

## **Of Like Souls**

The landscape before her was white with tufts of branches, a mellow brown, fiery orange bushes, stoic white arms reaching skyward. Shaggy pines were full and round from their winter feasting. And the snow. Patches of dirt starting to show through. Yellow aspen leaves soiled and disintegrating underneath. In the air, the smell of earth, raw and tender.

Audrey Rose moved north across the land, away from town, where houses became ranches, were spread out and could breathe. Noise stopped and cars could be seen coming miles away. She climbed over fences, touched the manes of wild horses. Left them tamer than before.

She followed curves, valleys. Climbed hills. When the mountain was out of sight, Audrey Rose had a new view. Wide open, kinder spaces. Audrey Rose sat on the ground cross-legged, taking in the curves, feminine beauty. Behind her, peaks she had already named.

Her vision was interrupted by panting and chestnut eyes. A patchwork of browns, blacks and whites bounded towards her, jumped up and covered her face with kisses. Audrey Rose licked the dog back, felt the velvet of her ears.

“Sadie May,” a voice called.

The dog cocked her head and looked at Audrey Rose, then looked towards where the voice was calling.

“Sadie May,” said Audrey Rose “that’s a pretty name. Sadie May and Audrey Rose. What wild adventures we could have.” Audrey Rose took off towards the voice. Sadie May followed.

The voice belonged to long blonde hair and an athletic body. The smile on the girl’s face turned into a frown when she saw Audrey Rose running, sparkly skirt flying, and her dog in tow.

“You’re on private property.”

“Your dog wanted me to come here.”

“Do you usually walk around without shoes?”

“Only when I can.”

A tall man came out of the house, his voice booming. “Who’s that?”

“I’m Audrey Rose.” Audrey Rose curtsied to both of them and Sadie May started barking and running circles around her.

“Seems like Sadie May likes her.” Said the long blonde hair. “I’m Emilie and this is my boyfriend, Dan.”

“So what do you guys do up here?” Audrey Rose poked her head into their barn where there were snowmobiles, a tiny jeep and a plow.

“We play. We work hard and we play.”

Audrey Rose nodded her head, took in the house with huge windows facing every direction.

“Lots of places to look out of, or in to.”

“We’re having a drink. You want to join us?” Dan asked. “We’ve got moonshine.”

“Only if you plan on getting me drunk. One drink gives me a headache.”

“Come on.” Emilie led her into the house and fixed her a glass of nice old fashioned moonshine.

Audrey Rose swirled the liquid in the glass, took in the bouquet and took a sip. “By my accounts, this moonshine must have been made about two miles northeast of here.

“How’d you know that?”

“I can taste the distance.”

Dan shook his head, while Emilie splashed a little more Baileys into her hot chocolate.

“How much do you know about this area?” Dan asked.

“Not enough.”

Dan looked at Emilie and Emilie nodded. “Get ready, Audrey Rose, we’re going to take you out on the Rhino.”

Audrey Rose jumped up and down and clapped her hands. When Dan started up the tiny jeep Audrey Rose looked disappointed.

“What’s wrong?” asked Emilie.

“Well, it looks more like a hippo than a rhino.”

Dan and Emilie laughed and loaded up Audrey Rose and Sadie May into the back.

Audrey Rose stood up, holding onto the roll bar so she could see further. Bugs flew into her mouth, so she chewed and swallowed. She offered one to Sadie May, but Sadie May wasn’t interested.

Dan and Emilie took them all over their property, up hills, jumped off ridges with Audrey Rose whopping and hollering the whole way. When they got back, Audrey Rose's cheeks were a little bit redder. Dan and Emilie brought out the guns. They fired at targets, Audrey Rose shooting at something they couldn't see and hitting every time.

They drank moonshine until the moon shined. Then Audrey Rose thanked her friends. Sadie May barked and barked. Audrey Rose tried to explain that she had a great time with her but had to leave. Sadie May wasn't interested. The dog followed her down the hill, weaving in her footsteps to keep an eye on her. At the edge of the property, Audrey Rose looked back and saw golden lights in the windows.

“You go home, now, Sadie May. I'll be okay.”

Sadie May sat and watched the quiet figure as Audrey Rose moved away to find a place to sleep. Around her the snow glowed and bushes glittered and cracked. Everything was shades of white.

*-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.*