

What Coy Said

Once upon a time, in El Paso, a city in the far western corner of Texas along the Rio Grande and the border with Mexico, there was a girl who said her name was Coy.

You can call me Coy, she said.

Later, she said, Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. She said, Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck fuck fuck. She said this in the bed of a boy named Jeff, who wasn't really a boy, but was in fact a young man of perhaps twenty-four years. Coy's age was uncertain, but she was old enough both to fuck and to say so.

Jeff and Coy first met the same night they ended up in his bed where she for a short time reduced her vocabulary to that one concise word that functioned as noun, verb, and imperative. They met at the bar where he worked as a bartender, a garish and tacky disco in a motel near the airport, the motel staunchly middlebrow and primed for the business traveler, the disco done up in mirrored walls, chrome-plated railings, and heavy furniture made out of various forms of nothing special. On the tables were red glass Venetian candles and anonymous black plastic ashtrays. On Friday and Saturday nights this bar was crowded with young locals drinking and dancing, shouting and singing, smoking and throwing up, looking for whatever was missing from their lives.

But it was not a Friday or Saturday night, it was a Sunday or Monday night, a very slow night in the bar, when Coy came in. She and the woman she came in with were the only people in the bar besides Jeff. The woman looked to be about forty-something, wore her frosted blonde hair in a fashionably safe office cut, was of an average height and weight, and probably had been an attractive young woman a couple of decades back. Coy was shorter and slighter and younger, with her lively blonde hair hanging down long and schoolgirl straight, her face pretty without being exceptionally so. The two women sat at the bar, the older on the left and the younger on the right as Jeff faced them, and ordered drinks, a vodka tonic and a screwdriver, or a gin and tonic and a tequila sunrise, or a Bloody Mary and a rum and Coke, or a Long Island Tea and a sloe comfortable screw, or a Scotch and soda and a 7 & 7, as time went by Jeff could no longer remember. But they had drinks, and when they ordered them, Jeff asked to see Coy's ID. He asked pleasantly, carelessly; he was a nice guy and usually pretty good at his job.

Could I see your ID? he said, smiling.

Oh, I don't have it, Coy said, smiling, confident and young. I'm twenty-three, she said.

Jeff did not think for a moment that this girl was twenty-three. He wondered why she picked that number, accepting in a minor way the slender possibility that she did because it was true. No matter—he needed to see her ID.

Well..., he said.

Saving him from having to force the issue, the woman said, I'm her mother—you can serve me and I'll give it to her.

While he could not have cited to the statute, Jeff knew this to be true, or true enough. He didn't need to see a birth certificate, and the woman was clearly old enough to be the mother of this girl whose name he was soon to learn was Coy. He mixed and served their drinks and the three of them chatted, the two women sitting on barstools and Jeff sitting on the stainless steel sinks behind the bar.

Coy and the woman who may have been her mother weren't guests of this motel. They were staying at a little place down the avenue that was not quite a competitor.

It doesn't have a bar, the woman said.

It's a drag, Coy said. The expression on her face was eager and bright, seeming lighted-up, as if earlier in the evening, in their room at the non-competitive motel down the avenue, as they primed and preened and prepped themselves, the woman had said, My sweet little Coy, let's see if we can get you laid. They could, it was not going to be difficult, even on a Sunday or Monday in El Paso.

So they conversed, the three of them, and it came out that Jeff was an unmarried college student who lived alone. It came further out that he would be happy after closing time to take Coy with him to his apartment and later give her a ride back to her motel.

What time do you close? the woman or Coy said, later he couldn't remember which. It may have been both, though not simultaneously.

On Sunday or Monday, we close at midnight, he said.

It was already after eleven.

Well, I'm going to go play poker with the boys, the woman said. Jeff's impression was that in some nearby hotel or motel room, cigarette smoke in the air, lamps turned low on tables in the corners, a group of men sat playing five card stud, expecting Mrs. Coy to drop in about midnight.

