

TRYING

Written by

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1

INT. MEG'S STUDIO - DAY

A small space made smaller by the collection of items strewn about: COLORFUL MUGS. HALF-FOLDED LAUNDRY. SELF HELP BOOKS. A painting of a SWAN sits on an EASEL in the corner.

We hear rustling and a THUD as MEG (25) storms in from the bathroom, toothbrush hanging from her mouth, blazer draped over her shoulder. She struggles to tuck her shirt into her pants while walking.

MEG

Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit, shit!

She sets her PHONE onto the table next to a FANNY PACK and FINAL UNEMPLOYMENT NOTICE as she stumbles into the--

KITCHEN: Rummages through the cupboards, quickly starts a coffee machine. She makes sure the stove is OFF, then oven. She darts back into the--

LIVING ROOM: Crosses to the A/C dial on the wall -- OFF. She glances to a CANDLE sitting on the table -- OUT. Her phone DINGS. She swivels to grab it, causing toothpaste to DRIP onto her blazer.

MEG

SHIT!

SHE disappears into the bathroom. We see a reminder on her phone: "Pilates at 11AM."

We hear another THUD followed by an "ow!" as her phone DINGS with a text message from MOM: "How do I share a post on Instagram?"

Meg returns pulling on a pair of sneakers when the SWAN PAINTING catches her eye. She crosses over, zeroes in on a TINY SPOT on the swan's wing.

She holds her look on the spot. A moment of decision -- then she hastily grabs a paintbrush and dabs a stroke. She eyes the corner of the piece and quickly paints her signature.

She takes a moment, trying to remember what she was doing. She scans the room as she twiddles a RING on her finger. DING. She swoops back into the--

KITCHEN: Grabs a protein bar from the cupboard. Re-checks the oven -- OFF. Stove -- OFF. She hurries back into the:

LIVING ROOM: Checks the A/C dial -- OFF. Glances to the candle -- OUT.

She stands motionless for a moment then grabs her phone, pulls up a TO-DO LIST labeled "INTERVIEW STUFF". Scans it, sees *Pocket Folder*. She leaps to her desk and picks up a POCKET FOLDER with a "DON'T FORGET" post-it on the front. She straps her fanny pack on and stuffs her phone and protein bar inside. She scurries to the easel and grabs the PAINTING with her free hand while blowing on the paint spot.

She checks the CLOCK, then triumphantly turns to the front door, stopping as she's faced with a "GET GAS" post-it. She looks to the clock again then to the key rack -- no keys.

Her eyes dart around the room, landing on the coffee table. She swipes through papers and mugs when a glimmer of SILVER catches her eye. She snatches her KEYS then re-stacks the papers. A beat -- she scurries back into the--

KITCHEN: Checks the oven and stove -- OFF. OFF. Darts back into the--

LIVING ROOM: Checks the A/C dial -- OFF. Candle -- OUT. With a final puff of her chest, she exits. The lock CLICKS. A beat -- then we hear the coffeemaker BEEP.

2 EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - LATER

Meg sits on a curb, flipping a HAIR TIE on her wrist back and forth as a AAA TECHNICIAN fills her gas tank.

MEG

I should've had four miles left. I only drove 3.

AAA Tech looks at MEG.

AAA TECH

Usually when the gas light comes on, it's time to put in gas.

Meg shakes her head and pulls out her phone. She scrolls through a slew of MISSED REMINDERS then opens Instagram. A sponsored ad for a gas can pops up. She grimaces. AAA Tech spots Meg's PAINTING in the back seat.

AAA TECH

What's that, a goose?

Meg jumps, startled. She looks over the hood.

MEG

What?

AAA TECH
The picture. Is it a goose?

MEG
Oh...it's a swan.

AAA Tech looks back at the PAINTING, then to Meg.

AAA TECH
Are you sure?

MEG
The painting? That I painted? Yeah.
I'm sure.

AAA TECH
Hm.

A beat. Meg goes back to her phone as AAA TECH continues filling up her tank with gas. Then --

AAA TECH
What's the difference?

MEG
What?

AAA TECH
Between a goose and a swan?

MEG
Oh. The necks. And the wingspans.
And the fact that Natalie Portman
would never play a goose.

Meg looks to the painting.

MEG
It's inspired by a paddle boat I
rode with my dad as a kid. We were
paddling and I told him I couldn't
wait to get home and tell our fish
Goldy about the big fish we saw in
the lake. Only I forgot that Goldy
had died that morning. That's why
he took me to the lake. I cried for
three hours.

(beat)
It's a "coming to terms" piece.

DING. New text message from SEBASTIAN: "Keep me updated on your interview!" Meg's eyes go wide. She checks the time: 11:48am.

MEG (CONT'D)

Damnit!

She slumps back against her car. AAA TECH finishes and walks over holding a clipboard. An awkward beat -- then They/He slowly places the clipboard under Meg's face. She looks up, grabs the pen, and signs.

MEG

Oh, I...thanks. Sorry. Thank you.

