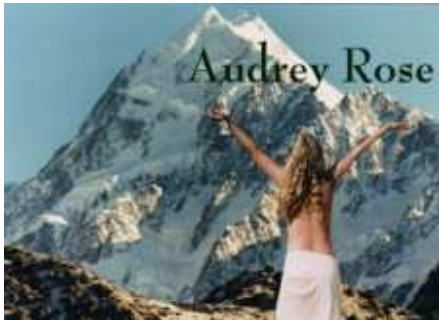


## Frozen in Time



The sky clouded, filled with gray. Winds picked up carrying leaves from mountain to street, pulling balloons out of hands and whisking them away. Skies opened.

The first flakes released, drifting slowly, twirling, swirling before making a home on the ground, hoping to be the first flake to last the season, to curl up under other flakes and nestle in for a good winter's sleep. In town, silvery white painted the ground. As the sun rose and melted everything she could reach, the frost held its ground in shadows, outlining trees and fence posts. In those lines the world was reflected like a dream, a cloud of shadows and across that beauty that Audrey Rose's toes traveled. Frost latched onto her hair and the crystals held, freezing strands. Audrey Rose ducked into shadows to hold onto the sparkly frost as long as possible. As she stood in the outline of a pine tree, a full and living pine, her footprint melted the frost. The outline of her toes in the outline of a tree in the outline of the land in the outline of the world.

Audrey Rose got on her knees and began to look for other clues as to what had been there before her. There were no other traces of life, but the way the blades of grass lay upon each other created letters and the letters spelled words, A prayer for the wild at heart, kept in cages. Now there was a mission to find the owner of the words. Audrey Rose headed downtown, stopping people on the street, saying the words. She went to the Steaming Bean and asked for napkin and pen. There were no extra pens so she borrowed a lipstick and wrote each letter, feeling the meaning in each curve, line and angle A prayer for the wild at heart, kept in cages. No one knew who the words belonged to. Audrey Rose asked young, old, healthy and sick. How could no one know where they came from? Did they sprout from the ground? Did nature feel caged? The words nagged at her, felt like they came from someone she knew. They came from a part of her past a part she had swallowed, had dug holes and buried. She remembered the bronze arrow piercing her womb, remembered blood running between her legs. Loss had spilled under the full moon, had turned the earth scarlet. Rains had washed away those memories but now winter was here. Memories couldn't be melted or washed, they were frozen masses that would survive until spring.

Audrey Rose carved a place in her mind to let this memory sit but the memory didn't belong in her mind, it slithered out of the gray mass and coils of knowledge, moving down, slipping into her mouth, touching her tongue bittersweet before swinging down her throat, lodging there for a moment, then trickling into her heart. The weight pulled at her at first. This memory was full but even as seconds turned into minutes to hours the weight became a part of her, became a cell of her makeup as natural as each beat of life

traveling through her body. Audrey Rose needed to lie down. The sidewalk was holding up too many people so she snuck into the library between the smell of books and layed down. As titles passed before her eyes so did words that had been spoken and written and she knew it was Tennessee Williams who the words had come from.

Invigorated she asked the librarian for information on Mr. Williams. There were plays and quotes and one jumped out at her. "I have found it easier to identify with the characters who verge upon hysteria, who were frightened of life, who were desperate to reach out to another person. But these seemingly fragile people are the strong people really." Tears filled Audrey Rose's eyes. The librarian turned away to give her some privacy. She held the words to her heart, she knew she must read through the plays she hadn't picked up in so long.

Passing Lyon's Drug on the way home she bought a permanent marker. When she got home she drew a cage on her chest over her heart. When she took deep breaths the cage expanded until it looked as if it would burst. One day it would burst.

Audrey Rose climbed out the window of the house and headed to her rock. In that landscape, with solid masses ripping through the ground, Audrey Rose curled up in the space that perfectly cradled her body. Audrey Rose bled. The first flake of the season melted then froze within her blood, within her memory, and here she entrusted the beauty and the pain that had been, letting it live above ground floating in consciousness until the spring came to absorb it. Upon her chest flakes landed, melting against her skin, melting against the lines over her heart.

-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.