

No Way to Say Goodbye

He ate away at her like the worm wriggling into an apple, eating her from the insides out until she was only skin collapsing upon him. She couldn't get him out, stop him from eating away pieces of her, filling her with the words he couldn't, wouldn't say. They wrapped around her, tried to strangle her into submission. Then he smiled. A laugh, "hah" and he sucked the anger out of her like a poison, taking it into himself, mimicking her, making her feel tingly inside, making her want to wrap her body around him like she used to do so easily.

Audrey Rose never wanted to say no, but no became all she could say or she would break, piece by tiny piece until she lay in a pile at his feet. She was at his feet.

"It is hard to struggle against the stream. Will this torrent never dry up?" Saint Augustine's words tripped through her head. *Confessions of a Sinner* was the latest book he had brought to her, placed in her hands with his very own hands. When she opened the pages, she felt his gaze as she read these words and knew she would be at his feet forever. She licked his toes.

He had show up at *Sunpie* bar, at the place where she took refuge in amber streams and colored kaleidoscopes of warmth running through her body. Audrey Rose passed him, felt him in her as she moved by. Didn't want to know him anymore, wanted to run to him and feel herself wrapped in his safety. He was next to her when she touched herself

the way he touched her. He was inside her when her mind finally went blank. His arms curled around her when she fell asleep. Now he was here. This was too real.

He sent a drink down the bar to her. She sent it back. He sent a note to her, she dropped it in her beer without reading it and drank it. He stood up. Sat back down. Her eyes called to him, kept tangling up in his. She wanted to leave. She ordered another beer.

Surrounded by boys, by their laughter that left her empty. She talked to men, to boys that came to her, that always came to her, wanted to surround her and she felt suffocated. She wanted his breath inside of her, she wanted him to rescue her. He paid his tab. He stood up. She almost jumped across the bar to him, but kept her muscles frozen. He started away, then came back. The boys parted around her as he took her hand without a word and led her out of the bar, into the patterns falling from the sky. He took his coat off and wrapped it around her, walked with her, stopped her under a street lamp, took her in his arms and danced with her body close to his, almost inside his. Soft shadows were cast around them, seemed to be moving with them, twirling around and around as their lips touched, as she could finally taste him again. A taste of dreams of something untouched and all the red inside cooled to amber shades of fuel.

“I can’t.” She pulled away, trying to find the sense that was caught in a whirlpool pulling her down.

“Fair enough.” He put out his hand to shake hers. She stared at it. “It’s fine. Just shake my hand. This is the last physical contact we will ever have. You can be on your way and I’ll go home.” Audrey Rose stared at the hand, moved towards it, then moved back.

She jumped up and down stomping her feet. “No. I won’t shake it. I don’t want to.”

His hand didn’t move. “It’s better this way. Cut and dry.”

“I won’t do it.” Before he knew it, she was in his arms, face buried into his neck. He carried her to a taxi and managed to get himself in, with her never letting go.

His bed again, his body again. Scentless. Same room, same views.

“I’ve never said I love you. Not even to my mother,” he told her as his arms were wrapped around her, the real arms. She squirmed around to face him.

“Never?”

“Never. And you?”

“I love everyone.”

“But have you said the words?”

“Not since I was a little girl.”

He pulled Audrey Rose even closer to him, felt something give inside. Their hearts talked to each other.

He was gone again. She never knew if he would be back, if he really existed or was just a tortured memory of her mind, but Saint Augustine’s confessions sat in her lap. She

would not listen to them, did not want to hear what he had to say because they were not the words she was waiting to hear.