

My Right Hand

Owen Carswell

All my friends love to shake my right hand. There's just something special about it, maybe it's the smooth skin, the firm grip, or the way it fits snugly into their hand while we interlock fingers. Regardless, they love my right hand, and I feel so special for being blessed with such a hand. Hell, even my wife loves my right hand, but maybe for reasons she wouldn't want me discussing here. Anyways, everyone loves my right hand, and I love my right hand too. I feel a benign calmness wash over me any time I think about how many hands I've shaken thanks to my right hand. I'm enamoured with the thought of being known for shaking hands, for being respected, being idolized, it's all I ever think about to be honest. There's just one issue, one small problem that quietly sits in the back of my mind patiently and politely, but nonetheless constant.

'I'm left handed'

I don't tell people I love my left hand, and honestly, nobody even asks about it. Sometimes I trick myself into thinking I don't like my left hand, or that I'm actually right handed and I just get a little confused. I try to not pay attention to it that much. Why would I even bother with my left hand anyways when I've been so blessed with my right? Oh how selfish and egotistical of me to desire both hands, my god, what's gotten into me recently? In actuality, I'm so glad that all my friends love my right hand, I'm so glad they don't bother to peer a little to the right and see my frail, boney, albino left hand that I try to hide so desperately in my coat sleeve. Thank goodness that they are so transfixed with my right that that's all they are concerned about. To be honest, I get the sense that some of my friends are envious of my right hand. Sometimes when we shake hands I can feel their skin is a little rougher, of their callouses. I have no such ailments, my skin is smooth and clear, and I'd be lying if I said it didn't feed my ego a little bit anytime I think about how good my right hand is for shaking.

It's the perfect distraction from my left hand. Sometimes I can go weeks at a time without looking at my left hand. I don't really like looking at it anymore, it's so frail, so weak, malnourished, so brittle, it hasn't been shaken in so long, maybe let's keep it that way.

'But... I'm left handed'

So what? What does it matter that every time your friend tries to shake your hand, you can't deny that for a millisecond, you twitch your left fingers before your heart drops and you raise your right.

'Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. They almost saw'

Maybe that's why I've been trying so desperately to trick myself into thinking I'm right handed, so that I don't have to bear that millisecond where I feel the urge to raise my left. I hate that millisecond with a passion. I know my left hand hasn't been shook in oh so long, but maybe it's better that way, let's just stick to the right? Alright?

'I know, I get why, but... I'm left handed'

Think about how useful you've become with your right hand. Think about the types of people you've gotten to shake hands with. You never would have met those people if it weren't for your right hand. Why can't that just be enough? At this rate you might as well just sever that left hand off, it looks like all you need is the right one to be honest, that's the one taking you places.

'But it makes me so much happier when they shake my left hand... Not that I don't like my right, but... I'm left handed'

It doesn't matter. All my friends love my right hand, my wife loves my right hand, they're envious of my right hand, this right hand has made me so useful, so valuable, it's gotten me into so many rooms my left never would have, can't you see what I mean? Sometimes it feels like people just grit their teeth and put up with my left hand so they have the chance to shake my right, my left hand just becomes a formality, something they know I have, but just wince at to get what they want.

Just then, the man slipped and shattered his right hand

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One week later

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All my friends love my right hand, there's just something special about it. It's a shame they can't shake it while my hand is in this cast— Oh well, at least I have a backup hand.

'But none of my friends shake my left hand'

Now my friends don't shake my hand at all, they don't even bat an eye. They keep walking as if I wasn't there in the first place.

I had the most sickening realization at this moment.

I watched my friends shake one another's hand from a distance, and I could oh so clearly see them shake left hands. Sometimes one would hold out his right and the other would respond with both hands, hell, sometimes they ditched the hand shakes and just hugged. This was the first I'd ever seen such a thing. All these years I've been so infatuated with my right hand that I never bothered to watch them greet one another. Now nobody shakes my hand, now my left hand is too brittle to even bother offering to them. Now I just kind of stand around, watching. Always present, but always passive.

'This must be how my left hand has felt all these years'

When all is said and done, I can't even say that the thing I liked about my right hand was the envy it brewed from my friends, I can't even say that it was how useful it made me feel either. At the end of the day, I didn't like the hand shakes as much as I just liked being recognized.

'God, what a nice thing it is to be greeted'