

Myra's Middle Name

by Doug Woodhouse

Myra looks like a Myra. I won't even bother describing her, because you can imagine yourself what a Myra looks like. The name evokes purple swirls, dark and strangely exotic. So does Myra.

Her full name is Myra Edith Madison. Her father wanted to name her after his mother, but they both really liked Myra and decided to make Edith her middle name. Her grandmother was pleased and honored, which is funny to me because Myra never ever tells anyone her middle name.

I'm glad they picked Myra. She looks like a Myra. I glance over at her sleeping in the passenger seat and try to picture her as an Edith, and I just can't see it. Edith evokes crochet and mothballs, and Myra is definitely purple swirls.

Back when we were living together I had gotten her a pop-up Kama Sutra book for her birthday. That night we stayed up until sunrise with it. By the time my birthday rolled around a month later we had worn out the binding and inadvertently crushed the popup on pages 48 and 49, which was our favorite. For my birthday she had found me a book of 1970's porn scripts, which were as hilarious as they were short. Apparently you can make a full feature length movie with ten pages of dialogue. We would act out the various scenarios, complete with costumes from her costume trunk, and we broke her old coffee table more than once during our visits to the doctor or explorations of the jungle.

But is Myra purple swirls because everyone has treated her like purple swirls? If she was an Edith, would she have been treated like crochet and mothballs? Would I still have dangerously flipped Edith over into a wheelbarrow in the shower? If Edith came to my office after class begging for an extra credit assignment, would I still have assigned her pages 48 and 49 from the text book?

The original Edith Madison was a devout Christian. I forget what denomination she was, but she was an elbows off the table chew with your mouth closed dear yes ma'am no thank you ma'am crochet and mothballs Edith. A text book Edith. She had two children, and Myra thinks she only had sex twice in her life. Joyless mechanical sex, for the purpose of procreation. I like to think the young Edith hid a fiery passion behind her prim and proper exterior, and that when young Grandpa Joe came home from work Edith was waiting with the beds pushed together, wearing only her frilly strawberry apron. But Myra is probably closer to the truth. I'm sure Edith and Joe probably had sex more than twice, but only in bed, at night, with Grandpa Joe on top. A whole generation of sexual repressed adults, having sex in bed, at night, in the missionary position. A mere fifty years later, Edith's namesake was getting nailed on the balcony of her apartment in the middle of the afternoon with a crude popup sex book propped open next to her. If Grandma Edith were still alive, she'd probably hail a story like that as sign of the downfall of Christian civilization, and I'm not sure I'd be able to disagree. Is this how it always is? Each successive generation seen by their parents as the destroyers of the moral fabric of society? The kids who grew up on Duke Ellington's pot laden devil music hated Elvis's gyrating hips, and I'm sure all the Marilyn Manson kids I went to high school with will hate whoever pops up in the music scene ten years from now. I'd like to think this cycle has been repeating since the dawn of human history, but my bones tell me we're perched on the cusp of something big, a massive shift of consciousness and we're accelerating towards the edge of the cliff. Maybe our whole generation is going to hell, but I'm not getting any younger or better looking. Life's too short for the missionary position.

Myra wakes up, stretches, and stares vacantly out the window. Something stirs in my chest and I suddenly realize how angry I am at her. The last month of our relationship she spent with another man. There were late night calls, afternoons when she wouldn't come home from work, and of course the excuses and alibis. I believed every single one. An honest man is easy to lie to. I was

completely oblivious to it all. The only indication I had that there was anything wrong was our sex life. The last month of our relationship we only had sex twice. It was joyless, mechanical, and missionary.

