

Vincent Craig Wright

Nothing Touches

We weren't putting anything on the Discover until it got paid down but here we were on the way to the mall.

So I told Ronnie-Ann she doesn't deal with thinking like me.

"Everybody got shit in their head," she said and rode so slow through the yellow light it felt like she'd park in the intersection.

"I can't decide on this blender," I said. Couldn't help it.

She hit the brake. "Buster, I'll stop and get a forty."

"That's not it."

She jerked us into Burger King, said, "Every time," got out, sat on the hood. Lit a cigarette at me.

The drive-thru guy explaining something, all I could make out was, "Please," sounded like I felt.

Ronnie-Ann blew smoke hard through smoke.

Everything was like I felt.

So I got out and asked what happened to Meth-Mouth.

Ronnie-Ann said, "What happened to you? Fucking life the way we live. Somebody's mom leaving him with his grandma and never coming back maybe."

That didn't happen to Meth-Mouth. That happened with Ronnie-Ann and they came back. Just took a year.

And them Christian as Ronnie-Ann pregnant.

She got an abortion because of them and against their beliefs.

Ronnie-Ann took a breath and told me how in seventh grade Meth-Mouth was supposed to say, "And a Happy New Year!" at the end of the school play but nothing came out and he stood there until they closed the curtain on him.

He disappeared in the folds until they found him wrapped up in everything.

She said after that he never knew where to go.

"I think that's why he always told that story," she said.

"We meet at the Golden Corral to work out the deal," he'd start, "but Bro calls and he's waiting to get paid so I go in out the heat, get a table, order a t-bone rare, which comes out quick. Bro gets there, first thing, grabs my baked potato and drinks my butter off the corner."

Ronnie-Ann'd get mad we didn't hear him out each time.

"Bro's talking shit to the waitress, she's smile-acting, turning, but gets tired of his shit because he can't help getting nasty so manager lady's taking care of us. I'm working on my steak and the fucker's sparkling some shiny seasoning. Bro's smiling when he realizes I realize and fuck it I keep eating and every once in a while he dabs a rock off my steak. Manager-lady's watching, trying to figure us out until Bro sticks a rock to his fingertip with blood and A-I sauce and points at her. She disappears into the back so we throw a twenty on the table and go to get out but Manager-lady figures we ain't paying, runs out and slams her hand on the table when she sees the twenty like it'll fly off and before I realize what the fuck Bro goes and grabs my steak and sets the fucker on her head, standing there like he gave her a hat. She starts cussing him in her native language, letting him have these windmill punches until the steak slips down her face which Bro grabs and two blocks down the road throws to a dog tied to a basketball goal."

One day they said Meth-Mouth messed with this teenage girl behind Dunkin' Donuts but nobody believed it not even the police.

"That girl don't believe that," Ronnie-Ann said, "That's some shit somebody started."

I told her it added a way to believe, the way he looked.

She said, "I'd fuck him."

I didn't say anything because what would I?

"I would," she said again, the only time I ever heard her call him that, "I'd fuck Meth-Mouth," like she meant it, "If I wasn't with you, right situation and all."

"You wouldn't kiss him," I said.

"Fuck you, Buster," she said far enough down she didn't cry and didn't go in the bathroom.

Next morning I took her to The Skillet and we ate real breakfasts and talked about cooking.

She said she always wanted a yellow kitchen, how a yellow kitchen seemed like a life she'd cross into.

"Light a candle, Buster, in a old bottle and our plates don't match. Can we put that on the horizon?" Go on a fucking walk. People we know walk to get places when their car's in the shop or bike's stole." She looked at me like we were already moving. "I want to walk to not get anywhere."

This little girl in pink rubber boots cried over something she left in Burger King until her dad said something about never coming back.

They loaded up their mini-van I couldn't tell was red or brown and Ronnie-Ann said, "You're going to talk, Buster. That and think. The fuck of it, you don't think about what you talk about."

The little girl looked at us like we'd always be there.

"You don't put anything together."

"What's that about me?" I asked.

"You're fucked up," she said.

The little girl turned away like somebody told her then looked back as they drove off.

"I used to be that little girl," I said.

"No you didn't," she said like don't start this shit too.

"She'll remember us sitting here."

“You don’t know what a little girl’s thinking, Buster. Trust me.”

“She’s going to remember she left something.”

“I gotta pee,” Ronnie-Ann said and walked off.

I sat trying not to think.

Only thing we knew his uncle had a farm and always talked about taking him to Redding, turning him into a hard worker waking up and going to bed early, maybe a beer Saturday afternoons fishing or during the football game.

Even after I heard from some skinhead turned Christian how Meth-Mouth (He said Benjamin in his Christian voice. I still saw skinhead in his eyes.) got stabbed at a cookout in San Jose, I’d listen to Ronnie-Ann talk about him plowing and going to church and meeting somebody, and she’d say, “...showing kids what’s in a handful of dirt.”

When she came out Ronnie-Ann wore a cardboard crown and said, “Let’s just do a shot,” and drove home but we forgot. Next morning, on top of the covers with our clothes on, we both knew we were awake but laid there as long as we could.

Until she said I was right about that girl and I wasn’t sure who until Ronnie-Ann rolled over and tried to put the crown on me but it tore so she wrapped it around my head and kissed me anyway.