

Get 'Er Done



There is a grizzled man who sits by the Steamboat spring, waiting to hear the chug-chugging again, which makes him older than dust. He looks almost like a rock he's been sitting there so long. Building the railroad in 1908 silenced the spring that gave Steamboat its name. Still the man sits there and talks about the olden days, the hard days when skiing was a method of transportation, not a sport. Audrey Rose spent a lot of afternoons sitting by the long white beard and bushy eyebrows.

"Kids don't know what hard is anymore with all their fancy clothes and heating pads to keep the fingers and toes warm. We didn't have none of that and we survived."

"I'm not a fan of the word hard," Audrey Rose said. "I prefer 'challenge' myself. If everything were a challenge then we could win, but the word hard doesn't excite people. Well maybe some people, but most people can handle a challenge, but they don't want to take on something hard." Audrey Rose didn't understand the word hard. She'd danced through the snows of the coldest winters, letting the chill brighten her cheeks. She'd battled mountain lions, magpies and love. She wanted to know the world this man had known so she dragged his wrinkled body down to the rodeo where the hardworking cowboys played.

They stood as close to the ring as possible so Audrey Rose could smell the horses, their sweat and the emptiness of smell of the riders. There was no fear in them, total confidence that win or lose, they'd get up tomorrow and play the game again. What struck her first was the announcer's ten minute speech on how bareback riding didn't harm the horses. Audrey Rose hadn't heard anything to the contrary before this, but the announcer made her wonder. Second thing she noticed was the eyes of the man on top of the horse. Blue and bright with a slight curl of the lip, maybe a smile. As he took off, she watched the cowboy's spurs dig into the horse, up the shoulder, holding him onto the horse with metal digging into the horse's flesh. Every muscle strained, worked, as the horse bucked back and forth. The rider was bucked after a few seconds. The white beard muttered 'sissy. I bet a pretty girl like you could do better.'

While the rodeo clown was great, telling jokes, it was as they were clearing the ring for a motorcycle stunt jump that Audrey Rose really laughed. Her friend Paulie had jumped the metal fence and was running across the grounds barefoot with a cape around his

shoulders that said “Happy Birthday to You Me.” As he started his dash, the rodeo clown began to chase him, huge yellow cowboy hat and little legs running as fast as they could. Even the announcer was speechless. Paulie danced a little dance in the middle of the grounds, then hopped the fence on the other side and ran barefoot into the night.

The rest of the events, the Steer Wrestling, Tie Down Roping and Team Roping were all okay, but there were no women. It was all men. A sassy looking blonde helped round up the horses and steer as needed, but no women were competing. When the barrel racing event came up, Audrey Rose was thrilled to see some female faces, but she noticed there were no men. There was a rider who sparkled. Sparkles are good. She had a green bead necklace on, a rhinestone belt and sequins on her shirt. As she guided her horse around the barrels, she shone, drops of water between the sunlight and night.

Knowing the night was almost over Audrey Rose patted her bushy eye-browed friend’s hand. Their eyes connected. “Make me proud,” he told Audrey Rose. A quick search turned up the sparkly cowgirl. Audrey Rose approached.

“We sparkle.”

“I guess we do,” said the cowgirl looking over Audrey Rose’s sparkly skirt.

“How come you’re the only one?”

“I don’t know. Some think it’s showing off, but sparkles always brought me luck. That and this necklace. My daddy gave it to me the night of my first competition, back when I was nine.”

“I’m going to need a little luck in a minute, can I borrow that necklace? I promise you’ll get it back as long as I’m in one piece.”

The girl was skeptical but handed Audrey Rose the necklace anyway. Audrey Rose curtsied to her then disappeared to where the horses were. She took off her top, whispered a few moist words in the ears of people who needed convincing then she mounted the wild stallion. Before the junior barrel racing, the gate opened and Audrey Rose was released onto the field. The stallion pranced around the ring. The green necklace shone around Audrey Rose’s neck, her breasts bounced under stadium lights, the sparkles on her skirt sprinkled out, catching the interest of the audience.

Audrey Rose tried to coax the stallion to buck, to prove that women can ride bareback in Steamboat, as well as Leigh Ann Billingsly, as well as any man. But still the horse pranced for her, calm under her. Finally Audrey Rose was inspired. She whispered into the horse’s ear “if you buck me as hard as you can, I’ll find a way to set you free.” That horse bucked and kicked with all its strength, Audrey Rose holding onto its mane, her bare feet resting against the horse’s side. She rode until the Dodge riders came to take her off, but Audrey Rose wouldn’t go. The crowd was on its feet, cheering her when Audrey Rose jumped the stadium bars, tossed the necklace to the cowgirl with a wink then

disappeared in the direction Paulie had gone, down a road filled with challenges; the road to freedom.

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The old man was never seen again but it was rumored he was wandered the woods looking for a wild horse that reminded him of days gone by.

-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.