

SHOCKING BUT NOT SURPRISING

by Sarah Gancher

ARPAD: *A Hungarian man, Hungarian accent, 20s — 30s.*

ANDY: *An American man, 20s — 30s.*

ESZTER: *A Hungarian Jewish woman, Hungarian accent, 20s — 30s.*

EMILY: *An American Jewish woman, 20s — 30s.*

Interlocking monologues.

ARPAD

(Hungarian accent throughout) You not knowing my town, it's not Budapest
It's factory town like with the flats, blocks of flats for the workers, you know the big gray
buildings, like this. We had factory for the telephones, in the time of the Soviets. They
made telephones, this kind *(he mimes a rotary telephone.)*

And so we have no factory

so it's a shit town.

So there's no jobs nothing nowhere, only like the Dizscout.

And the fucking Pakistiani 24 so you can go to buy it the Dreher in the night, because the
whole city it's drunk. So-drunk city.

And why it's this way? We joining the EU, we supposed to be rich already by now. We
supposed to be better than with the communism but we not, why? Because they still in
charge, the same people, the fucking communists, the fucking Jews! We can saying this
now, we have the freedom of speech now, it's the only thing what they do better than the
communists. That and the porno. And maybe the supermarket but really I don't need
eight types cheese, listen to me I only eat one kind cheese, why I supposed buy eight?

ESZTER

(Hungarian accent) The first what I saw was the graffiti.

ARPAD

And I never thought about Jews before

ESZTER

On the billboards, "*zsido zsido zsido,*" Jew Jew fucking Jew
All over Budapest.

ARPAD

I wasn't thinking like this until now.

ESZTER

And then at the protest, at the demonstration...

We start to have a lot demonstrations

They waving flags, red and white stripes

Same like the old Nazi flag,
 And I'm thinking "what the fuck?" really
 But it's all over the city
 Also on cars, the sticker for the bumper
 Also in windows
 In shops
 And I'm thinking "Do you know what it's meaning, actually?"

ARPAD

I met some guys, internet guys, open my eyes to this. Because I was brainwash too, you know, when I was a kid, I was thinking "yay wow democracy comes, we all gonna have swimming pool."

ANDY

I don't really know why I started trolling
 I mean I was an angry kid
 But I didn't believe anything I was writing, yet
 I just liked to offend people.
 I just liked to challenge them, make them think
 I just thought
 Everyone is too fucking delicate.

EMILY

I saw a phrase on the news today
 (And when I say the news, I mean one of those clickbait headlines that you sort of scan but don't ACTUALLY read)
 "shocking but not surprising."
 and I said "Yeah, that feels right."
 which is pretty much my response to news these days.
 I look at a headline and say "yeah that feels right." I don't read the article.

ANDY

I wanna say up top that I'm not like a coal miner and I'm not a hillbilly redneck
 I don't live in West Virginia
 I don't have to, to see what's going on.
 Don't tell me the country's not dying just cause the mall has a Panera!
 The way I see it Panera Bread is absolutely part of the problem.

EMILY

Because if you read the article, you can fall into a google hole. Hours will pass and you'll get nothing done and you won't get paid and whatever you do earn you'll spend on therapy and Prozac and weed, and you can't stop. I can't stop, with the news.

ANDY

We used to have actual individual stores here.

You got all these chains they're all from someplace else and the people working in them are all from someplace else

It's like space aliens, they hover their TGI Fridays over the city and just suck up the resources.

ARPAD

The system didn't change. They selling themselves the factories, selling the machines just for the parts, for the metal, keeping the money and go to New York London Tel Aviv I don't know where, then they telling me I must say "thank you for the democracy."

ANDY

And it's rich people it's globalists, Jews

I know that's not politically correct, I get it, but just look at the names!

I've got lists of names I could show you.

ARPAD

Everything they telling to us about democracy, about the EU, even about our history, about Hungary, it's lies. They can't let us see what they doing to us, to *us*. Like most of what they telling you about The Second World War, the camps, it's lies.

ANDY

They tell us the white man is on top of the pyramid: that's not true.

