

On The Write Track

Margret straightened her back in the leather chair, placing her fingers on the familiar smooth keys of the rustic typewriter. Her fingers glided across them, producing word after word, until her article was finally a complete. She gazed over the paper with wide eyes. This would get her the journalist position, she was sure of it. She turned her head towards the window taking in a breath of the cold air. Margret sunk into the leather chair falling into a deep sleep, but outside of her tiny apartment the city of Washington was very much awake.

Yawning, Margret glanced at the clock in front of her. "7:30!" she squealed, so loud the entire city might as well use her as an alarm. She pulled a knee length brown skirt over her slim 6 ft figure and a brown blouse to match. Margret put her dirty blonde hair in a tight bun. Before rushing out the door she cautiously put the article in her bag. Outside people quickly hurried past her, tending to their own important matters. Fancy sport cars and an array of coloured buggies impatiently awaited a green light. The smell of fresh pastries made her drool. She turned the corner and stood in line at Smith's Coffee House. Margret tilted her head towards the sky, memories from her small town in Misery coming back to her.

Ten year old Margret woke up at the sound of her father humming in the kitchen. She rushed down the wood paneled staircase. "Do you have it?" Margret asked out of breath. Her father motioned for her to sit beside him. She propped herself on the chair as her father, Mr Fisher, opened the daily newspaper. Her father smiled gleefully as she reworded the articles making them much better than they were originally. He lifted her up under her arms and swung her in circles around the kitchen. "What an amazing daughter I have," he repeated. Her interest in writing blossomed and it was because of his constant encouragement Margret finished school and moved to Washington in 1948 at the age of 18, to fulfill her lifelong dream.

"Hello?" a deep voice murmured. Margret shook her head "Sorry, I was distracted". "Five coffees and baloney sandwiches please" Margret said, placing the little change she had beside the register. There was nothing her boss Mr. Martin

liked more than a baloney sandwich and a cup of tar coloured coffee. Margret carefully balanced the tray on the palm of her hand and firmly gripped the bag of sandwiches with her teeth. A few dirty looks from strangers is better than being late, she thought; rushing out of the coffee house. Her fast paced walk began to turn into a steady jog. She looked in awe at the large building towering over her, with the name Washington Post printed on the front in bold black letters. Always the same reaction no matter how many times she has seen it. While trying to balance the tray, she firmly pushed the large door open.

Minutes later Margret burst into the war room unannounced. She looked at her boss apologetically, handing out the tray of coffee and sandwiches. Mr Martin closed his jaw on a baloney sandwich, mayo oozing out of the corners of his mouth. She studied the short pot bellied old man as he took a swig of the black coffee. Her skin crawled at the sight of Mr. Martin's caterpillar-like eyebrows rising with every bite. Margret pulled the article from her purse and placed it in front of Mr. Martin. "Who submitted this?" he mumbled. Margret cleared her throat, rolling her shoulders back, "I did Mr. Martin."

The once loud and boisterous room was now silent. Men exchanged smirks while some shook their heads in disbelief. All at once the room erupted into laughter. Mr Martin tossed the article to the side as his male colleagues chuckled in the background. The corners of his mouth rose, displaying a set of crooked teeth "Very funny" he said. "Mr Martin if you read it I'm sure you would..." "How about you run along?" he said, pinching her bum. Margret flinched. Her stomach churned and twisted into several knots. Drops of warm liquid began to form on the surface of her forehead. She picked up the scattered papers one by one, and stuffed them into her purse. Her hands closed into a tight fist.

Like everyday working as a secretary at the Washington Post, Margret made phone calls, filled out boring paperwork and received a few odd looks from her female colleagues. Then at last she went home, her safe place. Margret put on her favourite pair of blue pajamas and let her hair down. "Ouch" she said, rubbing her scalp. She opened the window to reveal a beautiful sunset. Blue, pink and purple colors filled the night sky, giving it a fairytale like essence. As a child Margret's mother would tell her that fairies would paint the clouds an array of colors as a gift to the children. The corners of Margret's mouth lifted. She stood over her thick oak

desk and stared at the typewriter in front of her. "They would accept my article if I were a man," she said, banging her fists on the table. She pulled the papers from her purse and laid them out onto the table, her gaze coming to rest on her name. She moved her fingers onto the keys and started to retype a copy of the first page with one small adjustment to the authors name, Mr. Hemmingworth.

