

Audrey Rose – Chilly

By: Dagny McKinley

Audrey Rose's nose was getting tired of winter. Being the most outward protruding part of her body besides her breasts and her toes, her nose was the first piece to encounter the day, to step into sunshine, wind, snow or cold. Lately her nose had become as permanently red as Rudolph's from the chilly mornings. With shorter days in winter, Audrey Rose made a habit of getting up to meet the morning. She would climb out of her closet and sit outside her roommate Joe's windowsill, letting the morning sun assure her that the planets were still aligned. Usually the sun warmed her soul, crawled inside and sparked her happy places, but lately even the sun failed to do that. Instead, frost crawled up her nostrils and with each inhale, laced them with ice. Over the week, frost was crawling deeper and deeper into her body, traveling from her nostrils to the back of her throat and down into the depths of her internal functions.

Thor was painting his canvas white. The original image was almost completely covered. Thick gobs of white lay on a palate, splatters stuck to his red hair, the wiry curls on his arms. He was in a tranquil state which had taken since the summer storms to achieve.

As another -4 degree morning greeted Audrey Rose, she knew it was time to act. She set out across the snows of town, into the deeper snows that had drifted around trees, over rocks, sometimes sinking up to her waist. In a sack she carried bread, cheese and wine. Her path took her upwards, climbing past hibernating bears, mountain lion dens, until hawks flew below her. At the peak of Mt. Zirkel, she un-wrapped her bundle and set out a meal for herself and one opposite her. She sprinkled wine across the snow staining the purity while helping herself to a few mouthfuls.

Thor's nostrils flared. The grapes always drew him out from whatever he was doing. The oaky fumes pulled him down from high above the universe to see who was calling him.

Audrey Rose was nibbling on a piece of cheese when Thor descended. His fiery hair was blowing around him, leather covering parts of his body. He sat cross legged across from Audrey Rose before picking up the bottle of wine and taking a swig. He swallowed his cheese and bread in a mouthful and washed that down with more wine.

"So. You called for me?" Thor asked.

"Were you busy?"

"Not really. Ever since Scandinavia was Christianized, I've kind of faded out of consciousness. Now I'm studied in English classes as a myth. Not even history classes. It's a little ridiculous, but times will change again."

“I feel your frustration, people don’t believe half the things I’ve seen. It’s like Tinkerbell said “you have to believe in wishes.”

“So true. So, why are you bringing me down here on my sunny days off?”

“It’s not that I want to upset Ra or Apollo or Helios or whatever name he’s going by these days, but it’s been a little bit chilly down here. The sun is cheering, but a little cloud cover would do wonders for my poor nose.” Audrey Rose pointed to her nose that was looking a little raw. “You think maybe you could send a storm our way?”

Thor got up and looked over the landscape that had a layer of crust and ice over it.

“It was nice to have been forgotten for a while, it gave me time to paint.”

Audrey Rose stood next to Thor, coming up to his waist. “What were you painting?”

“Memories I’d rather forget,” said Thor

“So why paint them in the first place?”

“To let things go, sometimes you need to look them in the face one last time.”

Audrey Rose nodded her head silently. Thor sucked in the air then blew, his cheeks puffing out. Clouds formed on the wisps of his breath, slowly covering the earth.

Audrey Rose handed him the last of her bread and cheese.

“You know the way to a man’s heart.” He smiled down at her. Audrey Rose tried to hug him, but her arms only reached part way around his giant waist. “Thank you for remembering me,” Thor said.

Thor disappeared into the clouds. He stared at his canvas, picked up tubes of color and spread them around the palate. Next to the canvas on the cloud sat a pair of cowboy boots. Thor fingered them gently, touching every stitch, inhaling the smell, then he began to paint.

Audrey Rose sat on Joe’s windowsill that evening, letting heavy flakes of snow and rain fall upon her. Her nose smiled, felt warmth crawl back inside.