

Chapter 25 – Slanderous Accusations

The Friday interviews were actually fun. They were with two local publications of the Connaught Province and the interviewers were charming and most interested in their local activities. They listened with rapt attention when Shane told his stories. They wanted to know more about his Sea Rescue work and how he met Katie. They were interested in the story of their developing relationship. One interviewer remarked that *they were bound together in the cement of crisis*.

Ah, a poet thought Katie and was immediately distracted to thoughts about Padraic Pearse.

One of the interviewers told Katie that she had been at Leveegee for the weekend fair and that she really enjoyed it. That gave Katie the opportunity to speak about Leveegee as a border community that works, about growing up there, about the relationships that developed among the peoples on either side of the border, and to further elaborate on the dignity of the farmer and fisherman, something that the readers of Galway would appreciate.

They talked about the University, about their work with Fr. O'Malley, about how they relate to the Church and spirituality in general.

One of the interviewers had gone to school in Scotland and wanted to know as much as possible about the University, especially the plans going forward and more about Katie's experience as a professor. Katie laughed and said while she was slightly older than the students, she still considered herself their contemporary.

One of the interviewers apologized for asking a personal question and said that they didn't have to answer it if they didn't want to. She addressed them both and asked, "How do you feel about sex before marriage?"

Katie said they would be glad to answer that one.

"I would never judge anyone who had pre-marriage sex. I do not feel that it is as horrible a sin as we have been taught, depending on the level of commitment of the couples involved. Shane and I have not had pre-marriage sex. We discussed it when we knew our relationship was moving toward commitment and decided we would wait until we are married. I have been teaching nubile and passionate young people for four years, and I have had the opportunity to get to know many of them not only as a teacher but as a counselor. I noticed that many times a developing relationship tends to flatten out once the couple starts having sex. I wanted a growing and deepening relationship with Shane, and our reason for connecting with Fr. O'Malley was to achieve just that."

Shane agreed. "I won't pretend that it is easy but I realize, especially now, that our relationship has achieved a level that I would never have thought possible. We are now ready for marriage and that celebration will take place in a few months. What I have

learned from this is there is far more to sexuality than sexual intercourse and we celebrate that in our mutual attention, respect, and all the little romantic things that we do to share our love for each other. It doesn't mean that we are any less passionate. I dare say that most of my contemporaries would not understand this and neither would either of us if we didn't have each other to share the experience. It all started with Katie's instinct that we could do better and we would have to do so for the next fifty years or more. We have learned to communicate in dynamic new ways and we are looking forward to communicating through sex."

Katie had to swallow hard to keep the tears from flowing. Shane's statement was beautiful and eloquent.

"What are the little romantic things that you do, asked the interviewer?"

"Ah, that is something that you have to figure out for yourself and part of the fun of a developing relationship is to discover that together. There is no 'how to' book to teach you that."

"Fr. O'Malley has been a big part of your preparation. Does he keep you on a short leash?"

"He doesn't keep us on any kind of leash, said Katie. He treats us with dignity, respect, and recognizes that we are two unique individuals and treats us that way. We have complete freedom, a freedom that is empowering. He doesn't try to put us in any kind of pigeon hole. We discussed God, the Church, spirituality, our own sense of ministry, our professions, sex, money, children, community, friendships, and many other things that celebrate life. It was also Shane's idea to work with him and I couldn't be happier. I try to be a devout Catholic, but I am a little leery of 'churchy' things. Still, I love what has happened as a result of our work. I am ecstatic that we will be living in the Rosseville parish."

They were long interviews because both took a different track than the interviews of the previous day. The interviewers and photographers were very pleasant and Katie and Shane were very relaxed.

Rory wisely interrupted after Katie answered the last question with the notice that the time allotted was up. In fact, they were overtime.

In each instance, the interviewers and photographers were pleased with the time given, the interaction with Shane and Katie, and especially their willingness to discuss things that might be considered "edgy." Shane and Katie were pleased that they had been able to go far beyond the routine interview and that made it interesting and fun for them. What they did not know was that Sean had slipped into the room for the last interview.

Sean was ecstatic. He thought the last interview was wonderful and hoped all the others had gone the same way. Rory and Edna assured him that they did, though each interview had qualities that made them unique.

He made certain that the tapes for all the interviews were stored in a safe. He told Katie that he marveled at the wisdom of her mother. It occurred to him that there could be a fabrication of pieces of their story but they were so clear and forceful in their presentation, he thought it remote. Angela was right and he was wrong and he freely admitted that. There are reputations and careers to be considered.

Plans for the evening included a short nap and then dinner at the Faculty Dining Room with Angela. It was a good day and they were looking forward to a pleasant evening.

When they arrived at the apartment, Peadar was there as well and they asked him to join them.

Peadar and Angela wanted to know how the interviews went.

Katie responded that she thought they went well and Shane concurred. She said the line of questioning was a little different today than it was yesterday. It was fun for them because the questions were fresh and gave them the opportunity to discuss things that they had not discussed in previous interviews. For the next two weeks they will be all over the newsstands of Ireland again.

Katie pulled Shane into her room and told Angela that they were going to take a well deserved nap, after which they would go to dinner. "You guys have the whole apartment to yourselves for at least an hour," said Katie.

Once inside the room, Katie looked him straight in the eye and said, "You made me cry today."

"Oh, I am so sorry, said Shane. What did I do?"