We're slaves too.

We're the biggest slaves!

They got the most of us!

We're not even allowed to know we're slaves.

Everyone else can talk about their culture, we can't talk about our culture —

ARPAD

They lying to us about our traditions, our *culture*, they try to take it, because it makes us strong.

ANDY

[Why is the white man the only one who can't say he's proud?]

You think Africans never did anything fucked up? They had slaves, some of em still do.

You think the Chinese are squeaky fucking clean? They get to be proud.

I met some guys online who really changed my head around about this.

You know half the point of college is just to make you ashamed of being white.

ARPAD

Now they tell to us you must take the Syrians, the Muslims, all the refugees from the war what *I* start, *you* must take them *and give to them* your flat and *give to them* your job and by the way they hate you they will try to kill you but you must not say you hate them because then you are a shitty fucking Hungarian, nationalist piece of shit, nazi, fascist.

OK. OK.

Maybe I am these things.

EMILY

This is embarrassing — I know my privilege is showing, but
 the day after the election I felt like
 I had been having a beautiful candlelit dinner with Obama
 And somebody came in and turned on the lights
 I looked around the room and thought “This place is a fucking mess!”
 All the police shootings, militarized police,
 the racial gerrymandering
 The misogyny, god
 and Guantanamo
 and for-profit prisons
 and the mother of all bombs and
 I mean I knew it was a mess, I knew that intellectually, but
 My god, we *live here*. And then...

ESZTER

There is statue, memorial statue on the side of the Danube
 Holocaust statue
 Many shoes, empty, it's to remember the Jews who was shot there
 their bodies falling in the river.
 Some man put into all of the statue-shoes the foot of the pig.
 Pig foot. In these shoes.
 By the way there are so-many Jews in our river. Their bones.

EMILY

My sister lives in Saint Louis
 My nephew goes to daycare at a JCC
 A couple days after the inauguration there was a bomb threat, evacuation, my nephew
 was wheeled out in his pack n play (little guy)
 My sister couldn't get over there for an hour and a half, and she was beside herself
 And I was on the phone saying “stay calm, it's like a prank or something
 They want you to panic ...”

ESZTER

Parliament introduce it, a bill, it's saying Jews in parliament must declare themselves,
 and register officially. Why? It's crazy!
 And at my university
 There are students, my-age students! Making up lists
 Of students, their ethnicity, their religion —
 Why?

EMILY

This bomb threat thing happened at JCCs all across the country.
 And then suddenly I'm noticing —

The cemeteries. Graffiti in the park, swastikas, even in Brooklyn... Bannon. Gorka. Holocaust Remembrance Day, "Holocaust Centers" —
Was this mess really here the whole time?

ESZTER

I find it in my mailbox, a paper — I don't know what it's called —
"brochure" maybe
For the Jobbik party
And it's a *Mogen David*, crossed out
It says "Vote for the Jobbik Party because we stand against the jews."
Very openly! They just say it. They don't care.
It start to become almost normal.

EMILY

And *then* suddenly I'm catching on: this "alt-right" thing, whatever, is happening in other countries too!
Brexit, Poland and Greece and Hungary and
Russia obviously and —
So I'm going down these google holes, researching this shit and meanwhile
There's a guy I know on facebook
And all through the election he was super Bern or Bust
But these days this same guy
Is going on and on about George Soros
Writing about him with his name in three parentheses: (((George Soros)))
So I'm looking up three parentheses: it's something alt-right trolls do to show someone's a Jew: "(((Jared Kushner)))"

ESZTER

My university
The government say "oh well this university is funded by Soros
He's Hungarian ok but he's globalist"
Which what does it means, it means we don't like him, it means he's fucking Jew —

EMILY

So now I'm looking up Soros
Soros is Hungarian
I don't know if you know this, I didn't, but
Hungary already had this Trump moment a couple years ago
They elected this guy Orban
Who was in cahoots with the far right, we'd call it the alt-right here.
And now it's basically a dictatorship and the EU doesn't know what to do with them.
They hate George Soros because he's a liberal Jewish billionaire who spends his money on building open societies.
Do you know what they're doing to him now, in Hungary?

