

Time to Get a Job

Audrey Rose had always liked the concept of working. Giving something back to society and she really liked the way money felt. Pieces of paper you could feed into machines that shot out candy, soda or whatever other dreams they had lined up in organized racks. Coins clinked in her pockets. A message from another world.

Audrey Rose wanted a job so she went to the *Steamboat Grand*. She figured since she had fun in their rooms, this would be a good place to work. She walked past the bell-boys, who dubiously held open the door for her. They had seen her here before, bare feet, sparkly skirt, but today her hair was brushed to a sheen. She wore deep burgundy lipstick the color of blood, of life, of power.

The stone tiles felt cold under her feet and she jumped in the water fountain as she passed by, just to watch the water plunge and pounce with her. Audrey Rose was escorted out of *The Grand* by the nice bell-boys who had held the door for her coming in.

At *Steamboat Art Company*, the manager gave her bare feet a look as she came in.

Audrey Rose felt her body close in around her and left before saying a word. She tried *Images of Nature*, beautiful pictures, but so quiet she could hear her voice screaming in her head. Completely discouraged, she walked down to *Sunpie*. She sat on a barstool and ordered a water. Her friend Steve was behind the bar.

“Two things are wrong. You’re not drinking and your smile is upside down.”

“I’m trying to get a job and no one wants me.” At that moment, the other Steve called from the kitchen.

“Hey asshole, you want a slice of tomato?”

“Sure and grab one for Audrey Rose.”

Steve came out and handed them both a slice of tomato.

“Hundred year old seed.”

Steve put the tomato in his mouth and chewed for a moment. When Audrey Rose was looking, he pulled his ears and the tomato slid out of his mouth. Audrey Rose giggled a little.

“Cheer up. I’ll talk to Vicki and see if she can help you out.”

“Let’s celebrate. Tequila all around. Put it on my tab.” Steve poured the shot while Steve marked something down on a very long piece of paper.

When Vicki came in, the Steves talked to her. Being a smart business woman, knowing they could never collect on Audrey Rose’s tab without hiring her, Vicki gave her a lunch shift. Audrey Rose danced behind the bar, curtsied to the customers as she served them. Colors swirled, clear, thick, new flavors, new mixtures and always a taste for Audrey Rose’s tongue, her throat, her belly. The regulars came in more regularly just to see if she was working.

Bob and Vicki were impressed. Steve, when he was there, watched over Audrey Rose protectively. They decided to try her out for a night shift. Audrey Rose was quick to pick up the pace. When a rush came in, her hands flew to the bottles she knew so well, a

different face, a different mixture every time she spun around. No one waited for long and people started buying Audrey Rose shots of appreciation.

Then the rugby boys came in. Trouble. She had a shot every time she poured them one. One beautiful face blurred into another, one accent after another; Kiwi, Aussie, everyone smiling, arms crossed, drinks knocked over, drinks swallowed down. The boys always had a joke or a smile for Audrey Rose. She collected their words and stashed them in her pockets with her tips, talking to presidents. Her pockets tickled her, the words worked their way up her body and into her armpits, where they wriggled through her pores and jumped into her bloodstream. Girls flocked, wanting to be a part of something, someone other than themselves. Audrey Rose poured until her arms went numb. Her world started closing in around the edges. She felt suffocated. She took off her top, flung her bra out the door, and let the girls free. The tips got bigger. She danced on the bar and *Sunpie* lit up.

Towards the end of mud season, before the tourists came to pollute the town, when the businesses closed, people headed for *Sunpie*. As the shadows got lost in the ink of the sky, girls started taking their tops off, feeling free, swaying and kissing the faces in front of them. Audrey Rose danced on the bar until she slipped and fell off. Her head broke the fall of a bottle of Patron that followed her down. Audrey Rose took this as a sign to pour free shots for everyone. Sunday/Fun Day was taken back by the locals. Audrey Rose always ended topless. No one went home sober when she was working. She could turn the worst day into something better. There wasn't a soul who came in who didn't

feel Audrey Rose's soft lips on their cheeks, her arms wrapped around their neck and a passage from limb to limb. A piece of Audrey sparked into each person that wandered through the door. When they left, they couldn't leave her behind.

The bar was making more money in mud season than that had during the summer.

Winter crushed in. The tourists crowded in. They found *Sunpie*. Wives and girlfriends didn't understand Audrey Rose, didn't want her hugs. Something caught Audrey Rose's smiles and carried them away before they could reach the people. In a matter of weeks, words weren't being said and girls were keeping their tops on.

Rumors started that the bar would be shut down for having a barefoot bartender. Second home-owners with millions of dollars weren't happy and Steamboat doesn't like unhappy rich people. Vicki and Bob tried to reason with Audrey Rose, but she refused to wear shoes, wouldn't promise to keep her clothes on. They had to fire her. She took it well, only asked that they buy her a going away shot. For the first time in a long time, Audrey Rose danced on the other side of the bar. The music was softer, her feet didn't move as lightly.

At night, Audrey Rose slept on her money until dollar by dollar she used it all up going back to the bar. When it was gone, Vicki and Bob started her tab again. Faces were new, came and went. Every now and then someone would come looking for Audrey Rose. Some days she was there.

For ever after, those who had a happy heart could feel Audrey Rose's spirit as they walked in. Smiles would spread across faces for no reason. The tourists didn't understand it, but they kept coming. The locals knew that when the tourists went home, they would see Audrey Rose on the bar again and her spirit would turn to flesh once more.

-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.