

TOUCHE'

By:

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EXT. RURAL TRAILER PARK - DAY

Old, weather-worn trailers haphazardly scattered about.

The ground is dried and overgrown with weeds. The asphalt cracked and bumpy.

A scraggly STRAY DOG rummages through a trash bin.

INT. NATHAN'S TRAILER - DAY

NATHAN CHILDRESS (28), rail thin, pale, shaved scalp, sits at a small table. His eyes laser-focused on a computer screen as he feverishly taps the keyboard.

A KNOCK on the trailer door. Nathan freezes.

EXT. NATHAN'S TRAILER - DAY

The PARK LANDLORD (50), stands by the door, a white envelope in his hand.

The door's an odd one. A small makeshift opening has been cut out about face high. It's covered by a wood panel affixed to the interior of the door.

PARK LANDLORD
(loud)
Nathan.

He gives the door another KNOCK.

The wood panel slides open. Nathan's face fills the space.

NATHAN
Just put it in the box like always.

The Landlord looks down at a small wooden box.

PARK LANDLORD
Can't. Ain't your bill. It's your
rental agreement for the next year.

NATHAN
In the box.

PARK LANDLORD
I need you to sign it.

Nathan's eyelids flutter as he contemplates.

NATHAN

Just a minute.

Nathan disappears from view.

After a moment, Nathan's hand, clad in a surgical glove, creeps through the opening.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Okay, give it to me.

An eye roll from the Landlord as he places the envelope in Nathan's fingers. Nathan's gloved hand disappears like a mouse escaping into a hole.

The Landlord rises on his tip toes, tries to peer through the opening. He's not quite tall enough - gives up the effort.

Nathan's gloved hand, holding the white envelope, reappears.

NATHAN (O.S.)

It's signed.

The Landlord takes the envelope. The wood panel slides back covering the opening.

The Landlord shakes his head, walks away.

PARK LANDLORD

(muttering)

Fucking nut job.

INT/EXT. NATHAN'S CAR - BURGER KING/DRIVE-THRU - DAY

A beat-to-shit 1995 small sedan. The rough idle and exhaust smoke indicative of maintenance neglect.

Nathan pulls up to the Drive-Thru Window. He's greeted by MARIA (21), plump, Latina - wearing a Burger King Uniform.

MARIA

(pleasant smile)

Good morning, Nathan.

Nathan nods as he studies Maria's face.

MARIA

Seven twenty-five, as usual.

Nathan reaches over to the passenger seat, grabs a small pole with a basket connected to the end. Seven ONE DOLLAR BILLS and one QUARTER rest in the basket.

Using the pole, Nathan extends the basket through his window towards the Drive-Thru window.

Nathan's eyes linger on Maria as she removes the money, drops a fast food bag in the basket.

Nathan pulls the basket towards him, places it on the passenger seat.

NATHAN

Thank you.

An awkward pause.

MARIA

Anything else?

Nathan shakes his head, drives away.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - (PARKED) CURB SIDE - DAY

Nathan stares at his rear view mirror as he slurps the last of a soda.

He wipes his chin with the sleeve of his shirt, drops the cup in the Burger King bag - tosses it in the back seat. It settles atop dozens of other empty Burger King bags.

Nathan's eyes narrow, his jaw tightens as he adjusts the rear view mirror for a better view.

EXT. SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH - DAY

FATHER O'NEIL (70), clad in a black vestment, and a YOUNG BOY (12) put the finishing touches on a large, black rectangular CHURCH SIGN sign with white changeable letters.

The banner on top of sign: SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH

The daily message spelled out in white letters: "DON'T FORSAKE GOD'S SCRIPTURES"

Father O'Neil closes the glass cover over the sign, then tousles the Young Boy's hair as they admire their handiwork.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - (PARKED) CURB SIDE - DAY

Nathan's eyes frozen on the rear view mirror. He chest rises and falls as he takes deep, measured breaths.

IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

Father O'Neil, with his hand on the Young Boy's shoulder, escorting him towards the front of the church.

BACK ON NATHAN

Nervous twitches. He runs his hands up and down his arms as if trying to wipe off sand.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE/WAITING AREA - DAY

A female RECEPTIONIST at a desk.

Nathan stands in the corner of the room, as far away as possible.

