain it all to him, I have to admit, I get all confused and start to bite my own tail, bits and pieces of my argument starting to stick to all the wrong parts. I once passed out. Lack of oxygen, from trying to talk back to where I'd started from and getting wound and wound back up again.

Mr. Wazzeldot is all legs, really. No head to speak of, just a soft squishy round body that sort of anchors all the legs in position. His feet are pads, so tiny, they're barely discernible. He's all legs, all thin legs that fold up in all manner of shapes and look covered with down because of all the amazing hairs that seem to manage everything for him. When I get to know him better, I'd like to ask him where his brain is. It could be inside the squishy body, but maybe his brain is in the hairs of his legs, all parceled out. Since he

talks with his hairs, he drinks with his hairs, he sees with his hairs — he must think with his hairs. But then, I often get things wrong and confuse myself and confuse everyone around me and Mr. Wazzeldot gets so annoyed.

What does it mean when you're the only one of your kind? The only example of your species in the entire universe?

He's a nocturnal creature. He'll make himself small. I mean, really small. He'll go into your ear and into your brain, tripping from thought to thought until he finds a morsel he really likes. If he likes it and it's portable, he'll tuck it away to take back with him. He has boxes and boxes of souvenirs. Sounds, colors, pricked emotions, a tossed aside word or memory. He'll take what you ate for dinner and eat it himself — what he likes is pineapple ice cream, pork dumplings, and slippery noodles, cold or hot.

I'd like to do it, follow him around while he's doing his collections. I can't think of anything more fascinating. And Mr. Wazzeldot says it's possible, if I really want to do it, only I'd have to make some changes, loose bits of myself, any bit that Mr. Wazzeldot deems unnecessary to the enterprise. And certainly, once I'm on my way, I never look back but focus completely on what I'm becoming. That in itself is always so fascinating. Only now, when I haven't begun, it's hard to decide and —

He's such a curious creature, Mr. Wazzeldot —

Well, now you've caught me thinking and I must run to Mr. Wazzeldot.

