

# Silver Corvette

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I am fifteen, but look twenty-one. I wear a black velvet choker around my neck. I'm a thinking, dreaming beauty queen in a town that has more bars than Catholic churches. Where the boys graduate from high school and get their girlfriends pregnant, get a job at the factory, get a job at the docks. Summer days are hot, especially in July. My mother calls them the dog days. In the evening heat lightening streaks across the sky, punctuated by iridescent fire-flies.

I am fifteen, and have an eleven o'clock curfew in the summertime. I am never late. I'm always at the park with my friends, Hannah and Trudy. There's a velodrome, a pool, a forest, a small waterfall. This is where we kiss boys and smoke joints. My hair has been bleached white by the sun and chlorine. I wear a green and white bikini. One night I ditched my friends, and met a boy at the pool. He whispered his name in my ears, and I liked the smell of his breath; peppermint, chlorine, root beer. We made out, and I made curfew.

But, I start to notice a silver Corvette parked on the street one block from my house. This car is so sexy, I feel it between my legs. The owner is dark, Latin-looking, but not Latin, just very Italian, with wiry black hair. Married. The gold ring glints in the hot sun. Irresistible to me. He is out there almost every day polishing that silver car.

When I walk by, he says, "Hi beautiful."

I hold my breath until I'm past him. I trip on my too long bell bottoms, stub my toe, think, Shit, shit, I look like an ass.

It begins to feel like I enter a zone whenever I come close to him and his car. A zone that is distinct and separate from my world, just one block away. A world where I am just another teenage girl; brothers, sisters, over-worked mother, too many people in too small of a house.

But as I approach the car, and enter the zone, that world melts away, like a movie, and I become someone else. The air is always so charged by his attraction to me. It bounces off the gleaming metal of the car, hits me in the eye, in the mouth, between my legs. I'm not used to feeling this way. I begin to have a sense of my power.

One day as I walk past, he says, "What ya doing tonight?"

I say, "I have a date," trip, stub my toe and keep walking. So embarrassed. Mortified. I hear him call out:

"I wasn't asking ya on a date, I was just asking what ya were doing tonight, dumb bunny."

And the way he says, "dumb bunny" is sexy and adorable and confuses the hell out of me. After a couple days, we are talking, having conversations, flirting. I find out that he's the uncle of two boys I know from school.

One them says to me, "Stay away from him. He's not playing"

But the zone is irresistible. I'm being pulled into something, powerless to stop it. This is nothing like the neighborhood boys who stick their tongues in my mouth in the woods at night. I am in control of that. They kiss me, their hands move towards my breasts. I push them away, light a cigarette and laugh,

"Get out of here!"

He says, "We ought to go for a ride one night. Down by the lake," and breathless, I agree. On Saturday, I meet him in the drive-way. The sun is just setting. I'm not worried about keeping curfew. Apparently, the Corvette is parked at his mother's house. Wife and children are always somewhere else. Before our date, I take great pains to dress and make-up. I steal my mother's green eye-shadow, her red lipstick. My hair is platinum.

I see us cruising down by the lake, my hair blowing in the breeze, the water now silver and blue in the sunset. We stop at the stone concession stand, he buys me a coke, tenderly brushes the hair from my face. I've seen this in movies, what happens between a man and a woman. There are close-ups of lips, whispered words of love, a backdrop of tall pine trees, and the air is sweet. I am

fifteen, and I am in love for the first time. He sees me down the block, walking towards him. He whistles,

"Baby, baby, baby."

My brand new body, that I've barely had time to get used to, is so smooth and so sexy, it's like that silver car. I barely see the other world around me. Sprinklers cast arcs of cool water over emerald lawns. Children ride by on jeweled colored bicycles. But all I hear is the sound of my footsteps and the beating of my heart. I am acutely conscious of my breasts, my nipples ache. I am in the zone.

He holds open the car door, and says,

"After you, my bunny".