AAA TECH gives her a sympathetic look then drives off. Meg sighs and gets into--

3 INT. MEG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She sees the text from SEBASTIAN. Replies: "It was at 11. I missed it." DING. New text message from SEBASTIAN: "What?!"

Meg closes her eyes and fiddles with the BUTTON on her blazer, then buckles her seat belt and starts the engine. Her phone LIGHTS UP: Incoming Call from SEBASTIAN. She inhales and answers as she backs up her car to leave.

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)

What happened?

MEG

Nothing. I had to call AAA, and --

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)

Are you okay?

MEG

I'm fine, I just ran out of gas --

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)

Gas? Babe.

MEG

It shouldn't have happened, I've driven further on the same amount before.

A beat.

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)

Wasn't this your last interview before --

MEG

Before I get kicked off unemployment? Yes. Thank you.

(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)
 (as tears start to form)
 I gotta go.

Meg puts her car into drive, then reaches to hang up the PHONE. We hear Sebastian rummaging around on the other end.

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)
 Wait...isn't the interview at 1?
 Don't you do pilates at 11?

Meg screeches to a halt, her car blocking a driveway. She quickly pulls up an EMAIL from Willow Elementary School with the subject: "Interview Request". She scans it and sees "May 21st at 1:00PM."

MEG
 Oh my god...it is at 1.

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)
 You owe me a drink.

MEG
 I can't believe I missed that.

SEBASTIAN (OVER PHONE)
 I can! Get it, Miss Meg!

CLICK. Meg checks the time: 12:02PM. Exhales her relief. She wipes her eyes and unzips her fanny pack, takes out the PROTEIN BAR and unwraps it. A melted glob of CHOCOLATE lands on her blazer. Meg groans as a HOODIE MAN on a bike pedals up next to her.

HOODIE MAN
 Hey baby, you want some of this?

He bites his lip as he rings the bell on his bike. Meg rolls down her window.

MEG
 (sarcastically)
 Oh, yeah! I'd really love to just -

HOODIE MAN
 FUCK YOU!

He SPEEDS off. Meg screams in frustration.

CUT TO:

INT. MEG'S CAR - LATER

We see WILLOW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL through the rear window as Meg FaceTimes her mom, LORRAINE. There's a burger wrapper and some rogue fries on the passenger seat. We see a STRAW WRAPPER twisted into a brooch pinned over the chocolate spot. The CLOCK reads 12:36PM.

MEG

Do you think they looked up my age?
If you didn't give birth to me, how
old would you think I was?

LORRAINE

They wouldn't have called you in if
they weren't interested in you. And
age discrimination is illegal.

Meg chews her lip as she glances out the window. Lorraine squints to see the straw pin.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Is that a ribbon for cancer?

MEG

What?

(looks at straw pin, then
nods)

Oh...yes.

Meg takes a sip from her soda, then quickly speaks.

MEG (CONT'D)

Oh god, what about the gap on my
resume? You think they'll accept
doing my best while living th--
volun--cris--

(Meg garbles her words,
stops, then continues
slowly)

Sorry. Living through an
involuntary generational economic
crisis?

LORRAINE

Just be honest. You're a hard
worker no matter what your resume
says.

MEG

Yeah...

Meg gets distracted, noticing a random BRUISE on her arm.

MEG
 (under her breath)
 How did I...

LORRAINE
 You okay?

MEG
 (shakes it off)
 Yeah, sorry, what was I talking
 about?

LORRAINE
 Your hardships as a millennial.

MEG
 Oh...yeah.
 (beat)
 I should've gotten my masters. Do I
 even know anything to teach these
 kids?

LORRAINE
 Honey, they're 6. Half the job is
 gonna be them asking you which
 paints make the color "poop".

Meg contemplates then nods.

MEG
 Okay. Yeah. Age discrimination is
 illegal. I'm a professional. Poop.

4 INT. SCHOOL - FRONT OFFICE - LATER

Meg sits at a kiddie table coloring across from DEVON (6),
 waiting for his parents. He stops coloring to eye Meg's
 painting.

DEVON
 Are you a famous painter?

MEG
 Well, in my sorority, I was voted
 "Most Likely Banksy."
 (casually shrugs)
 So, yeah.

Devon's eyes widen with excitement as he returns to art. Meg
 smiles.

MEG
 What're you drawing?

DEVON

A tree.

He holds up his drawing.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I like trees.

MEG

(nods)

It's a good tree.

DEVON

What's yours?

Meg holds up a drawing of a herd of sheep wearing ties led by a large, green dollar sign.

MEG

Capitalism.

Devon gives a confused look. The RECEPTIONIST stands from behind the front desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Meg Fischer?

Meg and Devon look up at the same time.

MEG

Yes, thank you.

As she stands to leave, she bumps the kiddie table, sending crayons scattering across the table.. Devon frantically searches through them.

DEVON

Wait! Do you know what colors make brown?

