

Copycat
By Dana Hall

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At Rise: Meg is sitting at her table typing on her keyboard. She is struggling. She writes then deletes. She is surrounded by snacks and looks disheveled.

There is a knock at the door.

Meg: *(yells OS)* - Come in it's open.

Tammy comes in she is has a sweater in hand. She is dressed up from her date.

Tammy: Hey.

Meg: Hey.

Tammy sits down. Meg looks up.

Meg: You look nice.

Tammy: Thanks. Oh- Here's -this thing. It's probably cursed.

She puts the sweater on the table.

Meg: Guess things didn't go well.

Tammy: Not really- got anything to eat?

Meg: Sure-

MEG passes TAMMY a bag of chips.

Tammy: Thanks.

TAMMY is eating loudly as MEG is trying to focus on her computer.

Meg: I thought you were going to dinner.

Tammy: I went.

Meg: Well.

TAMMY indicates to the bag of chips.

Tammy: *(eating chips)* Well -

Meg: That good huh? Want to talk about it?

Tammy: No.

Meg: Ok/

MEG goes back to writing.

Tammy: Question?

Meg: Sure/

Tammy: Is there some kind of magnet on my forehead that attracts losers? Seriously look/

Meg: I'm gonna guess Matt didn't show- huh?

Tammy: Wrong.

Meg: Oh really?

Tammy: He showed. He really showed himself.

Meg: Was it a catfish situation?

Tammy: Catfish? This was our second date how could he be a catfish?-

Meg: I don't know maybe it wasn't him at first- and this time the *real* Matt showed up-

Tammy: An imposter would've been better. Oh- trust me the real Matt showed -

Meg: Good?

Tammy: Not good! He showed up With. His. MOTHER!

Meg: His *mom*?

Tammy: Yup-

Meg: (*whispers*) Oh my! Is he underage?/

Tammy: Gross -No! He's an idiot, not a kid.

Meg: A grown man brought his mother on his date?

Tammy: Seriously maybe there's some pheromones I give off that attracts them/

Tammy is smelling herself.

Meg: Stop. Tammy, it's not you. It's just this weird world of dating/

Tammy: That's it.

Meg: What?

Tammy: I'm done. Dating in your 40s is terrible.

Meg: Nah-40 is when we start to become interesting.

Tammy: I'm changing my status to 'cat lady' and calling it a day.

Meg: You don't have a cat-

Tammy: Not yet but this is how it starts Meg.

Meg: You can't give up there's a lot of fish in the barrel-

Tammy: (*correcting*) sea

Meg: Yes -Si senorita!

Tammy: No- I meant the phrase is 'plenty of fish in the *sea*'-(*indicates swimming*) not barrel-

Meg: I know what I said.

(demonstrates)

Look- if you shoot into a barrel you're bound to hit one --eventually/

Tammy: But he'd be dead- Why would I want a dead fish?

Meg: True. Sounds like you've already been scraping the bottom of the barrel anyway -

Tammy: Thanks -

TAMMY throws chips at her.

Meg: Oh- stop -you're a catch!

Tammy: Use one more fishing analogy I'll strangle you with your computer cord.

Meg: Understood.

*MEG stares at her computer screen.
After a beat.*

Tammy: I'm fine- ya know.

Meg: Of course you are.

Tammy: Totally fine-

*There's a pause. The silence makes
Tammy uncomfortable.*

Tammy: What are you working on anyway- before I came barging in here with my stupid shit/

Meg: Nothing- just writer's block- and your shit isn't stupid-

Tammy: So what do you do for writer's block?

Meg: No idea- wait for it to pass I guess.

Tammy: Does that work?

Meg: Not really-

Tammy: Well, I don't want to keep you-

Meg: No, it's a good distraction-

Tammy: I'm exhausted- you must be too- get some rest maybe it'll help. I just came to drop off your sweater not to add more to your blockage/

Meg: I'm glad you stopped- its what friends do - they listen to crazy stories that their friends are going through---

It dawns on MEG she can use this for her book.

