

Playing With the Gods

Orpheus Descending was waiting at the post office. The play was from him.

Audrey Rose took the play to her rock up in the hills. The curves of stone cupped her head. As she read, cotton-candied clouds moved around her vision, their wombs filled with rain, ready to birth new lives. When she was done reading, she ripped the play in tiny pieces and scattered them in the wind.

Audrey Rose knew the birds Tennessee Williams had talked about. She had flown with them before. She had touched the wings, like silk, clear to see the sky and clouds through, pale blue bodies. They would swarm around her, with silent songs, wings fluttering against her cheek, grazing her skin.

You could see through their wings like you could see through Audrey Rose. When the weather turned grey, Audrey Rose's body clouded up like the sky, gathered the darkness inside of her. She curled her legs under her, pulled every part of herself into a ball until the storms passed.

There were days when Audrey Rose disappeared. The winds carried her up to the Gods, where she would sit with Apollo and Pan and Athena. Apollo would play the lyre and all else was forgotten, while Pan would chime in with his pipe made of reeds. The song was sweeter than the nightingales in spring. Audrey Rose would lay back and float on the notes while Athena danced over her, or snuggled into her armpit.

When hunger struck, they would feast upon Orpheus, his body torn limb from limb, ingesting his flesh, his loves. The eyes were always saved for last. Usually Apollo would savor the squishy orbs, unless Audrey Rose visited, then they were given to her. As she bit down on the liquid filled balls, she could feel Orpheus' fatal mistake explode in a squirt in her mouth. If only he hadn't looked back.

After enough drinking, Apollo without fail would try to bed Audrey Rose. She would dance around him, twirling his hair like the ribbons at the Mayfair pole. She would sit on his lap.

“You’re a naughty God.”

“I take what I want, Audrey Rose, and I will take you, too.”

He would fill Audrey Rose with his seed, not knowing that soon his seed would dry up and disappear inside walls that were not a home.

Audrey Rose could cross into worlds, the space between what is thought and what is, neither here nor there. Pieces of her were strewn like breadcrumbs, waiting for someone to collect them and make her whole.

When the winds grew restless and fierce, they would pull and tug Audrey Rose down to the underworld. Apollo would wait in agitation for her next visit. The road to Hades was strewn with skulls and bones. Audrey Rose did not feel the fires. She would throw balls for the ferocious guardian dog Cerberus to catch. He would bring them back, tail wagging. The furies would clamor around Audrey Rose, stroking her hair and rubbing her feet, while Hades and Persephone would greet her.

The gatherings were more formal in the land of the Dark Lord. Minions would serve Audrey Rose wine, black as tar in jeweled cups. Tables were laid where they ate off plates of gold. Audrey always tried to behave herself, but sometimes she would jump on the table and dance a merry jig, a merry jig, a merry jig. Hades would frown, but Persephone would join her until their toes were covered in the juices of meat and the creams of desert. They would hold hands a twirl and laugh until they exhausted themselves. Then Hades would pick them up like little girls and lay them in bed together, gently covering them with warm blankets.

When sleep released her, Audrey Rose would slide down lightning bolts, would travel the sky with the sun until she couldn’t take anymore. Then she curled into a ball

somersaulted back down to earth, surrounded by the worlds that loved her, the worlds she was no more a part of than she was of earth. And still the birds flew 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.