

Retreat

What speck of life do you love most about yourself or someone else? Tickle Audrey Rose with your answer – undiscoveredwriter@gmail.com

The yellow jackets were a sign. Their nests had reached their peak and they flew out in swarms soaking up the land, finding whatever food they could before the winter die-off. Frost nipped at the tips of long grasses bending them over, eating around the edges of dwarf sunflowers, pearly everlastings and fairy trumpets. Even the ferns were beginning to curl back, exposing the ground so long hidden under their fronds. A single aspen leaf littered the ground, yellow turned upward at the edges. The inside of Audrey Rose's mouth was honey and syrup. The smell of sweet sugars filled her soul and like the world around her, Audrey Rose felt the need to curl up into someone.

She wanted the juices of life spilled upon her. So she veered away from Sunpies where too much beer and too much coke confused the sperm and refused to let them come out and play. She wandered deep into the woods where she hoped to find a spirit as wild as hers to taste her nectar. The smell of pine was faint, too many of the sentinels of Colorado had succumbed to the pine beetle, turned brown, waiting for fire to release their seeds and spread once more across the landscape to dance with the aspens.

Up through the pass, Audrey Rose saluted the ears of the rabbit then disappeared down the backside. The lake was a teardrop in the landscape of evolution, but it held the azure sparkle of glaciers, depths of worlds long past. Audrey Rose realized her thirst and dove in, gulping down water as her body lapped up the chill. She was a dolphin, surfacing, submerging, flashes of naked body caught by the sun. Then a candied granular voice, "You keep that up, you might get hooked." Hair the color of honey dripping from combs, eyes the depths of the lake, the insides of the world.

As Audrey Rose swam closer, she noticed one burnt golden hair on his arm that stood askew, rising up towards the sun, searching for what else existed in the world. Honeyman held a fly fishing rod, and a canteen slapped over his shoulder.

"Would you be so kind as to oblige me?" asked Audrey Rose.

"How so?"

"I want to lick that hair on your arm, to see how determined he is to not conform."

Honeyman looked at his arm and at Audrey Rose who had pulled herself, naked, out of the water. He held out his arm. Gently, Audrey Rose ran her tongue across the hair, and then watched. For a moment the hair lay still, then quickly sprang up again as if coiled with excitement. Audrey Rose licked the arm again, several times, brushing the hair with her tongue. Each time she stepped away the hair bounced back up. Audrey Rose giggled. "Perfect." She said.

"What is?" honeyman asked.

"You are." And with that, Audrey Rose dove back into the water, as deep as she could until she reached the other side, wrapped her hand around a cattail and followed it upward. Honeyman wasn't sure what to do, so he busied himself with his rod.

Audrey Rose watched him from her perch on a rock. His wrist fluid back and forth, the line swishing in the air and all the while, the hair on his arm standing straight up.

Honeyman took off his shirt. Audrey Rose swam back. She pressed her body against his, droplets passing from one to another.

"When you dive in, you'll learn the story," Audrey Rose told Honeyman. His face was

young, unfamiliar with the lines of time creeping around eyes, around smiles, but his eyes were cracked holding depths of light in random crevices. Audrey Rose undressed him and led him into the water where every sense was engulfed in refreshment. Their bodies tangled together, entwined among the reeds and fish. Pebbles opened their eyes to see the movement swirling above them.

They rose out of the water, no longer two beings, but now one body with many parts. Lips opened, bodies wrapped, no inch left undiscovered. And as he came, Audrey Rose caught his life in her hand. She rolled over and dipped her finger in, writing their story onto the bleached rocks, writing words that had meaning to any who cared to learn. Honeyman disappeared like the words, lost in the story of place, the hair bent over like a willow on his arm, exhausted, beautiful.

That night Audrey Rose lay naked under the stars tasting Honeyman in her mouth, feeling the wind replace him over her body. The ferns continued their retreat and the aspens fought to keep their green. A flower lost a petal in a gust of wind and an owl swooped down, entranced by something on the rock next to her. Whether it was a mouse or the words, no one would know.

-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.