You're probably starved let me get you some real food.

MEG sits TAMMY down.

Tammy: Nah, I lost my appetite/

Meg: Let me get you some water---

MEG goes to get water.

Meg: (OS) You've had a string of these bad dates we should talk more about it/

Tammy: I said I was fine/

MEG comes back in with a glass of water.

Meg: Sometimes we feel fine at first then all the emotions rush over us.

Tammy: Ok Dr. Phil - I said I was fine.

Meg: Don't be silly no one should have to go through something like this alone/

MEG puts the sweater on Tammy's shoulders like a blanket.

Tammy: Well it was insane/

Meg: It was completely crazy. Just put your feet up and relax.

TAMMY kicks off her dress shoes.

Tammy: Thanks- I appreciate it. Going home to an empty apartment does suck. Ugh he keeps messaging me-

Meg: Uh -huh what's he saying/

Tammy: Same old shit they always say- he's sorry he didn't mean for things to go that way blah blah--

Meg: Maybe he is-

Tammy: Whose side are you on?

Meg: Yours of course. Relax- feet up. So start from the beginning and tell me what happened.

*TAMMY leans back as she tells the story.
MEG sits down behind her computer.*

Tammy: Not much to tell.

Meg: The first date went well- so there's that-

Tammy: Sure they all seem normal at first -- It's like bathwater. It has to warm up slowly- no one jumps into a scalding hot tub/

Meg: Where were you meeting him tonight/

Tammy: The fancy french place on Main and 8th-

Meg: Oh la la -so what were you wearing?

Tammy: This. I was wearing this and your cursed sweater-

Meg: Right-right sorry, keep going. What happened when you walked in? Did you see them right away or what?

Tammy: I walked over to the table. *(laughs)* Man, can you even imagine my face when I walked into that restaurant?

MEG *types feverishly.*

Meg: I think I can.

Tammy: Two dates and there he was sitting with his mom at what was supposed to be our table.

Meg: What was running through your head?

Tammy: Besides the thought of dying alone in my one-bedroom apartment?

Meg: Ya, go on *(under her breath)*... in detail.

Tammy: But you know what happens? -

Meg: *(looks up)* It's good for the healing process.

Tammy: Fine- at first I thought she ran into him and stopped to chat. Like she happened to be there *(imitates mother/son conversation)* What are you doing here, mom? Wait- what are *you* doing here-son? I'm waiting for my beautiful date. Oh, I'll let you get back to that then. But NOPE. I walked up, giving him the benefit of the doubt. and what did he do?

Meg: He introduced you-

Tammy: Sure did.

Meg: Damn this is good *(corrects herself quickly)* terrible/wow--

Tammy: He called me his girlfriend.

Meg: Well you are a girl and a fri(end)/

Tammy: Two dates Meg. Two dates-- well technically one date and the start of one so like 1 1/3-

Meg: What did she look like?

Tammy: I don't know- who cares?

Meg: I do-

Tammy: It's not like I have to pick her out of a line-up?

Meg: I just mean what was she like...

Tammy: A mom-she was wearing loose knit pants and an oversized tunic wait- What are you doing?

Meg: Nothing- listening/

Tammy: Are you writing this down?

Meg: No.

MEG is typing.

Tammy: Why are you typing?

Meg: I'm not.

Tammy: Bullshit. I see you typing right now.

MEG steals a few clicks at the keyboard.

Tammy: Stop typing!

Meg: Ok.

Tammy: Wait-Are you writing about my life?

Meg: No.

Tammy: Oh really-

Meg: Really... *(confesses)* ok maybe I'm taking notes.

Tammy: Notes? This isn't a class Meg it's my fucking life not a chapter in your stupid

book.

Meg: I know I know. It's just my editor said my writing sounded inauthentic and prescribed I thought maybe I could/

Tammy: Steal my life and pass it off as your fiction crap?