"You were brilliant, loving, gentle, tender, and showed an incredible depth of understanding and I love you more and more each day."

The much relieved Shane held her and kissed her again, and again, and again. They fell asleep in each other's arms.

They awoke slowly about an hour later much refreshed by a deep and restful nap. They washed up to prepare for dinner. Katie added a touch of makeup which she really did not need. The four of them then walked over to the Commissary.

John Kelly, the manager, assured them that he would join them for dessert and showed them to a table in the Faculty Dining Room. Shane had been in the room several times before and always admired the rustic ambiance. Clearly the room could accommodate

two hundred people with room for a band and dancing. The fireplace would be lighted in December adding to the romantic nature of the event.

John took their drink order, wine for the ladies, Guinness for Shane, and a vodka martini for Peadar. While they were enjoying their drinks, Shane asked Peadar why he chose the Faculty Dining Room for their reception. Peadar thought for a minute and said that he always liked it here. "It has an ancient, rustic quality that I enjoy. The food is outstanding. Angela and I have spent many happy hours dining here. The service is excellent with great attention to detail. The room is big enough. They will do all the planning for you. Just put it in their hands. It is convenient since we are marrying in the Chapel. Besides, this is the University. This is my element."

"Well it certainly has a lot going for it," said Shane.

"Do you like it, Angela?"

"I love it, she said. Yes, we have been here a lot but it is here that we began move from mutual interest to falling in love. I can remember every conversation that we had here and I'll cherish them all for the rest of my life. But you must remember that I am new to the neighborhood. I have been to Lahinch and to Ashford but guests would have to travel too far to get to either one. I like Fitzgerald's but I have great memories here and our wedding reception will be another one."

Shane was impressed with Angela's answer because he also had many happy memories of meals with Katie.

The waiter took their order after greeting Peadar and Katie with considerable deference. He shook Shane's hand with, "Nice to see you again, Mr. Ryan." He bowed to Angela and said that it was a pleasure to meet her. Katie ordered salmon, Angela ordered rack of lamb, Shane ordered lobster tails, and Peadar ordered a steak.

They took another round of drinks but Shane ordered white wine to compliment the lobster. Table conversation was very pleasant and Shane and Katie regaled them with stories of their interview adventures. The Times could run their interview tomorrow. The others are Sunday papers so their stories might be out by Sunday.

When it came time for dessert, everyone ordered coffee or tea, avoiding the extra calories of a rich dessert. John Kelly, the manager, came to their table knowing that they were going to talk about a wedding reception.

Katie told John that they were getting married on December 28th and asked if that presented any problem.

"Not at all, said John, The day is not otherwise booked." We stay open for the benefit of the faculty and the international students. All I have to do is bring in enough staff to provide for you."

“Dr. McDermott told me that you provide all the wedding planning details such as decorations, flowers, and music/”

“That is correct, Mr. Ryan.”

“Is this a house band and can we go to hear them somewhere?”

“Yes, Mr. Ryan. There is a retirement dinner next Friday evening for Professor Bennet. I can make arrangements. I believe that you are coming with Mrs. O’Bierne, Doctor,”

Peadar nodded, yes.

“I can’t sit you with Dr McDermott, but I can arrange a private table for you on the outer fringe of guests.”

“That is perfect, said Shane. Please draw up the contract. Dr. O’Bierne and I will discuss dinner options and let you know.”

“I can give you a menu of options from which to choose.”

“Thank you,” said Shane as he got up to shake Kelly’s hand.

Kelly called the waiter over and told him to bring whatever we wanted for after dinner drinks and they were not to be added to the bill.

As the evening drew to a close, Katie and Peadar wrestled politely over who was going to sign the bill. Katie graciously let Peadar win. She knew him well enough to know that this was something that enhanced his masculine pride. Kelly provided a menu of dinner options and they walked back across the campus to Katie’s apartment.

The next morning, the phone rang early. It was one of Katie’s friends, Jennie, who said she was sitting on her porch reading the Irish Times and when she turned the page, there was Katie’s smiling face.

“Oh isn’t that exciting?” said Katie sarcastically.

Both of them laughed and Katie said it was good to hear her voice.

“I knew, along with the whole civilized world, that you were getting married. Did you set a date?”

‘Yes, circle December 28th. I want you to be there with me. When the invitations go out I am going to ask for secrecy. I don’t want a media event. So keep the date under your hat. They continued to chat about wedding plans and Katie said that their mutual friend, Maeve the Druid Witch, was making her wedding dress. And, I almost forgot that you

know my mom. She is also getting married in October and Maeve is making her dress, and we'll be each other's maid or matron of honor. They talked more about locations of the church, receptions, her mom's fiancé, and where they are both planning to live.

"Katie asked, "What did you think of the interview?"

"Oh, it was great, said her friend. It was mostly stuff that you covered on the Byrne Show. It presented you as sweet and nice, so they could be accused of false journalism."

Katie laughed, expecting no quarter.

"You gave a great plug for your work at the University. I don't know if anyone in my family was connected with the Rising."

"You were so inspiring about your church and those priests that I am going to Mass tomorrow morning. You might have saved another soul."

"Those are the burdens that weigh me down," said Katie. Stay good and give me a break."

"Well, I'll get to Mass. I don't want to rush into being good."

They both rang off laughing.

No sooner did Katie hang up when the phone rang again.

"Good morning, Katie, this is Archbishop Manning."