

Making Scenes
Megan Shannon

I. Introductions

“I’m sorry, are we supposed to shake with our left hand?” This is Cathal. In the local vernacular, the TH or Θ sound isn’t pronounced, so his name sounds like “CAHD-all.” This poses an interesting problem for me: do I pronounce it like everyone else, or use my New England accent to say “CATH-al”? Worried about sounding silly, I decide to avoid saying his name entirely.

I had no idea I’d offered my left hand instead of my right. I have to politely explain this away. “Oh, I masturbate right-handed, and we’ve just met, so in this case, yes, we are supposed to shake with our left hand.” Nice cover. Third or fourth glass of whiskey is in my right hand and I’m trying very hard not to drop it, but I guess, when meeting new people, it’s better to talk about masturbation than how intoxicated one is.

“How long do I have to know you before you switch back to your right hand?” He surprises me because he’s completely un-phased.

“Darling, we won’t be shaking hands again.”

II. Homesick for up to 10 minutes each week

I miss my mom and dad and brother. But that’s nothing new. I miss them when I’m in New York and they’re in New Hampshire. The three of them, snuggled together in the living room, in front of the fireplace, sipping hot cocoa and watching *60 Minutes* without me. It’s despicable, that’s what it is.

I miss them even when we’re in the same room. Wouldn’t it be nice if the four of us could die at the same time? Mom and Dad passing painlessly in their sleep (not until they’re at least 115 years old). Tim... overdosing on cocaine (that’s the closest he’ll ever get to being the coke-addled rock star he always aspired to become). I don’t know how I’ll go. I think I will just die, no cause.

But that would be no good. The chance of two parents and their two children (the four of them fit and healthy^[1]) dying of unique causes in different locations, but at the exact same time is so slim that once the press gets wind of it they’ll spin the story to make it seem like we were some sort of cultish family and we planned the whole thing, and that’s how I’ll be remembered when I’m gone. Or at least, it would detract from the tragedy and/or glory of my own untimely demise.

III. I swear I’m fine.

Concerned parents. “Yes, Mom, I’m having a great time. Yes, I’m happy. Plenty of sleep, adequate vegetable intake. Last night? I went out with a friend from class. Yes, a boy. How the hell am I supposed to know if he’s Catholic? No, we just hung out. His name? Mom, I need to go, can I call you back later?” (There’s no way in hell I can tell her how Catholic this boy was, or how much I drank, or what we really did. That much parental approval would just ruin it for me.)

IV. An argument

“Haven’t you read the Bible? The whole thing? That’s what I thought. If you had taken

the time to do your own translation from the original Ancient Hebrew like I did, then you'd know that the Old Testament is basically about how bestiality is the highest form of self-expression. No proper, God-fearing Christian, or really, any decent human being would ever soberly consent to having intercourse with another human. Wait, you haven't, have you? Oh, man, you're probably going to Hell. You know how there's a huge list of animals that aren't kosher to eat? Do you know why they're on that list? Those are the animals you're supposed to mate with.^[2] The original plan for the Earth was to have everyone and everything breed in all sorts of crazy combinations. It would have been wild if people just did what they were supposed to. And, come on. You can't make sweet love to your wife Susan, an actual pig, and cook her bacon and eggs the next morning. That's so rude. I can't believe you never took the time to learn any of this. Are you illiterate? That's not a valid excuse."

V. Expensive international phone call

I'll say, "Try this. Break someone's heart, completely humiliate yourself in front of your peers because you're an inarticulate fuck, then stumble home drunk at 4am. Then tell yourself none of it matters because you're leaving in a month."

Then she'll tell me, "You're drunk."

But I'll go on. "It doesn't work. It sucks. You have fun, do whatever you want and never have to deal with it again. But then you have to go home and you realize that someone hurt your feelings and your friends were probably laughing about you behind your back."

Then she'll give me the answer: "Shut up, drink a glass of water, and go to sleep. And when you wake up in the morning, you'll realize that you're not so important that anyone is thinking about you. You're just bored and paranoid. Stop being so fucking dramatic. It's unbecoming."

^[1] And how good-looking!

^[2] Check Leviticus 11. Google that shit and tell me it isn't true.