Meg: Well technically that would make it non-fiction////Ok- ok! I get it you're mad -

Tammy: Mad? Try hurt - betrayed ---

Meg: and you have every right to be/

Tammy: I thought you really cared about me. I guess not- you're just exploiting me for your shitty book. Whatever happened to writer's block? Or was that just a lie to lure me in/

Meg: You're not that interesting -

Tammy: Excuse me?

Meg: I mean I wouldn't lure you- you came to me-

Tammy: So it's *my* fault is that what you're saying/

Meg: Let me explain- writing is influenced by real-life - I can't help when the creative juices flow--

Tammy: Creative juices? First- eww. Second, are you seriously defending yourself right now?

Meg: No- I'm just saying you inspire me- it's a compliment. Sure I may have gotten a bit desperate for material but please don't be mad. I won't do it anymore I promise--

Tammy: I'll sue you for intellectual property infringement- don't try me.

Meg: Not sure it fits the statute but//

Tammy: Art is life. This is my life, and copyright protects art-

Meg: You don't have a trademark on bad dates/

Tammy: My dating record begs to differ- but that is not the point Meg. You can't pretend to be a good friend to fill your pages. It's really shitty.

Meg: Ok - I said ok. It was just loosely based on you anyway.

Tammy: Let me see- then.

Meg: No.

Tammy: Let me fucking see it.

TAMMY reads Meg's computer.

Tammy (reading):

Teri entered Le Petit Chateau with stars in her eyes. Her *(insert color of sweater)* sweater fit tightly across her ample bosom as if it were waiting to be freed by the handsome man across the room. Her eyes fell upon his gaze and she was transfixed-

Looks with judgment at Meg

Tammy: (continues) *(To Meg)* Really?

(Reading) She was, after all, a few years past her prime. She feared her next stop would be animal welfare to take in a score or two of cats - to seal her fate as an old maid.

(To Meg) Just slightly influenced- huh?

Little did she know Robert had already invited a guest to dinner, his mother- dressed conservatively in a linen pants suit she sits on the edge of her chair sipping a Pino Grigio. Robert attentive to his mother has always sought her maternal advice as no one would better know his heart than the one who created him.

(To Meg) This is sick you know that right?

Meg: See the protagonist is Robert not you. It's about this demented web that mother and son have where/

Tammy: She dies. He keeps her body preserved in an upstairs bedroom? It's Psycho Meg.

Meg: I know you're pissed but don't call me names/

Tammy: No! It's the fucking movie Psycho- *Alfred Hitchcock*?

Meg: He didn't write it Robert Bloch did and I don't use his words verbatim--

Tammy: It's the same concept! You can't just go taking shit people already did and pass it off as your own.

Meg: It's reimagined.

Tammy: It's plagiarism.

Meg: You don't understand the arts- writing- being a 'creative'.

Tammy: I understand you're a shitty friend. I'm sorry I'm not *interesting* enough for you to be real friends with... What else have you stolen? (*realizing*) You didn't write about my divorce, did you? (*Meg doesn't answer.*)

Fuck. You know what? You're just like all of *them*. We're supposed to have each other's backs- girl power and all that shit. I'm supposed to be able to come over here and vent about my shitty date or when Steve left me without it popping up in some corner bookstore. I guess we're only friends if I provide something to you- well, I hope my pain was entertainment enough to sell a few copies. I'm done- with you- and them.

Meg: You're right. I'm a fraud.

Tammy: What?

Meg: I used to be able to write - ideas poured out of me and now nothing- all fucking dried up. I gave up everything for this novel and I can't even get it off the ground. We've been friends forever please don't throw it all away because I did something stupid. I need you. I want sisterhood - we can share jeans like the movie- come on smile- you loved that movie- I want to make it up to you. I will make it up to you.

Tammy: Good luck with your book. Thanks for the sweater.

TAMMY EXITS.

MEG tries to speak but nothing comes out. Then goes back to her writing. Frustrated she slams the computer closed. She takes out her cellphone and dials it.

Meg: Tammy- I am sorry...Please call me back. I am sorry this time.

-END-