

The Snowman on the Moon

by William Walsh

Green cheese? Nope. Try frozen sand. Frozen sand everywhere. When all you see is frozen sand, you learn to hate frozen sand. But then you realize that you're made of frozen sand, mostly, with an admix of lunar regolith for footing.

Who made me and why? That question used to keep me up nights. I always knew that my creator was a man because my being lacks all subtlety. I was endowed with no style, and my anatomy lacks anything by which I could measure my manhood. Turns out he was an astronaut. Of course. A playboy during that era. But sentimental about his Midwestern childhood and, at the time he made me, filled with romantic notions about his career. I understand he's divorced now. No kids. Blames the sterility on his space travel. He didn't mention me in his memoir. At least, I didn't find myself listed in its idiotic index.

I was a total improv job. I get the large, rolled snowballs, stacked biggest at the bottom, medium in the middle, and small up top. But I don't get the carrot nose. The two eyes made out of coal. The uneven stick arms. The mismatched mittens that don't want to stay on. I don't get the top hat, either. Or the scarf. Useless. Thanks for the scarf. How about a warm coat? Three buttons frozen on my chest, but no coat. No. Not a lot of thought went into my design. He just used whatever was handy, taking his inspiration from God knows what.

The corncob pipe I like. The corncob pipe was a good idea. Thanks for the corncob pipe. The corncob pipe helps me think. Relaxes me. When I'm on the corncob pipe, my mind works. I see the corncob pipe as proof that the guy who made me is capable of a good idea and has, at heart, a generous nature. The corncob pipe

was a gift that says, I am yours and there's more where I came from—not necessarily more corncob pipes, but more things that make me feel the way the corncob pipe makes me feel.

The view is sensational, if vastness is your thing. The firmament. Wouldn't trade it, though some days I think it's too vast by half. A galaxy of stars and planets and the moons that moon around the other planets. My moon is certainly the best moon, which is, I realize, damning the place with faint praise. You want to insult a place, call it lunar. It's lonely, and nobody ever goes to the moon anymore.

Seen from earth, I must be quite a sight. A lunar colony of one. A totem to man's folly, I'd say. I am the space race. More symbolic than any flag that's been planted on the surface of the moon. I'm like the hieroglyphics they find in caves. Why I am not a major figure in popular culture is a mystery. I should be written about. Children should draw pictures of me and form pseudo-familial attachments. There should be an item in the papers once in a while in which the USPS opens some of the mail people are trying to send to the Snowman on the Moon. I should be a figure of great interest, studied across academic disciplines. But no. Everybody wants the snowman to melt. Can't wait 'til I'm a puddle.

I try to keep the grump in me at bay, but it's a struggle. Especially around the holidays. I call it catalogue season. 'Tis a cruel season. I have nothing and no means to order anything. Nobody to shop for and nobody to buy things for me. But the catalogues keep coming. And these catalogues don't bring out the best in me. The catalogues switch on what I call my want switch. I never knew that I wanted so much until the first catalogue came in the mail. Nothing but catalogues some days. Home decor. Electronics. Smart toys. Spicy meats and cheeses. Lingerie. The lingerie catalogues offer more questions than answers. The women are inscrutable and totally stacked, built like no snowwoman I've ever imagined. I wouldn't know where to begin with these lingerie women. But the other

catalogues give me ideas.

I have two competing thoughts in my head lately.

Idea number one is big and I am inclined to dismiss it despite its persistence. Here it is: I'm not just three sections of frozen sand—I'm really four. The fourth section is sort of my second bottom and it is the moon itself. Crazy. But think about it. I'm made of frozen sand, the moon is made of frozen sand. It's a leap of ego that I want to take but can't seem to make. It's also an exercise in self-loathing. I am the thing I hate. My ass is the moon, and I hate my ass.

Idea number two is the easier course: Christmas. That is, I can't help feeling that I'm made for Christmas, that I have something to do with its celebration, even though I have good reason not to believe in Santa Claus. Two Christmases ago I had a perfect view of the North Pole on Christmas Eve and I saw no activity whatsoever. Not a creature was stirring. But I think maybe if I embrace the holiday wholeheartedly I'll realize some returns. Regardless, I know that I will again mail my wish list to Santa Claus, which I am writing today. This is another thing that the catalogues are good for. I mark up each catalogue and tear out the pages of the things I want. First pass I get the big ticket items: recumbent bicycle, panini press, a set of clay poker chips. Then a few practical items: flannel sheets, a telescope.

I don't know. I want so much.