Then it was closing time and the woman referred to as Coy's mother was gone, leaving her smiling daughter in the care of this pleasant young stranger who tended bar. Coy and Jeff would leave the bar through the side door into the motel lobby after he had

closed up everything else. When he went down the short hallway to the front door, to lock that, Coy followed him. They kissed there, just after he'd turned the key to lock the deadbolt, just inside the bar's plate glass door, sparse traffic going by on the avenue across the parking lot outside. Coy rubbed her body against his while they kissed. Jeff did not long remember how wet and warm her mouth was, but it was; what she tasted and smelled of, but she was not unpleasant; how soft her lips were, though they were soft; what she did with her tongue, though it played about languidly and sensuously, as did his; what her breathing sounded like through her nose while they pressed their opened mouths together, though it almost certainly was unobtrusive; what her long, clean and soft hair felt like as he slowly moved his hand down the back of her head and her neck, pressing her firmly against him; what her back felt like underneath her leather jacket when he put his arm around her, or what it felt like underneath her shirt when he slipped a hand beneath her jacket, or what her jeans felt like when he ran a hand over the contours of her butt. He long remembered that they kissed, and she rubbed herself coquettishly against the side of his leg and asked him how much longer it would be.

Not long, he said.

At his apartment, she lay on his bed in all of her clothes, including her jacket, while he sat at her feet, likewise still wearing his own jacket. They had just arrived and she hadn't wasted a moment of the time it took her to walk in and find the bed. She moved her hips in an almost subtle writhing and thrusting motion, made a slight whine from deep in her throat, and said, Come on—

and time and again in the years to come Jeff found himself staring at his walls and replaying the memory of this girl who called herself Coy, and who may have been twenty-three. Within five minutes of their arrival the lights were off and Jeff and Coy were naked. She was utterly flat-chested and not self-conscious about it. Jeff had known a not excessive but still slightly impressive number of women, and he had never known one who didn't have some sort of self-consciousness about her breasts, be they large or small, droopy or firm, symmetrical or not, with nipples of various size, color and shape. While he and Coy were in his bed—specifically, when she was on top and settling herself down on him, which was not the first position they tried—he thought, This girl could well be thirteen. It wasn't just the absolute flatness of her chest and complete absence of any sign that she feared he might reject her, any indication that she might harbor some self-hatred arising from what could have been perceived as a physical deficiency, but he wasn't sure what it was. Her labia reached far down around him while she rocked on him, her long blonde hair straightening down over her face to wisp his equally flat and hairless chest. He thought, She has pudenda like a married woman but the chest and single-minded eagerness of a girl. If she hadn't had pubic hair she could have passed for a ten-year-old.

And so they passed some time together, sometimes her on top, sometimes him, her long blonde hair playing in patterns of curving lines on his pillow; sometimes there were the movements of Coy's hips and the low, animal sounds coming from her

throat, her saying Fuck fuck fuck fuck...while he pushed himself home inside her and refrained from saying anything, ever a taciturn fucker, our Jeff. There was Coy curling beside him as he lay on the bed on his back, his head propped on the pillow to watch her take him into her mouth after she said, I want to show you this, her head over him, around him, taking him all the way back past the soft palate to the vaginal softness down her throat, his hands on her head and playing in her hair, stroking her hair while she engulfed him, her hair snaking across his belly and draping over his legs. Sometime a little later, after he had come inside her, she was saying, Do you have any lube?, and she was digging her finger deep into a little brown plastic jar of medicated petroleum jelly, deep in to take out a glob of antiseptic jelly and smear it over his penis, massaging the jelly into him with both her hands to get him hard again to put him into herself again, her rocking on him there on his back, her hair hanging down, the light from the streetlamp outside soft bluing his room, her skin. He kept that jar of medicated petroleum jelly for several more years, but scarce ever used it again.

There was Coy in the stronger blue light of dawn, on her back in Jeff's bed, her hands in the crooks of her knees to pull her legs up after she had let him in again, the two of them waking and him rolling to the space between her legs, neither of them saying a word, her legs pulled up so he could go deep as he could, pushing himself towards a place that even if he came back up her throat and out her mouth, he would still never reach.

There was Coy against the El Paso sunrise, stepping out of his car in the parking lot of the motel where she said the woman who had gone to play poker was, Coy turning and quickly, casually, saying, Thanks—bye.

He never saw her again, never heard from her, never tried to find out anything more about her than what he learned that night. And so he lived ever after, sometimes happily, sometimes not.