

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

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How Marzy Got Her Name

"MARZ, I'VE BEEN THINKING," Eddie sleepily said as he reached over for the pack of Viceroy's that Marzy had left for him that morning. He had worked through Monday night and his stuff was still at her place from over the weekend; when he just got her as she was headed out to work the early shift at Qwik-Bake Synthetics, Marzy offered him to grab some shut eye there rather than take the B-9 all the way back to his place, as long as he was quiet so crazy Mrs. Baumgartner the landlady didn't hear him. She threw in the pack of Viceroy's as long as he smoked it out the window so it didn't drift down to Baumgartner's apartment.

"Thinkin bout what? Ya look like you just woke, when did you have time to think?" Now that Marzy was back home, Eddie didn't have to hide his presence. Marzy was sure if the old lady saw Eddie there alone she would bump her rent up. So they both lit up in the living room where Eddie had crashed.

"Only the second one I'm havin' today, I was gonna buy another pack, but I figured there'd be some left since you'd be sleepin all day an I'm tired of those gals on smoke breaks anyway, just talkin about their hair an nails and loser guys, or their guys getting killed or wounded in Nam a few years ago an now they're useless, I can't see it Eddie, why would anyone wanna go half-round the world to shoot somebody that ain't botherin anybody?" Marzy was a bit different, she wasn't into makeup much at all, and she didn't need to be, her face looked ten years younger than her age of thirty-eight. Eddie looked somewhat older than his twenty-six, so they got none of that cradle-snatcher stuff some people love to throw out. The most she would do was a little lipstick in muted colors when Eddie took her out somewhere other than Maitland's down by the pier. Eddie liked that, she had more city grit than any of the others, but looked like she could have stepped out of a mountain cabin ready to chop wood. Her small but solid body would have no problem with that task. Having been against the war before it started to end in this workers' neighborhood was not normal either, but Marzy wisely didn't talk politics. Eddie loved that about her too; for him it was easy, being in college those years the views fit right in, but he wasn't smart enough to keep his mouth shut in the wrong places, and paid for it. Marzy had been teaching him the wisdom of her unseen age.

"So what's on your mind, nuthin I'm gonna get pissed at is it? Usually when I hear that from guys it means they're two steps out the door already." She put on a crocodile pout, she knew Eddie wasn't going anywhere, at least not soon. Since hooking up for more than the one-nighters both of them were settling into a calmer existence, though calm is a hard word to use with Marzy. Both had stopped sleeping around with others, to Chalky's despair, although he only did it twice and Marzy described it like "making love to a dime-store mannequin, I can't believe I did it again, musta been the hootch".

"No, no, nothing like that, though don't be giving me ideas, it might turn real" Eddie chuckled, seeing right through her charade. What I was

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

thinking about was your name, Marzy. I never heard it before, the only thing I can think about is marzipan, but who'd name their kid that?"

Marzy laughed aloud, though she heard that before, Eddie screwed his face up sometimes in such an odd way that she laughed a lot more lately.

"OK. I'm gonna tell ya how I got it, but don't tell anyone, I don't think even Mait knows it, an he's known me longer than anyone but Granny. I sure didn't tell Malevitis, that drunken sailor ex-husband of mine, though he never even thought to ask, turns out I coulda had any name as long as I had a warm hole for him to use, that bastard."

"Hey, Marz, we agreed you'd stop letting him get to you like that. I heard Lena tossed him out and he hightailed it back to Miami, I don't think he'll be back anytime soon."

"Yeh, I know he's left, just sometimes I can't help but compare him to you, you're such different kinda guys." This time Marzy's warm smile was real.

"Can you tell I'm Italian descent? Didn't think so, the dark red-brown hair always fools people. An I don't have an Eye-ta-li-ano ac-chen-te", as she mimicked one. "An my boobs ain't big. Well, I am Italian, sorta, Granny didn't even come off tha boat, her Mom and Pop did an I never knew what my Pop was. But since I was raised by Granny cause he split even before I was born, and Mom was too young, an Granny's parents were still alive, so when she wanted to name me Marcia, they insisted on the Italian spelling of Marzia, M-A-R-Z-I-A, even though in Italy they hardly use it anymore. So Marzia I became, I didn't know any different anyway. Until about fourth grade, one started callin me Marzi an spellin my name that way on notes an if she was takin the roll, so soon everybody did. I lived with it, didn't bother me, after Granny's folks died she took ta callin me just Zia, but I didn't like that, it was too weird for me, I wanted to fit in at the time. But then a coupla years later, around twelve or so, all the frilly girls started getting all cutesy-pie, Susie became Suzi, Linda became Lindi, and on an on, then they start dottin the "i" with big circles an then even with hearts and then started writin my name that way too. I almost puked every time I saw it, those were names for Long Island rich girls with their camisoles and gingham and white gloves, not a Brooklyn gal, those girls were crazy pretendin to be sumthin they never would be."

Marzy finally took a breath, her Viceroy had burned to the filter without her taking more than the first puff, so she lit up another.

"Chain smoking now, are we?" Eddie could tell this telling was getting to her, so he tried to lighten the mood.

"I mean, it doesn't seem like such a big thing now, but back then it was huge. So as soon as I turned fourteen, I forged Granny's signature on a form an went down to tha DOR to change it. I was thinkin still to use some famous name at first, but the big singers then were Connie and Leslie, which would become Conni and Lesli to all those twits, an Vicki – didn't even have to play with that one. So, I crossed over the line into the jazz and blues clubs in South Brooklyn an started hearin about Etta James and Lena Horne, but those names could be changed to Etti or Leni, so I tell the barkeep when he asks me what's up with the sad face, I tell him and he

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

says 'why', an I start to tell him why it makes me sad, but he says 'no, no, change it to a 'Y' on the end. Ain't no one gonna stick an i on that, Marzyi? Don' think so.' So I get to keep my own name, an I change it, legally. Its not much now, but glad I did it, even you big-world-traveler Eddie never heard it before." She liked to poke fun that Eddie bragged about being in Canada twice.

"Now, I gotta go check on Granny, her arm is getting better, but still . . . ya know, she never found out I legally changed it an I'm not tellin her, think she would feel it disrespects her parents. Let yourself out when you get dressed, I'm no good for tonight, early shift again tomorrow."

Eddie got ready, and jotted a note thanking her for letting him crash, Marzy always loved those little touches that Malevitis never did. He was tempted to address it "Dear Marzi" with a heart over the i, but couldn't bring himself to, Marzy's wisdom was rubbing off.