Audrey Munson

Clan Waitstill

It's Me, Audrey: A Dramtic Play

by Pamela Munson Steadman

My frustration mounts this frigid winter's evening. Organizing my thoughts concerning what I want to reveal in my theatrical play is difficult for me. Too many interruptions, doctor and dentist appointments, club meetings, luncheons and dinners with friends.

I'm alone in my husband's den. He is away, playing poker with friends. I am at a loss for words. Suddenly the lights flicker. My laptop screen goes dark.

A forgotten yet potent fragrance of Lily-of-the-Valley cologne permeates the air, and a bygone song starts to play...

"I'm always chasing rainbows
Watching clouds drifting by
My schemes are just like all my dreams
Ending in the sky..."

"*Hello dear cousin*," a sweet-sounding voice now exclaims. I spin around and my heart skips several beats! Standing before me is a tall, large boned young woman dressed in what I would call fashion of an earlier era. Her dark short hair frames her angular face in a fashionable bob. Her flowing dress is cream-colored with a pale green sash about her waist. She's familiar, yet I'm too startled to make any further presumptions as to who, what, and why I am now seeing an apparent apparition.

"Audrey...Audrey Marie Munson?" I manage to blurt out in semi-recognition.

"Hello Pamela. I've been sent here as an advisor. Your frustration is quite similar to my own experience concerning the dramatic arts. For you see, I often wished that I had never been sculpted into all of that stone... admired by thousands, but never really known for what lay in my heart." she said.

"My entire legacy was filled with personal tragedy, financial issues, legal battles, brief love affairs gone bad, unfortunate experiences, and mental health difficulties. Fame can be a nasty perpetrator. It can steal away all of your being if you allow it."

I had read the biographical book, 'The Curse of Beauty,' concerning by fourth cousin Audrey Munson. A fortune teller early on had predicted her doom.

The part that struck me the most was that this sad, ethereal beauty had been mandated to live from the age of 40 to 104 in a desolate, upstate New York mental institution.

"I truly don't want to be famous, I just want to make sure I leave some sort of legacy when I do leave this earth," I tell Audrey. "My own soul has always been expressed best through the written word."

"Dear one, after my father walked out on mother and me I so craved affection, but mother was incapable of giving it. I wanted perfection...and a voice. My attempts at acting proved futile...beyond disastrous. My love affairs were as well. Scandalous for the most part. Newspapers had a field day with me...Perhaps had I stayed in one place, married a good man, gave birth and love to a couple of children, I might have had eternal rest."

I'm having a difficult time absorbing so much coming from this translucent vision. Am I hallucinating? Have I overly probed my ancestry? Nope. Here she is...almost in the flesh. A lonely forgotten symbol of the past.

Of course, Audrey Munson had posed for minted coins, war posters, and other paraphernalia. She had been a marvel of her time! From Manhattan, stretching across our great nation to San Francisco, Audrey Munson contributed to American culture. She hadn't let the nation down, the nation had let her down!

Suddenly, it all makes sense. This brave woman, carrying on my Munson bloodline, deserves much more recognition. I am going to make sure that she gets it.

"Audrey," I tell her now. "You were a survivor in a world gone mad. You're here, speaking to me because you want me to be a conduit between our generations, am I correct?"

Suddenly, long outstretched arms embrace me. This lovely creature whispers into my ear, *"You must carry on the name. You know what has to be done now. Put your pen to paper."*