Margret entered the war room, article in hand. She straightened her spine and made direct eye contact with Mr. Martin. "Here" she said, handing him the article. He shook his head, "Don't tell me you've been at it again". Margret cleared her throat. "No actually, I found it at the door. Someone must have dropped it off." He squinted his eyes at the paper, "Mr Hemmingworth" he repeated to himself. She watched Mr. Marin as he slowly flipped through the article. He lifted his eyebrows and a smile creeped onto his face. "Wow, not bad," he said. "Hey, how do we get a hold of this guy?" he asked. "There was only a partial return address, but I'll find him for you" she said. "You're a doll" he said, lowering his palm onto her shoulder as she shifted weight to her other foot.

Margret swung her arms up in the air. "I can't believe he published my article, or shall I say Mr Hemmingworths" she chuckled to herself. She spun around in the chair, fidgeting with a pen. Margret grabbed a pile of paperwork, beginning to fill it out. She sighed, putting her chin in the palm of her hand. I need an address, something that won't make Mr. Martin suspicious, she thought. Margret bit her fingernails, like she always did when she was deep in thought.

Afternoon approached and Margret had come up with a plan, a really good plan. She set foot in Mr. Martin's office with a slip of paper which read, 115, Chapman Street. "Well apparently they live in the same building as me," she said with a shug. He took hold of the paper, slipping on a pair of reading glasses. "You don't say". "Well drop him off an invitation to the awards dinner this Saturday. If we give him an award maybe he'll consider working for me." he said. The thought of having a journalist position made her grin from ear to ear. "I'm on it," she said excitedly.

"Saturday, April 1950, in other words my big day" she said looking through her closet. She pulled out a floor length red dress and a pair of ruby red high heels, which she purchased with remaining money from her paycheck. They reminded her

of her favourite movie of all time, the Wizard of Oz. She squeezed into the red dress and slipped on the high heels. Margret let down her blonde curly hair, which sat just above her shoulders. She stared at her reflection in the mirror, she was by no means used to this fancy attire. Margret applied red lipstick then grabbed her purse. Once outside, she waved her hands in the air "Taxi" she called. "Take me to the Banquet Hall" she said, slipping inside the small yellow car.

Waiters handed out horderves and men and women talked amongst each other. A Jazz band played lively music in the center of twelve of the tables. Middle aged women snapped their fingers and moved their hips side to side. Seated at a table, Margret took a big bite of mash potatoes. Mr. Martin looked around the room frantically "Where is he?" he asked. "Don't worry, they're here," she said.

Mr Martin took hold of the microphone, clearing his throat. "It is now time for the awards ceremony. First I would like to congratulate an amazing writer, a new favourite ladies and gentlemen, Mr Hemmingworth!" The audience clapped enthusiastically. "It's now or never" Margret said, standing up. Both men and women looked at her in wonder which gradually changed to disbelief. She walked towards Mr. Martin, in a relaxed and confident manner. "You're Mr. Hemmingworth " he said fuming. Margret nodded. "I'm thrilled you all enjoyed my article and I hope to write more in the fu-" he cut her off. "You are a woman, you have no future in writing" he said abruptly. His voice ecowed throughout the dining hall. Margret swallowed hard. "I am the same person, I just used a different name," she said. "Leave my Banquet, now!" he snapped. The audience shook their heads in agreement. Margret left the banquet hall, feeling like her ruby shoes had lost their sparkle.

Margret slid into her desk with her head down, hoping that she still had a job. Mr. Martin approached her. She lifted her head slightly, not daring to make eye contact. "Ms. Fisher, I'm sorry about the other night," he said. "You are?" she asked. "I'm not used to women in this workforce, but I have to admit you're good. I know it's not exactly what you hoped for but how about I give you a job as a news editor to start?" Margret jumped out of her chair, her face inches away from his. "Thank you!" she exclaimed. He briefly smiled then grumbled, "Alright come with me".

He opened a door leading to a small office located in the corner of the building. "It's all yours." Everything seemed familiar; the desk, chair, mug of pens

and phony picture of the war. Her eyes darted to a shiny new typewriter. Mr. Marin pulled out a stack of articles and placed them on her desk, "Enjoy" he said exiting the room. She picked up an article and began circling the errors. Margret was instantly reminded of mornings with her father.