

Enna Rose

Pilgrimage

By Dagny McKinley

-Please do not attempt to recreate the events of Enna Rose's life. They will result in internal/external death or at the very least a yeast infection.

On her quest to find a religion that reflected her beliefs, Enna knew she would have to leave Steamboat. She freed her toes, let their bare skin feel the summer air and cracked earth under them. Her breasts were cut loose from the soft cloth shirt she had been wearing. Because of the solemnity of the occasion, she stepped into her inspirational sparkly skirt. Away from town she headed in the direction of the setting sun.

Night has always been a time when the spirit can be free and the senses come alive. Focusing on the moment in the moment is the key to survival. Thoughts must be pushed aside, demoted below survival, below the cracking of a twig that could mean a squirrel or a cougar. Breathing in, the world became clearer for Enna. The night sky was thick with stars so dense they formed light enough to see by. The blackness passed quickly into day into night into day until her past seemed to live where it belonged, as a memory, but no longer an obsession or an excuse.

Hours had no definition out here, only the movement

of the earth, spinning, spinning. Food was abundant and Enna knew how to survive off plants and berries and tree bark. She hunted when she needed to and went hungry when her body felt strong. Hallucinations came if she burned too many calories without replacing them, hallucinations of bright colors and angels' sorrow. When the sun came into exactly the right position between two clouds, a house became visible. Outside people were moving around, tending a garden. The thought of fresh fruit and vegetables caused Enna's mouth to water. Enna approached the home and saw a couple out front. The sun had weathered their faces, folded layers of skin over one another. The man was stooped over with shaggy black hair, while the woman's hair was as white as the snow with sparkling sage green eyes. Their hands curled inwards - too many years of holding rakes and shovels and maybe each other.

"Hi. I was wondering if I could trade you something for a fresh tomato?" asked Enna.

"What do you have to trade?" said the woman looking at this half-naked waif.

"I could trade a quote, or a story?" suggested Enna.

"We don't need any of that around here. What we need is someone to help us work." The words were firm. The man nodded.

"Just the two of us out here," he said with a content smile.

"I can work," said Enna. "What do you need me to do?" The day was spent pulling weeds, tending the garden, scrubbing floors, cooking, feeding the horses and the chickens and Betty, the cow. At the end of the day, Enna was exhausted, but a good exhausted. Jeffrey and Elise had a way of making Enna feel like one of the family. No special treatment, but definite appreciation. Dinner was

an omelet filled with tomatoes, basil, and spring onions. Enna had seconds and thirds before her eyes felt heavy. "You can sleep where you like," said Elise. "There's a sofa in the other room, or I can give you blankets to keep you warm outside." Enna took the blankets in her arms and headed out the door. She lay under the stars, wrapped in the kindness of strangers. The stars were the same here as they were the night before, but somehow brighter. There was a message in them that she had yet to learn.

She felt like her eyes had just closed when she heard Jeffrey moving around, fixing coffee. The stars were still shining, but Enna Rose, not wanting Jeffrey to have to tackle the work of the day alone, got up and joined him.

"You don't have any Coca Cola do you?" asked Enna.

"Just coffee," said Jeffrey, a little too loudly.

"Okay."

"I have a stash that I can't tell the Mrs. about. She doesn't approve. I'll get you one, but don't you let her see it, okay?"

"Let's pour it into a coffee cup," suggested Enna.

That day passed much like the day before. Chores took up the light of day with a nap after lunch. Keeping the wild from their property took a lot of work, as did the care of their animals. Somehow the days kept passing and Enna still found herself there. There were days she didn't want to get up, didn't want to clean, but Jeffrey and Elise never complained, so Enna did her work, some days silently, but always feeling like she had accomplished something at the end of the day.

Summer had steadily arrived before Enna felt the pull of her toes towards new adventures. She fought the urge for a few more days. Part of her wanted to stay here forever, could live a simple life, content at the end of each day, not wanting for anything. Jeffrey and Elise were humble people. They were good people. Enna was the better side of herself when she was here. She pushed aside ego and petty frustrations and simply lived doing what needed to be done. If she was tired or cranky, the animals still needed to be fed and cared for. The vegetables needed attention and fences needed to be fixed regardless of her emotions. Giving away her sense of self, her identity felt right. Nothing here was good or bad. Everything simply was and that was as life should be. But Enna wanted to see more of the world. She knew her pilgrimage wasn't over. This was only the beginning. She stored away this way of life deep in the crater of her mind and the heat of her heart.

She chose dawn for a farewell, a new start of a new day. She folded the blankets and set them on the kitchen table.

"I feel badly leaving," said Enna.

"We've managed until now, I suspect we'll continue to manage until we can't," said Elise.

"I packed you a bag with a special surprise," said Jeffrey.

Elise gave Enna a warm hug. "I know there's a Coke in there, but don't let him know I know," she whispered.

Jeffrey handed Enna the bag and a smile that said he just might miss her. Then her toes pulled her on and the day turned to night turned to day turned to night.

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