

Hearted

Audrey Rose rubbed her temples. “Somebody put a drink in my drink last night,” she said to no one in particular. She was in the kitchen sitting on the counter while her roommates Joe and Justin were watching TV. Julie was moving around Audrey Rose cleaning up wine glasses and empty beer bottles from the night before.

“I think that somebody might have been you,” Julie suggested.

“Aha, I thought the culprit was someone I knew. They always say we usually abuse the ones closest to us. I need some fresh air.” Audrey Rose jumped out the kitchen window and landed in a huge drift of fresh powder. The ground was covered in a thickness of snow that had no notion of other seasons, had no idea its life was not permanent. Audrey Rose tilted her head up to the sky. The clouds were grey and low, flakes fell and landed in her hair. For just a moment, she could see the individuality of each flake, the crystals and rods the different shapes. She arched and stretched her body to mimic the different patterns before she fell on her back and made a snow angel.

Her bare feet were thick and toughened against the winter snow. They no longer turned red and raw like they did after the ground first froze. She skipped down a road and through trees to the place where the hawks circle and the forest is reformed in shadows on the snow. She jumped over sun-sent limbs and dug into the ground to see what was lying under there. She knew in places corpses of animals rested, frozen before their final consumption when the snows melted. She didn’t find any creatures, only a red foil balloon in the shape of a heart. The string around the bottom was tattered and frayed, white a color to be lost in snows. The red was in almost perfect condition, just a small

piece ripped by a tree or a bird that thought it was a new form of food. Audrey Rose tied the string around her wrist and moved her arms to watch the heart flutter in the breeze.

As usual, her journeys took her to Sunpie's Bistro for a drink to warm her insides up. After a few giddyups, she decided to get in her jeep and drive home. She found one outside the bar, a white jeep with a tan softtop. She climbed in. She couldn't remember where she left her keys. She felt around, then decided to take a nap. She woke up to a tall brunette man knocking on the window. She rubbed her eyes then rolled down the window.

"Can I help you?" She asked.

"You're in my car," the man said.

"Impossible. This is my car."

"Then why do I have the keys?" He jangled the keys in front of her.

"That's strange."

"Do you need a ride somewhere?" He asked her.

Audrey Rose started laughing.

"What's so funny?" He asked.

"I don't even own a car." Audrey Rose jumped out. She started to walk away, but noticed his jaw hanging open slightly.

"Oh, sorry, here." She took the balloon off her wrist and tied it around his.

"Everyone should be hearted at least once a day." She kissed his cheek and skipped off.

When Audrey Rose got home, there were fresh baked cookies on the counter. A plate wrapped in saran wrap had her name on it. Underneath was a cookie in the shape of a heart.

Julie was in her bedroom. Audrey Rose burst in and jumped on her bed.

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“Hearting me.”

“I didn’t heart you, talk to Joe.”

Joe was in the garage working on his car. Audrey Rose sat on his lap. He smashed his head on the undercarriage of the car as he sat up to see who was on him.

“I gave a heart today, but I got back an even bigger one.”

“It’s just a cookie to help with your hangover.”

“Last night I put a drink in my drink. Today, you put a heart in my heart.”