ESZTER

They say we close it, the university that Soros started
 The CEU. My university, where I got my “MA.”
 Orban closing the whole university.
 Just to say: fuck you Soros. Just to show he can.
 That was happening Passover, 2017.

Beat. A shift.

ESZTER

I didn't think so much about being Jewish before.
 First of all I didn't know it, for a long time.
 In Soviet times it wasn't possible to be open about such things.
 My mother didn't want me to know, we are Jews.
 But my grandmother she told to me some stories about hiding in a “hay loft,” on the
 country side, in the winter
 With no heat
 And listening for the dogs.
 I was not ashamed exactly but maybe I was embarrassed, somehow...
 I didn't feel myself Jewish.

But during this time of the graffiti I got to be angry
 And I couldn't understand it, because it's not me, I'm not being raised with this
 It's not a part of my life but still
 I feel fucking angry
 And I can't explain this.
 I feel it like suddenly everyone is *looking* at me
 I have a kind of a panic.
 I feel that I should have been asking my grandmother before she die
 What her experiences were, in the “hayloft”
 And what happen with her parents, her brothers and sister.

When she die there was an old man who came to her funeral
 And he told to me: your grandmother and me
 We were cousins
 We had seventeen cousins
 But then the war came
 And they all (*gesture*)
 After the war, it was only two:
 Me, and your grandmother.
 (Her name was Eszter, like me.)
 He said to me your grandmother was my best friend.
 She was my only family.
 And he told to me that I should pray.
 But I did not know how to do it.

And I had a friend who invite me to his minyan

In an old apartment, in the ghetto, the Seventh District
And I went, to try it.

To me it was very beautiful and I don't know why, because it was a very normal
praying...

They was praying very fast and

It was sort of casual not very "holy-holy"

I think maybe the music, the line of the music, how you call it, melody

It's possible everyone has this experience,

You feel somehow you can remember it, the melody...

And I feel something on my cheek, it's wet and "oh, I am crying..."

And I don't cry!

I never crying.

EMILY

By the way Orban — the Hungarian Trump — he's in cahoots with Putin too
Huge love fest

All these right wing assholes, extreme nationalists,

They all believe the same thing.

If you want to know what President Bannon would like to do, look at Hungary

Censor the news, clear the courts, change the voting districts, change the schools
immigration ban, protest ban

Whole new constitutions!

And people are demonstrating! The young people?

And it doesn't mean shit.

And the kids there still have this question like: "is this a dictatorship or not?"

Is this it? Is it official yet?"

Same like us, when it happens we won't even know it.

We won't realize our democracy ended until fifteen years after it's too late.

I mean democracy ending is not even the worst case scenario

There are concentration camps

Actual concentration camps for gay men in Chechenya!

They're hunting down and slaughtering gay men.

The leader: Putin aligned.

This is the world we're in, NOW.

How can this be happening all over again? Why doesn't someone do something?

But I don't think we're organized.

Do you? Organized like they are?

What's our goal? What's our vision?

What's our fucking plan?

Call Congress?

I call my reps every day

I believe in it even if it doesn't do anything, it's a spiritual practice, but still:

This is an emergency. Right?

ANDY

Here's what I know

The strongest societies are the most cohesive. Sweden. Japan. Iceland. Right?

Different cultures come into conflict, that's human nature.

So if you mix up people from a lot of different cultures in a society that will make your society weak.

That's why Jews love diversity so much. That's why they love immigration!

They want to keep us weak.

They have discussions about this, there are leaked transcripts online

This series of talks at this hotel in Tel Aviv.

It's intentional!

You notice they don't love diversity in Israel.

ARPAD

So I join it the Jobbik party

Because they saying, they actually *saying*: "who's doing this, it's the fucking Jews, we see it, it's the gypsies, (you know these gypsies got to be so bad, with the crime) and the EU is shit, we see it and we going to fucking stop it."

For me, Jobbik it's not radical enough, actually.