MEG

(eyebrows raised)

Brown? *What* are you trying to color?

Devon looks confused, then laughs. He point to his picture.

DEVON

Nooo, it's for the branches! On the tree!

Meg squints her eyes at him as she starts to walk away. Devon pouts. She quickly turns and dramatically covers her mouth as she speaks.

MEG
 (loud whisper)
 Orange and blue!

Devon smiles and grabs the crayons.

5 INT. SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Meg sits, her bright clothes in stark contrast to the mutely-colored office. As she surveys the office, her eyes land on a NAME PLATE on the desk: MRS. HAZEL, PRINCIPAL.

She tenses when the door opens and MRS. HAZEL (52), uptight, no-nonsense, enters. She takes her seat.

MRS. HAZEL
 I apologize for that.

Meg gives a nod. She glances from Mrs. Hazel to her PAINTING then back to Mrs. Hazel. A beat.

MEG
 It's a swan.

Mrs. Hazel examines the painting then looks to Meg's RESUME.

MRS. HAZEL
 It's beautiful.

Meg's eyes flicker. She shuffles in her seat.

MEG
 Thank you. It's actually inspired
 by -

MRS. HAZEL
 I see you've worked many various
 jobs over the past few years. Is
 there a reason for the employment
 gap here?

MEG
 Um...yes. I've worked a lot of
 jobs, but none of them have been
 the right fit. I'm a painter, not
 an executive assistant person. Or a
 numbers person. Or a desk person.

MRS. HAZEL
 I see. Well, luckily, this job is
 standing all day and painting all
 day.

Meg forces a smile, her leg bouncing against her chair.

MRS. HAZEL (CONT'D)
Do you have experience working with children?

MEG
Actually, I--

MRS. HAZEL
(noticing Meg's bouncing)
Wait. Meg Fischer -- Megan Fischer.

Meg inhales, sits still.

MEG
Yes.

MRS. HAZEL
You were a student when I first started teaching here. Third grade, was it?

MEG
(quickly)
Fourth, yes.

Mrs. Hazel gives a small smile as Meg shifts in her seat.

MRS. HAZEL
I remember things were always a little more difficult with you. Head in the clouds, doodling away.

Mrs. Hazel looks to the SWAN PAINTING.

MRS. HAZEL (CONT'D)
I see not much has changed!

Meg nods.

MRS. HAZEL (CONT'D)
How is your mother doing? I remember she always --

MEG
She's fine, good. Making her way.

MRS. HAZEL
Well, that's good. I remember you were always two peas in a pod.
(chuckle)
When she could remember to pick you up from school, that is.

A long pause. Mrs. Hazel scans Meg's resume, amused at herself. She looks to Meg's PAINTING.

MRS. HAZEL

So, --

MEG

I have ADHD.

The color drains from her face. Mrs. Hazel purses her lips.

MEG (CONT'D)

I had ADHD then, and I have ADHD now.

MRS. HAZEL

I see. And you really feel that *this* job would...

MEG

Yes, I feel that this job would give me the opportunity to share with the students what I know. What I've learned. Each of them.

She flips her ring back and forth, then notices a dried paint smudge on her wrist.

MEG (CONT'D)

Art class was the one place I could be myself and not get yelled at. I put my whole heart into my work and feel that I could support the kids in a way that others can't. Maybe *help* a student who has their head in the clouds. Not just dismiss or reprimand them for it.

She sits still for a moment then pulls TWO ENVELOPES from her purse. Hands them to Mrs. Hazel.

MEG

These are letters of recommendation from one of my college professors and an art collector I interned for last year. He said that I had an eye for things that usually went unnoticed.

Mrs. Hazel sits pensively, hands folded over Meg's resume. For a moment we only hear the TICKING of the clock. Then--

Meg clears her throat.

MEG (CONT'D)
Thank you for your time, Mrs.
Hazel.

She grabs her fanny pack, stands. Mrs. Hazel remains seated.
Meg picks up her painting.

MEG
Did I mention this was a "coming to
terms" piece?

She exits, closing the door behind her. Mrs. Hazel sits
silently before picking Meg's RESUME back up to read it.

6 INT. MEG'S CAR - LATER

Meg sits behind the wheel, crying.

7 INT. MEG'S STUDIO - DAY

Meg gathers dirty dishes and mugs from around the apartment.
We see a TO-DO LIST on the coffee table, her laptop open to
JOB LISTINGS.

A NEW CANVAS with the outline of a LION sits on the easel.
DING. Meg's phone lights up on the couch.

She crosses to see a new Instagram notification: "Lorraine
shared your post." DING. New text message from Mom: "I did
it!" Meg sighs, sets her phone down and moves back to the
kitchen.

DING. We hear Meg's phone from the living room.

MEG
(under her breath)
I got it, mom. Good job.

Meg continues putting away dishes.

We close in on the phone as an email from WILLOW ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL pops up. We scan to see the subject line "Offer - Art
Teaching Position" and --

CUT TO BLACK.