

Angel Marie

Excerpt from Chapter 2 of Untitled Novel

Word Count 786

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Cold white walls, decorated with branches of cracks that trailed up and down each of them, as if they were the veins containing the blood of the house - the essence of the house that kept it alive - remained forever blank as I grew up. Never once did a hook get nailed into the wall's body, never once did dust dare collect around the window frames of the exotic and surely outdated interior, and never once did a smiling familiar face of a family member look down at me from its mounted position -- my Mother despised art, and any sign of decoration within the house immediately found a new home in the dumpsters that lined the back streets. So when I confessed my love for art, at the ripe age of nine years old, she acted as if I plunged a ten inch blade into her heart, removing it with the intent of drinking up every last ounce of blood her body could hold, sending her away in the most painful fashion possible.

Art promised to damn my family.

And yet I still found myself drawn into the need to write, the need to illustrate pictures with words and the need to paint images I never wanted to forget, scenes no one else could see but me – it became a thirst I could not quench. This is why when my dearest childhood friend offered up her computer (another form of common technology Mother simply didn't trust and thus would never allow within her walls) to apply to the prestigious 042's Traveling Artists I knew this would be my only ticket to the life I felt determined to live - the life of an artist.

“No daughter of mine will be an artist,” her voice rang cold, like the sensation of a flat palm upon the inside surface of a metal freezer, and it always shocked me, despite her tone never changing all my life.

“But you don’t understand what being a part of the 042’s could do for us,” I found myself, for once, feeling undaunted before my mother’s disapproval, for I knew in a matter of months, this would no longer be my home, and I would no longer have to answer to her. No matter how this argument concluded, I would be packing up my belongings to set out on a creative expedition; to rediscover the history of artists and poets much like myself. Whatever sticky web I manage to work myself into today by daring to step on my mother’s toes, the 042’s would grant me asylum, “I simply don’t understand what the issue is here.”

“*Simply?* Since when do you speak like that? Like some good for nothing poet -- do you know what happened to Edgar Allen Poe? Dead on a park bench. Charles Bukowski? Succumbed to the filthy addictions that inspired his so called ‘art’, not to mention the slime of a man he lived as. Is this what you intend to make of yourself? Well, I *simply* won’t have any part in it. I will repeat myself once more; no daughter of mine will be an artist.”

She turned to look at me - a mirror of a woman before me, most certainly not my mother, despite all the features we shared. We both held the same almond shaped eyes, the same blackened curls that framed the edges of our face. Constellations of freckles painted across her pale, fair skin – a tribute gifted to her as a result of years locked inside, locked behind the fear of germs, sickness and the memories of the Fourth, also a quality – so I heard -- shared with her own late mother. Daggers shot from her gaze; they seemingly stared right through me. So she agreed. I wasn’t her daughter, I wasn’t a living copy of her, but instead a measly sewer rat, a

piece of dog shit on the sole of her shoe, just another problem she had to deal with as she went about her day.

I knew, from this simple look, that from the minute my umbilical cord was cut, a mother of mine no longer, and as much as a small part of me dreaded it, I needed to find a way to let go.

And this was it.

“I’ll be leaving in four months.”

“Then I guess we have this settled.”

Her voice still haunts me to this day - cold and vile, like thick poison dripping off the tip of her tongue -- filling my ears, filling my head, my throat -- until I felt as though I’d suffocate, unable to breath through the weight of her venom words.

I never heard her voice after that night,

as my mother never spoke to me again.