

The Meeting of Six

Six. The number that is a new finger. A new hand. Movement after the fullness of five.

Six. Starting.

Six years. The Local has been putting words to pages and releasing them into the world.

Six is a baby, but for dogs six is middle-aged.

Six years ago, Audrey Rose came out of the woods. Her limbs were sinewy, her body brown. Her hair fell long around her, hadn't been cut since her mother disappeared. Left her alone.

Six years of following paths, of nestling into grasses matted down by deer that slept there before her. Ticks crawled on her. She could feel their tiny journeys against her skin. "I am not a good home for you," she told them as she lifted them off her and put them onto leaf or bark. "I am not a good home for anyone."

Six years measured by the shift in the color of her eyes. What had been bright and wet were soft and hazy. Audrey Rose had seen too many sunsets alone. Too many sunrises, where her only company was the geese, swooping and laughing amongst themselves. The jokes Audrey Rose wasn't invited to share.

Six years changing the shape of her face, her body. Limbs stretching towards the earth, towards the sky. Cheeks defined. Breasts forming, filling, full. Blood running out

without wounds. Her tongue was dry a place water couldn't quench. Her speech was simple, childlike. She loved...simply. She lived the fairytales of a child.

Six years before her toes touched concrete. Before she covered what had been bare. And then the noise. Voices loud and unnecessary. So fast. So many words. Screeching of brakes not of hawks. Music thumping in her heart, moving her feet, pulsing. Dancing. African queens guiding her. Showing her. Grey concrete rising above her, covering the ground. Her connection to the Mother severed.

She moved in the land of men. She shrank between the lined and worn faces. Felt closer to them than the fresh flowers of youth. She went to dumps. Liked to sift through pages. Touch words again. She spoke words to the rats. No one corrected her. Audrey Rose stood on the highest pile she could and let the sound of a word move through her body. *Impossible* made her arms flail. *Curtailed* made her curl into a ball. She sat on abandoned couches and watched grey move above her, fall on her.

Six months before she could pull apart the smells of gasoline, wood, dirt, urine (man or dog), dust, flowers. Two years before she let the smells be one and enter and leave her at will. Four years before the balls of her feet itched and the lines of her forehead forgot how to uncurl. Four years before she skipped away from coffee and concrete and disappeared back into quiet.

No more months or days. No more minutes or seconds. Just passings. Passings of light to dark. Of warm to cold. Of stirrings and movement. Of feelings bubbling and gurgling and trying to find a way out of Audrey Rose's mind. But the grey matter of her brain held it all in. Stored it away, letting aromas out, sweet and putrid.

Six months ago that Audrey Rose found her way to Steamboat. Six months ago that Audrey Rose found the words that fit her. Told stories that were hers. Six months ago that the boys at the Local gave her a place, her very own space for her words. Her letters, her movements. Her time with them a hiccup in their six years.

Six years ago something started that Audrey Rose was now a part of. Six years of two men creating a sacred space for expression, ideas and beauty. Six years. Six months. The Local and Audrey Rose met at six.

-Do not attempt to recreate the events of Audrey Rose's life. They will result in internal and/or external death or at the very least a yeast infection.