

THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF WAYS TO SUFFER, BUT some of us will always choose to suffer in silence. In life, humans are tested by their ability to feel and capability to not feel, their ability to hide behind a mask and the capability to put on a convincing performance to the audience; the rest of the world.

EVER SINCE NEW YORK

AMBER ALEXANDER

Although Vincent already knew there were a lot of struggles and complications going on within not only his family environment, but his own life as well, he found a way to desert himself on his own personal island. By climbing from his window in the Colonial house, he would sit on the roof with his favorite snack or drink and allow the world to merely exist around him.

On this particular night, he was accompanied by a small package of Double Stuffed Oreos, which against his ballet teachers advice, he still enjoyed whenever he pleased. Vincent moistened the cookie between his lips so that he didn't make a loud crunch when he took a bite as a way to still enjoy the natural wildlife that existed around him simultaneously. The crickets chirped through the surrounding woods filled of live oak trees layered in Spanish moss. Off in the distance, the sound of fireworks going off echoed throughout Vincent's own, their booming roars and dazzling lights taking over the night sky through the surrounding trees.

Something so simple became the concept of something that seemed so complex and intangible to understand, he thought to himself. All he could do was shake his head as he closed his eyes.

Vincent, to his mother's distaste, had a mind and soul just like his father's. Although in the South it wasn't considered exactly socially acceptable for him to be so involved in theatre and dance, he still pursued what he wanted in his heart. He felt a shiver course through him as he remembered his last unsuccessful conversation with her.

"Vincent, I'm just saying, it's not what dignified men /do/." She said simply, taking a sip of her sweet tea as they sat in the shade that summer afternoon. Vincent could feel her eyes remained glued to his father's frame as he sat in the sun, sketching their

garden. If Vincent had it his way, he'd be sitting beside his father with his own sketchbook, but after what he drew last week, all his available supply of paper from sketchbooks and notebooks had been taken away.

"Mother, are you saying that David Bowie and Van Gogh aren't dignified?"

"Vincent, don't be ridiculous. They were European, they weren't supposed to be dignified. Southern gentlemen were." Her words stung his skin, but in retaliation he blasted his Aladdin Sane album a little louder that evening in his room.

He snapped back to reality as another flash of light in the sky dazzled above him. He could already feel himself beginning to grow even more distant from his mother who was becoming the woman he loathed. She questioned every little thing he did, and wouldn't give the funds for him to do what he yearned to do. Therefore, his artistic father had to sell enough paintings in oil and and sculptures of beautiful caramel colored clay in order to keep up. Vincent was unable to find a job in his own city. That could of been one of the main reasons he wanted out so badly.

If only he knew that wanting to leave Georgia may of been a mistake.

"Charles, if you make that boy actually believe that he can have a life doing that-

"Charlotte, if I can do it, so can he. He's far more skilled than I was at that age and there's so much potential in him."

"I really don't care. He doesn't need to be chasing after things he can't

get."

Charles offered her a blank stare, shaking his head furiously before walking into the kitchen. "He's my son too, damnit. Lottie, let the boy live!"

"Who's the one who makes the money around here, Charles? That's right, me. So shut your damn mouth before I think about kicking you out."

"Lottie, you know you can't do that, my name is on the house too."

"Do I really look like I care?" She rose her eyebrows in question, a sneer on her red painted lips. "That boy is just like you.. I wouldn't be surprised if he's—"

"You stop right there." He demanded, turning around forcefully, a deadly glare ruminating in his eyes. "Lottie, you have no right to use that against either of us. If he is, so be it. We love him no matter what; that's what good parents do."

"Is that what you call it?" She asked coldly, turning on her heel and heading off to her office. Anger boiled inside of Charles as he slammed his palm against the countertop, jumping in surprise as he heard faint footsteps on the tile floor.

"Hi dad. Did you still want to watch that movie in the den?" Vincent asked, a faint smile stretching across his lips.

"I'd love to, Vin. You get the drinks and I'll gather up the snacks." *