

# I'm Not Laughing at You

Sun Kil Moon

In the morning, I went to the breakfast area in Ghent. Jet-lagged, at 6:50 in the morning, the woman said "Hey, I'm not open yet." We got to talking, she said "Excuse me, sir, but you look very tired."

"It's cause I stayed up late, not because of cocaine or anything, it's just the way my internal clock is constantly being unwired."

She said "Where you from?"

I said "The USA"

She started cracking up, I said "Hey, why are you laughing at me?"

She said "I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing at the country from where you came."

She said "I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing at the country from where you came."

"I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing at the country from where you came."

She said "I'm not laughing at you, I'm laughing at your country."

People ask me in my country "What does the rest of the world think of the USA?" Said "Same thing that they always did, they think we're stupid and insane. Goes back to Columbine, and Reagan, and Nixon, and Viet Nam, and George Bush, and shock and awe campaign. It's always been the same since the first time I ever boarded a plane to get across an ocean. They think our country is insane. They look at me crooked when I am in Finland, and Portugal, Norway, and Spain. Americans say "Really? They always thought that way of us?" They ask me holding their plastic Big Gulps, I say "Yeah, they think we're a bunch of uneducated, fat, Mountain Dew drinking, fast food eating dumbasses. Once I said to a promoter "You imported me, right? So we're responsible for many beautiful things." He said "Yeah, but you guys also shot John Kennedy and Martin Luther King." I said "Well, one day of this conversation," I was saying "And by the way, we're responsible for Lou Reed, who are you responsible for? Sting?" He said "Well, we also exported Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, and The Beatles." I said "Well, you got me there. I give up. We're responsible for Michael Bolton, Steely Dan, and The Eagles."

"You better start swimming, or you'll sink like a stone." Bob Dylan said that

"For the loser now will be later to win." Bob Dylan said that

"Don't criticize what you can't understand." Bob Dylan said that

"Fuck hate culture, let's rise above. Let's come together and show each other love." I said that

"I love you all, I love you all, I love you all. I love you too, ghost girl in the elevator, hearing voices in the hall." I said that

"If you see somebody hungry, and sleeping in the gutter, hold them in your arms and tell them that you love them, for they're all your sisters and your brothers." I said that

So I went to breakfast room the next day very well rested. I said "How do I look today?" And she studied my eyes so closely, if she were a doctor and I were being tested. She said "Looks like you slept too much, and this is also not healthy."

I said "Where you from?"

She said "Romania"

I said "What part?"

She said "Transylvania."

I asked "Hey, what brings you here to Ghent?"

She said "My husband is Italian, my son is three. What is this? Why? Are you interviewing me?"

I said "I was just wondering how someone ends up in Ghent from Transylvania."

She said "Well you're here. And where are you from exactly?"

I said "The state where the kids at Kent Station were killed west of Pennsylvania."

She said "Do you mind if I say: You show signs of megalomania"

I said "I don't mind. Can I sit down now? It's 6:59."

She said "OK. What can I get you?"

I said "Nothing. I still got my bottle of water from the plane. I flew over on Lufthansa."

She said "Yeah, drink lots of water" and we talked about the heat. We talked about the August heat and the European heat wave

I said "Every time I play Belgium in the summer, it's usually pissing rain."

She said "Yeah, this is the worst heat wave we've had since 1978."

I said "Yeah, and my hotel has no AC."

And she said "Poor thing."

We played our concert in Ghent on a bar on a beautiful blue telecaster. And I asked the guy who owned it "Can I ask you a question", he said "Sure, Mark, ask me anything, I'll give you an answer"

I said "This is the nicest Telecaster I've ever played. Is there any chance I can buy it from you?"

He said "Well, this is your answer, I can't sell it to you. This was my father's and he passed it on to me before he passed of bone cancer."

I left the hotel at one o'clock in the morning, all the street fare stands were closing. But there was a group of Flemish people standing around a guy who barbequeing something that looked and smelled so good, I don't have to open my mouth. For Europeans, a known American, my belly gives it away and so do my baggy clothes. It doesn't matter the size and shape of people in Europe, they all wear very tight clothes

Anyhow, I asked a group of people hanging around the barbeque "How do I order?" The barbeque guy laughed at me and pointed at the three ladies in aprons standing on the street corner

They said "How many do you want? He is closing."

I said six, and everybody laughed. One lady said "You can only have four" holding four fingers up to my face. So I went and stood with the people and the cook, who looked at me twice, and said two words in Flemish that had everybody busting up laughing. My guess is that he said "Stupid American". My guess is that he said "Stupid American". Even if they were laughing at my expense, I didn't care and I laughed along with them. USA's a laugh, OK, I was too tired to defend where I live. This country is a laugh, and I'm sorry, but again, I was too tired to defend where I live. I mean, what did we invent? I was thinking the iPhone, MySpace, OKCupid? No wonder everyone in the rest of the world thinks we're all so fucking stupid. I mean, Buffalo invented Buffalo wings, and to me that's a very cool thing. But at a certain point Buffalo wings are heart attack makers so Buffalo had to invent another thing called the pacemaker. What a wonderful contribution to our world. Kids are committing suicide because they're being cyberbullied thanks to inventions created by nerds. Trump is rallying troops via an invention created by nerds

Oh, let me guess, when you listen to music, these are not the kind of words you want to listen to. You'd rather listen to Eight Miles High by The Byrds, but you don't want to listen to music at all, you want to binge out on some TV series or another. There's so many networks now, it's all a blur. Amazon, Netflix, iTunes, HBO, Showtime, Hulu. I ain't pointing fingers, I watch Finding Joseph too. And Mark [?] is my friend, so I watch Creed I and I watch Creed II

I need to know I'm loved, fucking off in the morning, at my favorite meal

"I need eyes looking at me as if there is no other loves on Earth." James Kavanaugh said that

"I love America more than any other country in this world and exactly for this reason. I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually." James Baldwin said that

"I'm gonna say one thing to the American people. I want you to listen to me. I'm gonna say this again. I did not have sexual relations with that woman,

Miss Lewinsky." Bill Clinton said that

"When Donald Trump becomes president, we will all face reality TV, and Twitter, and Google, and video games, and everything that has turned this country into a bunch of dumbed down slaves to technology." I said that

It was fucking hot out. I knew they were laughing at my coat. I always put one on at night. If you lived in San Francisco for thirty years, that'd be your natural instinct, too. So I asked the people around me "What's he barbecuing?" Somebody said "Lamb". When he divided it all up at the end, he was giving the Flemish people theirs first. And after they had all walked away, I was given the last four pieces. I thought "Well, this is a pretty transparent 'Fuck You'." One of the ladies in the apron said as I was walking off "The last pieces are the best ones. Those are good luck."

It was the best lamb I ever tasted, it must have been the salt. At the time, I thought "holy fuck, this Flemish guy is putting a lot of salt on this lamb." But it must have been the kind of salt that he put on the lamb that gave it the very nice flavor it had. I'm back in San Francisco and my bed feels so cozy and fog horns are going off all night. They sound beautiful and I'm reading Crocodile by Dostoevsky. Guy named Ivan crawled inside a crocodile's belly and he prefers life inside the gator's belly, so does his best friend. He's got a thing for Ivan's lady. Now it's daytime, drunk people are walking around my neighborhood and it's twelve noon. I said "Nathan, something seems strange. Where are all these people coming from?"

He said "They're here for the Outside Lands Music Festival."

I said "Who's playing?"

He said "Janet Jackson, the Weeknd, and Chromeo."

I said "Well, we gotta get to work so we'll be skipping that."