RECEPTIONIST
(pointing at chairs)
You're sure you wouldn't be more comfortable sitting?

Nathan shakes his head.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Two large fabric chairs across from each other. A small table between them. An office phone on it.

DOCTOR ANDERSON (55), bifocals, silver hair, sits in one of those chairs reading the contents of a manila case folder.

He reaches over, presses a button on the office phone.

WAITING AREA

The Receptionist places a phone receiver back in it's cradle.

She stands, walks to the interior door, grabs the handle.

RECEPTIONIST
(at Nathan)
Doctor Anderson is ready for you.

NATHAN
Please, sit.

RECEPTIONIST
Pardon?

NATHAN
I'll get the door myself.
(off Receptionist's look)
Please.

The Receptionist walks back, retakes her seat.

Nathan makes a wide arc around her desk as if she had Ebola.
He reaches the door, turns the handle - pushes it open.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Nathan enters, closing the door behind him.

Doctor Anderson glances up, points to the empty chair across from him.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Please, have a seat.

Nathan hesitates - scans the room. Finally, he grabs the back of the chair and drags it to the far corner.

NATHAN
Here.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Alright. If that makes you more comfortable.

Nathan takes a seat. Doctor Anderson crosses his legs, removes his bifocals, points at the manila folder.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
So, it says here that you're afraid of being touched.

NATHAN
Or touching.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Anything?

NATHAN
Anyone.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
What happens when you are touched?
Do you feel panic?

NATHAN
I'm never touched. Not anymore.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Never?

NATHAN

I avoid people.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Hmm.

(stroking his chin)

How is it that you make a living then?

NATHAN

Translation.

(off Doctor's look)

People e-mail me documents. Manuscripts, contracts - all sorts of things. I transcribe them into English. From home.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Interesting. What language?

NATHAN

Seven languages. Spanish, German, French --

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Seven?

(off Nathan's nod)

How in the world did you manage to learn seven languages?

Nathan's eyes blink rapidly as he contemplates.

NATHAN

Because of all the time.

A quizzical look from Doctor Anderson.

NATHAN

The time I don't waste on people.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Nathan, You must have some encounters with people.

Nathan shakes his head.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

What about your family?

NATHAN

I was a foster child.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Even so, they would --

NATHAN
I've been on my own since I was
eighteen.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Well, what about school? You've
learned seven languages that must
have --

NATHAN
Self taught.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Really?
(off Nathan's nod)
What about food? Do you go to
grocery stores? Restaurants?

NATHAN
Fast food. Drive through. Same
place. Every day.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Why the same place?

A moment passes. Nathan clicks his teeth.

NATHAN
I like the girl there.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
Okay, that's helpful. Is that why
you're finally seeking treatment?
Because you found a person you
like?

A gentle nod from Nathan. Doctor Anderson scribbles some
notes in the manila folder.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
When did you first realize you had
this fear?

NATHAN
I don't know. As long as I can
remember.

Doctor Anderson stands. Nathan presses back into the rear of
his chair - panicked.

NATHAN

That's close enough.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

I'm just going to my desk. Okay?

Nathan nods. Doctor Anderson, manila folder in hand, goes to his desk, takes a seat. He removes a digital recorder from the desk drawer, brings it to his mouth.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

(low voice - into
recorder)

Classic signs of haphephobia.

NATHAN

What's that?

DOCTOR ANDERSON

It's the fear of being touched or
of touching.

NATHAN

I'm not afraid. I - I just hate it.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

The most common cause is sexual
abuse.

Nathan's breathing becomes heavy. Beads of sweat dot his forehead. Doctor Anderson leans back in his chair.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Nathan, have you been --

NATHAN

No! Why would you even say that!?

Nathan feverishly runs his hands over his shaved scalp.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Is that where he first touched you?

Nathan's eyes clamp shut. He bows his head. The knuckles on his fingers whiten as he presses his hands against his scalp.

FLASHBACK - NATHAN REMEMBERS

A YOUNG NATHAN (12) outside Saint Francis Church placing white letters on the Church sign.

A YOUNGER FATHER O'NEIL stands behind Nathan. His hand rests on Nathan's thick head of hair.

FATHER O'NEIL

Good boy.