ANDY

(on a roll)

Feminism fits right into this

You got a way that humanity worked for millions of years

Man goes out and hunts and the woman raises the kids

We're not evolved to do anything else, that's the point!

Man is the warrior. They want us weak.

Education: what are they teaching kids

College for everyone: why?

College spoils your common sense, they like that.

Brain drain: pick us all up and move us to cities

And then the robots are gonna run the farms and the warehouses and the auto plants

And liberals are supposed to be the humanists?

I say get the Jews away from the space ship control panel.

It's a human rights issue. It's self determination.

ARPAD

I don't like it the violence, I'm not interested in this but you know

Like I say: when the system really changing, there will be violence.

This how I know that in 1989 the system did not really change.

And we have a Right to Self Defense.

If a fucking gypsy want to come into my house and take it my television,

What I'm saying? "OK here, I take it for you to the elevator?"

OK so

Self-determination:

It's worth more than a television.
 It's myself.
 Myself, the EU cannot take it.
 The communists cannot take it.
 The Jew cannot take it.
 I am Hungarian.
 They cannot take it.

ANDY

I got a cousin I talk about this stuff with and she always says you know "how can you think this, what's your damage," all this stuff
 Like she'll say "Show me on the doll where Hillary Clinton touched you."
 She really thinks my views are so nuts that like — "Were you abused?"
 I just say "there are so many people that think like me, that see what I see.
 There's no way we are all crazy."
 Everybody's got to educate themselves.
 But *really* educate *yourself*! Question authority!
 You know George Soros owns Snopes.
 I saw that online today.

ESZTER

There was a guy I met at my minyan
 When I started to pray there a lot
 From Argentina. Jewish guy from the Argentina.
 (And you know this is where all the Nazis were going after the war, to the Argentina)
 This guy told to me:
 "You know assimilation is never working, anywhere
 It isn't really possible."
 And I thought he was crazy, really.
 I thought he was just saying this to provoke.
 But now I think
 It's possible.
 It's possible that they never accept us.
 That all through the war, all through the soviets, all through the changes,
 they hating us the whole time.
 And now they just got to show it again.
 It's possible you shouldn't asking these people to accept you
 Because they won't do it.
 Maybe they can't do it actually.

EMILY

My grandparents were Marxists.
 My parents were hippies.
 I was raised to believe that things get better, a little bit at a time,
 things are better now than they were ten years ago, twenty, a hundred years ago...

We can make a society where there is no war and there is no prejudice and no sexism and every single human being is able to live to their complete potential and this goal is... beautiful, but it's... starting to sound insane. To me.
Has anything really gotten better, ever?

ANDY

And I just thank god we have Trump now and somebody's saying these things
And by the way:

EMILY

Maybe society has progressed, and gotten less racist,

ANDY

I didn't hate Obama because he was black.

ARPAD

I know a Jew man, in my building, we drinking together.

EMILY

But the forces of racism have evolved and progressed too

ANDY

I hated Obama because he hated white people.

ARPAD

I'm not racist actually, but Hungary it's supposed to be for the Hungarians.

EMILY

So every generation is locked in the same struggle

ANDY

The global elites know we're coming for them

EMILY

The same fight

ANDY

That's why they're kicking up such a fuss.

EMILY

The same players, in different incarnations.

ANDY

This week, me and some of my online buddies are meeting up IRL
I'm driving down from Eugene to a protest in Berkeley

Take on these antifa fucks face to face.

EMILY

Do I believe in progress anymore?

I think maybe I

Might not believe that society actually progresses.

I think maybe I

Don't believe true progress is actually possible.

And if progress is not possible

Then what are we fighting for?

And who am I if I don't believe progress is possible?

And what do I do now?

When I have a child, what should I teach her?

ESZTER

Now I got to be more religious

And I'm thinking

My "ancestors," they know something about how to survive.

They was living here one thousand years before even the Hungarians

And you know everyone trying to destroy us that whole time

The Romans, Hungarians, Germans, everyone.

OK so my "ancestors," they know it, how to survive.

Ok, so I'm listening.

I'm listening.