

The Art of Being Okay

Maggie walked downtown to grab a bottle of wine for the weekend. She liked a Pinot Grigio or a nice Cabernet. Sure, she hadn't had the best week, but things were okay. The job thing was disappointing, yes, but she'd always been a go-getter. She'd have a few cover letters drafted by Monday. Her resume was pristine.

She straightened her spine, entering the liquor store with her head held high. She was a very accomplished person after all. She imagined what the man behind the desk was thinking as she browsed the white wine aisle. *Look at that lovely young woman. I'm sure she's planning on splitting a bottle with lots of friends.* She smiled to herself. Things would work out fine. She picked out a bottle with a label that was only slightly pretentious and made her way to the counter. The store owner glanced at her. He rang her up, surely thinking her dress was adorable. She left the store with a grin on her face.

On her walk home, Maggie tried not to think any thoughts. Now was not the time for thinking. She focused on her feet walking. Right foot, left foot. She concentrated on stepping on every sidewalk crack.

She opened the door to her quaint apartment and strode to the cabinet. She picked out a dainty glass with a pink rim. The one her brother bought her for Christmas years ago. She remembered that day, how her dad had loved their joint gift of a monthly beer club subscription.

One glass in, Maggie was feeling better. She deserved this. She was a pleasant, twenty-nine-year-old woman. Sometimes she felt like the world was exploding. It wasn't abnormal. After all she'd been through, she was doing great. Better than great. They had no right to judge her. She'd look at job postings tomorrow and surely, some company would love to have her. Multiple companies probably.

She tried listening to music, but every song was wrong. The words either reminded her of what had happened or they reminded her of her father or they were too happy and pissed her off. So she turned on the tv, some rerun of a cheesy game show.

Two glasses in, her body started to tense up. Her breaths were shallow as she replayed the day's events in her head. She decided to take a walk. Her father always told her endorphins cleared the head. She wished she didn't have to think at all. That she could turn herself off like a robot and not remember anything, anyone. Her supervisor had been jealous of her from the start. She was a young, promising upstart and some people couldn't handle that. Like her dad always told her, you've got to look out for number one. *You have a problem, Margaret.* They had no right. Sure, maybe she'd said some things that weren't quite work appropriate. She was at her neighbor's house now, the ones with the perfect family and the white fence and the cute dog. She saw their perfect little trashcan waiting on the side of the road and gave it a kick. She wasn't wearing the proper shoes for such an athletic endeavor, but it felt amazing. She kicked it again and again, briefly imagining what a passerby might think. *There's Maggie getting her workout in, what an impressive athlete. We love her.*

And then she was back home and the world was caving in on her again. Did anyone like her at all? She felt claustrophobic as she reached for the bottle. Three glasses in now and she was replaying her entire life in her head. Her dad telling her to be tough like him and her supervisor telling her, *please leave, Margaret.*

One bottle in. No one understood her. She was laying on her couch. She looked at the TV and was filled with hatred for the game show host. He had a goofy looking mustache and a tie that was too long. How dare he give the audience members hope. They probably wouldn't win anyways and even if they did, they'd probably get fired for insubordination and everything

would fall apart. She looked up for the first time in a while. Her window was broken.

Admittedly, she wasn't at her most agile. But she'd get a new job offer any day now. What if she didn't?

Since she was little, she'd loved stories with happy endings. Even the overly romantic ones. She liked when things worked out the way they were supposed to. When no one got fired and no one missed dad and no one was hitting her head on the corner of the coffee table as she felt herself slip off the couch.

A knock at the door. Her brother, with his shaggy hair and kind eyes. He stood there in his fancy suit jacket, looking worried. Why? She was dizzy. He had a stable job, a family. He told her to sit down. He stared deep into her. *Are you okay?* Yes. Maybe. She was happy to see him. He'd been so good to her these past few months. *I miss dad, too.* She let him hug her, her body limp like a ragdoll. *You don't always have to be okay, Mags.* He made her a cup of tea. Deep in those eyes, she saw disappointment, the memory of when this had happened just last month. She was imperfect. She let him lead her to bed.

The next morning, she got up and cleaned the broken glass below her window. She had a splitting headache behind her eyes. She glanced at the counter where the bottle of wine had been. It was gone. She looked at herself in the mirror. Her face was pale and her hair was knotted. She took a deep breath and went on a walk. The sidewalk cracks seemed to laugh at her. The whole world was laughing at her. As she passed her perfect neighbors' house, she winced. Their dented trashcan lay on its side. She walked faster. This had happened before. It would happen again.