

## **Another Chance**

There was a knock on the closet door. “Mail for you, Audrey Rose.” Audrey Rose pushed open the door, saw the size of the envelope, the type-written label, grabbed the package and disappeared back into Joe’s closet. Her face flushed.

Somehow Neil Labute’s play *iphigenia in orem* had found Audrey Rose. How *he* managed to find her she would never know and never wanted to. Inside the cover was a graceful yet masculine script ‘*Sometimes we act out of desperation. I’ll see you soon.*’ This was the first time she had seen *his* handwriting, the flow of *his* soul on a page. She licked the words, smeared them, rubbed her nose against them and tried to see *his* face as *he* wrote the words to her. Yet when she tried to imagine *his* face, there was nothing. She could see the lines of *his* body, the soft downy hair of *his* chest. She knew *his* hands, manicured but wide and strong. She knew the veins that ran up *his* arm, *his* second toe just a bit taller than *his* big toe, but she couldn’t picture *his* face.

Putting the play on her head, Audrey Rose tried to bring *his* face to her, but only a blurry smear appeared. She stretched out on the floor of Joe’s closet and read. As she read, her body slowly curled into her, around her. She couldn’t shelter herself enough from the words. When she was done, she tucked the play into the pocket of Joe’s winter coat.

Somehow the horror Audrey Rose read translated into joy from the words *he* had written to her, just for her. What was *his* desperation? Was she *his* desperation, did she make

*him* desperate? The thought cheered her in the way a bug caught in a spider's web would cheer her. Someone was getting the nutrition they needed.

Audrey Rose skipped into the living room, where Julie was sprawled on the couch watching T.V. Audrey Rose kissed her on the cheek, which made Julie smile. Despite the frustrations of Audrey Rose folding laundry and leaving the clothes on top of lights or on window sills, or the bathroom being covered in hieroglyphics written in Julie's eyeliner and lipstick, Julie couldn't not love Audrey Rose.

Feeling as ecstatic as a pig rolling in shit, Audrey Rose put on her sparkly skirt and hitchhiked out to the Zirkels. After she gave kisses to all the guys who had driven her, she disappeared into the grasses and fields, surrounded by craggy cirques and peaks. She stripped off her clothes except her skirt and spun around and around, the sun catching her sequins and spinning their light out like a disco ball until she fell on the lush blanket of grasses and flowers. Above her, clouds puffed by and the sun warmed her. Breezes floated across her skin, each hair on her body standing up, feeling alive. Her toes danced and soon they carried her up one of the mountains. She scrambled over rocks that gave way as soon as she reached for them, rolling down to crash far below. A feeling of everything shifting, nothing concrete somehow propelled her even further up. For every step up, she slid a few inches back. She dug her hands into the fragile network of erosion, of pieces breaking off, large and small. By the time she got to the top, the air had turned cool, but her adrenaline kept her warm. She straddled a long sliver of rock, resting her body against the warm strength, hugging it to her and feeling the unyielding

forces that had kept mountains in place for centuries. She stood on the ledge and pirouetted. The sun broke out from behind a cloud and warmed her darkened skin. Summer had almost passed and there were traces of chill in the air. After she had been on top long enough, she ran and skipped down, riding on a stream of rocks, her insides glowing.

In the crook of the cirques, lay a glacial lake of the deepest winter. Audrey Rose let her skirt fall off her and dove under the water, felt her breath pulled from her, a paralysis of body. She froze.

For just a moment, she was the ancient flowings, trapped in the snow and pull of the glacier, at its mercy. She saw bubbles from her mouth, felt her body sinking down, down. She landed on slimy grasses and saw silvery fish skuttle around her. Just as she was beginning to feel she belonged there, life woke her, pulled her head to the surface and pushed her to the edge. She giggled as she slithered up onto shore. Now she dangled her toe in the darkened wetness in as she watched beads of water run off her legs, between her breasts and down her stomach.

Audrey Rose listened to the birds, the different calls that only sometimes got answers. Chipmunks and flies visited her, tickled her skin.

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That night she came home and saw a plate on the table with her name on it. Julie had left her dinner: fried chicken, mashed potatoes and green beans. Each flavor waltzed across her tongue and shimmied into her belly.

More satisfied than she had been in a long time, Audrey Rose found her way through the dark into Joe's closet. She undressed carefully folding her sparkly skirt and packing it away in her suitcase. She had just crawled under her blanket when the door opened.

Joe fumbled his way in. Audrey moved over so he would have some space.

“Am I in your way?”

“No, Audrey Rose. I was just wondering what it was like to sleep in my closet.”

Whiskey on the breath.

Audrey Rose pulled back the blanket and felt Joe's body move in next to hers. Secure in warmth, she began to drift off when she felt his hand moving slowly up her leg. Audrey Rose stopped breathing. Gently she took his hand and threaded her fingers through his, holding them safely against her stomach.

“Why? You sleep with everyone else.”

“I like you too much, Joe.” She moved their hands up to her heart and lay staring at the wall until she heard his breath coming more deeply. When he was safely asleep, Audrey Rose let go of his hand and wriggled down to his feet where she rested her head on the soles.

*-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.*