Father O'Neil's fingers drop to Nathan's ear. He caresses the outer rim of Nathan's ear between his thumb and forefinger.

BACK TO SCENE

DOCTOR ANDERSON

It's why you shave your head - yes?

Nathan looks up.

NATHAN

No. I just don't want anyone cutting it...touching...

Doctor Anderson removes a prescription pad from his desk drawer. Starts to write on it.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

I'm going to write you a prescription for an anti-depressant. It might help until you're really ready to talk. But it won't cure you.

NATHAN

What would?

DOCTOR ANDERSON

That's difficult to say in instances where a patient refuses to provide details.

NATHAN

In general.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

I don't understand.

NATHAN

Say that...say that someone was abused. What would you tell them?

Doctor Anderson leans back, drums his fingers on the arms of his chair - not quite sure the session should go on.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

To confront and forgive.

NATHAN
 (indignant/angry)
 You think it's that simple?

DOCTOR ANDERSON
 No, of course not. But I do know
 that for...
 (a beat)
 Victims of abuse. Confronting the
 abuser is the best way to conquer
 the fear. Forgiving is the best way
 to find contentment once it is
 conquered.

INT. SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH - NIGHT

The CLICK-CLICK of Nathan's heels echo as he walks down the
 marble aisle of the empty church.

He stops when he reaches the Altar, falls to his knees, makes
 the sign of the cross.

FATHER O'NEIL (O.S.)
 Nathan? Is that you?

Nathan, teary-eyed, turns towards Father O'Neil, in full
 vestment.

FATHER O'NEIL
 Why are you here?

NATHAN
 Confession.
 (ominous pause)
 Yours.

EXT. SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nathan stands at the sign that reads: "DON'T FORSAKE GOD'S
 SCRIPTURES"

One by one, he removes the white letters forming the word
 FORSAKE.

Then the letters spelling GOD'S.

Then he moves on to SCRIPTURES. Removes the S, the C, the...

EXT. RURAL TRAILER PARK - MORNING

The dew on the grass still wet, the sun just rising.

Nathan, wearing a knit beanie sits outside his trailer with the STRAY DOG curled up in his lap. He pets the dog with one hand as he feeds him bits of a burger with the other.

The Landlord's car pulls up. He stops, rolls down the window.

PARK LANDLORD
(surprised)
You're outside.

NATHAN
I am.

PARK LANDLORD
Hmm.
(points at dog)
Well, be careful feeding that. He's
going to think he lives here.

The Landlord rolls up the window, drives away.

INT/EXT. NATHAN'S CAR - BURGER KING/DRIVE THRU - DAY

Nathan pulls up to the Drive Thru Window. Maria greets him.

MARIA
Good morning, Nathan. Going to be
seven twenty-five.

Maria's eyes widen in surprise as Nathan extends a trembling hand through the window and presents a ten dollar bill.

Maria takes the bill.

A moment later, Maria hands Nathan the Burger King Bag. Nathan takes it and places it on the passenger seat.

Maria then extends her hand. Her hand gently touches Nathan's hand as she places the change in his palm.

Nathan flinches at first, then closes his eyes, smiles.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Nathan now sits in a chair directly across from Doctor Anderson.

DOCTOR ANDERSON
So, you're feeling better?

NATHAN

I have touched. But I'm not sure
I'm getting better.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

I don't understand.

NATHAN

I confronted.

DOCTOR ANDERSON

Yes?

Nathan stands, turns and heads towards the door.

NATHAN

(as he exits)
I couldn't forgive.

INT. SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH/CONFESSIONAL - MORNING

Father O'Neil's blue-tinted corpse slumped in the dark
confessional.

The rope from his Vestment wrapped snugly around his neck.

EXT. SAINT FRANCIS CHURCH/CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Shocked PARISHIONERS, various ages and ethnicity, stand on
the sidewalk staring at a A CORONER'S VAN on the street.

Next to the van, two POLICE CRUISERS, blue and red lights
pulsating.

An OFFICER holding a roll of crime scene tape approaches the
Parishioners.

OFFICER

We're going to need you all to
clear out.

The Parishioners hesitate a moment then start to disperse.

As they leave, the Church sign behind them comes into view.
It's large white letters now spell: "DON'T RIP."

FADE OUT.