

Roommates

When the ants disappeared and the moths stopped visiting, Audrey Rose decided she needed a change. She filled her ivory suitcase with rocks and letters from faded people. A diamond ring from another life rested in a hidden pocket. She snapped the buckles, caressed the trees, plants and flowers that had been her friends and headed to town. She wandered the streets away from the river until a house called to her. There were Hollyhocks guarding the house, huge blossoms in burgundy, peach, yellows and pinks. Their petals were wrinkled like tissue paper, their centers inviting. Velvet tongues calling. This was her home.

She knocked on the door. Julie answered. The first J.

“Hi. I’m Audrey Rose.”

“Hi Audrey Rose. I’m Julie.”

“I want to live here.”

Julie looked down at Audrey Rose’s bare feet and sparkly skirt. She got caught for a moment in Audrey Rose’s eyes.

“I’m sorry, there aren’t any bedrooms available.”

“Oh, good, because I don’t want a bedroom, just a closet.”

“A closet?”

“I don’t like big spaces, except outside where everything is big. Small spaces are much safer.”

“You’ll have to ask my roommates.”

“Who are they?”

“Joe and Justin.”

“Yikes!” Audrey Rose hopped from one foot to the other. “Three J’s in one house. The hooks, spaces to curl into, or get caught on. J is a tricky letter. I’m needed here.

“How’s that?”

“I’m an A. All straight lines, no where to get caught, but places to hide like a tent. Plus I’m a healer.” Audrey Rose had always wanted to be a healer and thought she might be a good one.

“Listen, I have to get to work. You’re welcome to come back tonight and talk to the boys when they get home.”

“The other J’s. I think it would be dangerous if I left. Can I wait here on the steps, or inside the Hollyhocks?”

“Whatever works for you.”

When Julie left, Audrey Rose got on her hands and knees. She crawled around the garden, putting her secrets in the Hollyhocks, cupping them in her hand. She touched their leaves, felt power in them. She wrote stories in the soil about great healers; Florence Nightingale and Mother Theresa. Audrey Rose wrote her name among theirs, intertwining their letters, then she smoothed the soil to make all things come true.

When Justin came home, he had beer, and tools. Audrey jumped up to help him. He handed over the beer.

“Are you a friend of Julie’s?”

“I’m your new roommate. I’m a healer and an A.”

“Is someone moving out?”

“I don’t know. Are you moving out?”

“No. I mean where are you going to stay?”

“In a closet. I only have one suitcase, which I won’t unpack. You look tired. Let me rub your feet.”

“Whose closet?”

Audrey Rose took Justin’s hand and led him inside.

In the kitchen, Audrey Rose found a huge pot, filled it with warm water and soap. Justin sat down and opened a beer. Audrey Rose peeled off his socks.

“Hey, we cook in that.”

“Okay.”

Audrey Rose placed his feet in the pot, soaked them then dried them and began to rub them slowly. Justin’s eyes closed a little. Audrey pulled his toes and drew flowers on his sole.

Joe came crashing through the door.

“Look what I did to my finger today.” He held up a swollen finger, black and blue.”

“No worries, Audrey Rose is a healer.”

“Who?”

“This chick who wants to live in my closet.”

“Whatever. It fucking hurts.”

Audrey got up off the floor and walked over to Joe. She took his finger gently in her hands and kissed the battered flesh.

“Better?”

“It’s broken, not a boo boo. Who the fuck is this chick?”

Audrey Rose couldn’t understand why that hadn’t worked. Kisses always healed her.

“Take me to your room.”

Joe stared at her, but there was something about the way she looked at him. He pointed to a door and followed her.

“Sit.” Said Audrey Rose. Joe sat. Audrey Rose closed the door.

“I see strength in you. A warrior.”

“I have a broken finger. Can you fix it or not?”

“Close your eyes.”

“You’re fucking crazy.”

“Maybe. But you can try this, or you can keep crying about your finger.”

“Whatever.” Joe closed his eyes.

Audrey Rose took his good hand and stroked his arm.

“Can you feel this?”

Joe sighed in frustration.

She slowly took each finger in hers, learning them.

“Feel this. Remember what this feel like.” She said.

She picked up his injured hand and moved up and down his arm. Gently down his pinkie, his fourth finger, his third finger. When she reached his broken finger, he didn’t flinch. She stroked and squeezed, gently. Then kissed his fingers.

“Your broken finger doesn’t know he’s broken unless you tell him.”

Joe opened his eyes. Audrey Rose had found a new home.

-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.