

## Where Man Meets Land

The Giant was sleeping and Audrey Rose curled into his folds, into the rock and mud and snow that defined his strong chest. He had not moved for thousands of years, and as Faulkner said in *As I Lay Dying*, “He did not know he was dead. I would lie by him in the dark, hearing the dark land.” Not knowing he did not live in the sense that others live, the Giant spoke to those who could hear his voice. Resting on top of that expanse of strong chest, Audrey Rose devoured the stories of the Giant, how he had wandered the land, had set his feet in the warm oceans of the Caribbean, the deepest snows of the North Pole, until one day he grew tired. And when he grew tired, he lay down. As he slept, the ground grew up around him, over him. His heart beat unheard under layers of rock, sediment. New life sprouted out of him, used his blood, his oxygen to stretch up and away from him, while still rooted to his core.

As the sun shone down, more and more of his form emerged, the real color of his skin browned with sun and time, made to match the soil of the valley, deep reds and browns, a meshing of skin and earth. His eyes were the color of stone, grey, streaked with black. The Giant had seen the land in innocence and watched it grow up to adolescence. In rebellion against all the valley was, trees were cut, houses built, the landscape covered with lights that never dimmed, minds that never thought beyond the immediate. As Audrey Rose lay on him, the Giant wondered what would become of this world, this place once loved and settled for the clean rivers and abundance of wildlife. The Giant pondered what the valley might look like when it reached middle age, if it might not all be ashes and scattered to the winds in old age. The Giant asked Audrey Rose to go to the people and bring him back their stories, so he would know their minds, so he might be reminded of beauty and not have to live with only what his eyes could see.

As she wandered through town, she danced for a pencil and a notebook covered in stars that sparkled in the sun. Inside were the words of the college girl who had owned it when I was young, I thought my father worked on a star, I imagined him out in the universe. When I grew up, I understood he only worked for a paper called the *Toronto Star* and he had seen no more of the universe than I had.

Audrey Rose paused, let the words climb inside her. She moved around town, through the bars, the coffee shops, the restaurants, the lifts, and wrote down the words of those she passed:

- I’ve got a new name for my penis. It’s called Plow because that’s all I did all day was plow though snow.
- Darkness crept across the face of the moon covering up all that had been exposed.
- Take your cupcakes into the night.
- Don’t throw a polk-a-dot tantrum.

- Everyone should be hearted at least once a day.
- I know, my eyelids are sweating.
- So you know about bears, about mountain lions?  
No, I only know about squirrels, robins, foxes and magpies.
- I woke up and was like, Aaaaaw Man! It was a pixie, but I'd never seen a pixie before.
- Hey, I thought if you took a Xanax and drank you could die.

It's okay, I'll die with you.

- So I was sitting on the toilet and a fish came out of my ass and started swimming around the bowl. It was the weirdest thing
- What an epic fucking day!

These were the words she took to the Giant. And while his massive structure shook with laughter, while rocks rolled down the crevasses of his body, the giant digested the words of animals on the tongues of man, the sounds of the moon, the effect of the environment on those that walked upon it. He realized that the land still lived in people as much as it grew out of him, even if only in passing, if only in a thought that floats away. He closed his eyes to sleep, the deep sleep of those at peace.

-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.