



Buddy Wakefield is of the most versatile performers in the Poetry Slam world, using his talents for a wide range of pursuits from producing, acting and songwriting to binging on Hostess products and hickory smoked...wait, nevermind about that. A three-time member of the Seattle Poetry Slam Team for National Finals and 2002 Long Beach Grand and Rust Belt Regional Slam Champion, Buddy is known for his relentlessly honest subject matter, intense delivery style and bio-rhythmic punch. In the spring of 2001, Wakefield sold or gave away everything he owned, left his job as the executive assistant at a biomedical firm, and moved to the small mobile town of Honda Civic. Buddy is currently living from his car in the midst of a 2-year tour dedicated to the art of spoken word, supporting his chapbook (Some They Can't Contain), CD (A Stretch of Presence), and EP(Bodisatva). Buddy has The National College Dean's List, a novel, rare memorization training, over 70 first place poetry slams, skydiving, bull riding, river rafting, guitar playing, public speaking, teaching, team leading and event organizing under his belt. He is a tested & proven, highly competent, quality Gemini with zero defeats in milk chugging. Despite all this activity, Wakefield is still portly, but does hold a degree in English, with minors in General Business Administrations and Creative Writing. Buddy Wakefield pretends that, inside his skin, he's got a friend who's willing to give him everything he ever wanted in exchange for all he's ever been.

CONVENIENCE STORES BY BUDDY WAKEFIELD

We both know the smell of a convenience store at 4 am like the backs of a lotta hands.
She sells me trucker crack/Mini-Thins. Doesn't make me feel awkward about it. She can tell it's been a long drive, and it's only gonna get longer.
Offers me a free cup of coffee, but I never touch the stuff.
Besides,
I'm gonna need more speed than that.

We notice each other's smiles immediately.
It's our favorite thing for people to notice ^ our smiles.
It's all either one of us has to offer.
You can see it in the way our cheeks stretch out like arms wanting nothing more than to say "You, are welcome here."

She -
shows brittle nicotine teeth with spaces between each one.
Her fingers are bony. No rings. And she'd love to get'er nails done someday.
One time -
she had'er hair fixed.
They took out the grease, made it real big on top, and feathered it.
She likes it like that.
She will never be fully informed on some things just like I will never understand who really buys Moon Pies, or those rolling, wrinkled, dried-up sausages, but then again, she's been here a lot longer than me. She's seen everything from men who grow dread locks out of their top lips to children who look like cigarettes.

I give'er my money. I wait for my change. But I feel like there's something more happening here.
I feel -
like a warm mop bucket and dingy tiles that'll never come clean.
I feel like these freezers cannot be re-stocked often enough.
I feel like trash cans and candy wrappers with soda pop dripping down the wrong side of the plastic.
I feel like everything just got computerized.
I feel like she was raised to say a lot of stupid things about color.
And I feel like if I were to identify myself as gay ^
This conversation would STOP.

It's what I do
I feel.
I get scared sometimes.
And I drive.

But in 1 minute and 48 seconds I'm gonna walk outta here with a full tank of gas, a bottle of Mini-Thins, and a pint of milk while there's a woman trapped behind a formican counter somewhere in North Dakota who wants nothing more than to hear my whole story. All 87,775 miles of it.
I can tell, though, she's heard more opinions and trucker small talk than Santa Clause has made kids happy, so I only find the nerve to tell'er the good parts; that she's the kindest thing to happen since Burlington, VT; and I wanna leave it at that...

...Because men - who are not smart - have taken it farther; have cradled her up like a nutcracker and made'er feel as warm as a high school education on the dusty backroad, or a beer in a coozie. I feel like she's been waiting here a long time for the one who'll come 2-steppin' through that door on 18 wheels without makin'er feel like it's her job to sweep up the nutshells alone when she's done been cracked again. A man who won't tempt her to suck the wedding ring off his dick, but will show her - simply - Love. She doesn't need me or any other man, but she doesn't know that either, and I'm just hopin' like crazy she doesn't think I'm the one because the only time I'll ever see North Dakota again is in a Van Morrison song late (LATE) at night. I Promise.

Y'all, I feel like she's 37 years old wearing 51 (badly), dying inside (like certain kinds of dances around fires) to scream through you, a forest, if you weren't so taken with sparks.
But she wasn't given those words. She has not been told that she can definitely change the world. She knows some folks do, but not in convenience stores. And NOT with lottery tickets.

So I finally ask'er what I been feelin' the entire time I've been standin' there, smilin', getting' scared like I do sometimes, really (REALLY) ready to drive, I ask
"Is this it for you?
Is this all you'll ever do?"
Her smile
collapsed.
That tightly strapped-in pasty skin
went loose.
Her heart
fell crooked.
She said,
(not knowing my real name)
"I can tell, buddy, by the Mini Thins and the way ya drive,
That we're both taken with novelty.
We've both believed in mean gods.
We both spend our money on things that break too easily like people.
And I can tell that ya think you've had it rough,
So especially you should know:
It's what I do -
I dream
I get high sometimes.
And I'm gonna roll outta here one day.
I just might not get to drive.