

## NOTHING?

Nothing is important in my life. I like nothing. Nothing bothers me. I sit on the porch and drink whiskey. I watch cars pass on the highway. I think of nothing. The main problem is that nothing can come from nothing.

I once had possessions. Then I had pockets. Now, my pants are torn, my hand reaches into nothing. But I do have whiskey, and that is better than nothing.

I once wrote a story. Then I had ambition. It was about nothing. It started with 'nothing.' The next word was 'nothing'. An entire page of nothing. The thrill of this word that contains everything: nothing, in a neat cadence, all down the page. Three stars at the bottom showed that nothing had come to an end.

I sent it to the paper. For publication. The editor said the story was nothing. But in those days, nothing was the rage of the town. At least among those who knew something. But this editor knew nothing.

We drink whiskey and talk about nothing. My buddy and I, we know about nothing. Once he said:

"You know something?"

"No, I know nothing."

"You know something?"

"What?"

"Women — are not nothing. They are something."

Now I have nothing, but once I had a woman. She had red hair and sex was great. Afterwards, she talked a streak of nothing. I understood nothing, except that women understand nothing. She didn't understand that a freshly fucked man wants to hear nothing.

Anyway, the world is full of nothing. Nothing is going on, even down by the railroad tracks. Except the time when this guy aimed something black at me that was not nothing. He said: "Give me everything." But I had nothing. He said: "Give me your Nike-Airs." I took them off. "Give me your Dockers." I took them off. "Give me your Levis shirt." I took it off. "Run!" I

ran, wearing nothing. And all the people, down there by the tracks, saw nothing.

Also, people don't hear nothing. At night, when a man comes home drunk, he feels nothing but rage. He smashes his house, and his wife, and his kids. But nobody hears nothing. The next day, he remembers nothing.

Also, people don't tell nothing. I was trying to tell nothing, once. In my story. But they publish nothing, down at the paper. That's how they are. Because they know nothing.

Still, nothing can come from nothing. And if it all began with nothing, then it must end in nothing. We think we are something. We think the world is something. We think the universe is something.

"But tell me, Buddy: How can anything come from nothing?"

So, this whiskey I'm drinking on my porch is nothing. The mosquito that bites me is nothing. The time, way past midnight, is nothing. And it's nothing that the red head left me. It might have been something, if she had not talked so much nothing. It's better not to talk about nothing. That's why we drink whiskey, in silence.

\*\*\*\*\*

What's this, bothering my eyes?

"Turn off the porch light, Buddy."

"Can't, sun's coming up."

Too much light. I can't see nothing. In my glass there's nothing. But, by the highway there is something.

"Did you see that, Buddy?"

"No, I saw nothing."

"Boy-oh-boy, isn't that something?"

"No, that's nothing. Children get abandoned every day," said Buddy.

"But not in front of my porch. With nothing but the dress on her back. Hey, you! Little girl. This woman drove off. What's going on?"

"Nothing," she whispered.

"Gee. Who was that?" -- "Your mother?"

No answer. You could ask her hundred more questions. 'What will you do?' 'Where can you go?' Nothing.

"Buddy, we have to do something."

“No, you can’t do nothing.”

She hides her face. She looks down. Her red hair is matted. Her sundress is soiled. Her sandals are covered with dust. She doesn’t move. She stares in the dirt. Then, in the dust, something happens. A dark spot. Small, with star-like tendrils. And another. And it’s not raining. I have to do something. I take her by the hand. I lead her to the porch. I throw away last night’s bottle. I go to the kitchen and find cereal. I bring some milk.

“Here kiddo, have breakfast.”

The rays of the sun warm the porch. On the table, milk drops mix with whiskey stains. She eats quickly. At last she does something.

“Right, kiddo, you have to do something. We have to do something. We can’t do nothing.”