It's strange to sit in a car so low to the ground. I've only ridden in the family station wagon, sweaty little brothers, candy wrappers, babies crying. But the silver Corvette is like the inside of a church. It's a sacred place. The white leather interior is spotless, luxurious. The dash is real wood, walnut, he says. He caresses it like a body, like a woman. He hasn't shaved and a dark shadow covers his chin, and the sides of his jaw, and I can tell his hair is freshly washed. I am his woman.

We shoot off down the street, head east towards the lake. My heart is singing. When he down-shifts, his right hand grazes my knee. After awhile, it remains there. It feels like we are already having sex. I do not object. We pass a group of kids I know and I say "kids" because at this minute, I am not one of them. I cast side-long glances at his forearms, his wrists, his hands, so muscular, covered in a fine net of black curly hair. I can't get over how good he smells.

He leans over and says,

"You having fun, bunny?"

I love it when he calls me that:

"Yeah, I'm having fun."

In response, he guns the engine, veers sharply to the right, and then we are cruising on Lake Shore Drive. The lake to our right, the road twisting and turning. We drive underneath a dark canopy of pine trees. I am breathless. I tell myself: You remember this

moment. This is magic. Remember this feeling of possession, ownership. Remember how when he turns sharply you are thrown against him, and then he quickly moves his hand from your knee and pulls you in closer, how you stay there, his arm around your shoulder, and it is just like the movies, but its somehow better than the movies, because it's your life.

Maybe this is just the beginning in an unending chain of events, where someday soon you will land, New York, L.A. or London.

These small town days long forgotten, these days and nights of swimming in an over-chlorinated pool, being groped by little boys in the bushes, getting straight A's, but no hope of escape, because your mother only wants you to learn how to type. You remember this moment, this night. The stars over your head are magic.

He abruptly pulls onto a deserted promontory on the south end of the road. He parks his car in the gravel, practically at the tip, the lake a dizzying swirl beneath us. He pulls me close and begins to gently kiss me. His lips barely touch mine. His tongue delicately explores my mouth. I've never been kissed like this before. I don't know what to do. I follow his lead, as if I've been kissed like this a million times. A butterfly has landed on my lips. After a few minutes, he says,

"Come on," and gets out of the car.

He pulls a leather pouch and a blanket from the back seat. The silver Corvette continues to shine even though it's dark. It must be the moon that lights it up like that. He lifts the blanket with a snap and it magically floats to the ground. He sits, and motions for me to follow. It's not very comfortable because of the gravel. But I settle in next to him while he extracts marijuana from the pouch, rolls a joint. When he's finished, and when he's sure I'm watching, he puts it in his mouth as if he is sucking on it, pulls it out with a twist. Ready for action.

He lights it, and passes it to me. At least this is something I know how to do. I draw long and hard, the tip flaring, glowing in the dark. We sit in companionable silence, knees drawn up, close together, alone. Alone with the stars and the car and the summer

night. The marijuana is potent, more so than I expected. My mouth gets very, very dry, and suddenly I am so stoned I'm not even sure I can talk. He jumps up and gets a six pack from the back seat. I gratefully take it from his hands. I pop the top and drink long and deep. He laughs and says,

"Easy does it bunny."

I am so thirsty, I am so wrecked from that joint.

He says, "Are you OK?"

But I don't answer, I can't.

He says, "Whatsa matter, cat got your tongue?"

His voice sounds so far away. I manage to say,

"I'm just really stoned."

He replies, "Yeah, it's good shit, man" then he lays back.

A second later he pulls me down to him, flips me over on my back, the gravel cuts into me. His kisses are not delicate anymore, but big and wet and devouring, my face covered in saliva. He presses me so hard against him, my breasts hurt. I say, "Ow," but he doesn't hear me. He's not with me anymore. I'm not his bunny. His hand roughly grabs my hand and leads it down towards his erection. I rub up and down. He begins to moan, but this scares me. I move my hand away, but he pushes my body forward, until my head is draped over the edge of the promontory. I say,

"Wait, wait," terrified of falling over into the water. I know that the currents here are fast, the water is deep and cold. Even in the summer.

He says, "Then stop fucking around and do what I tell you."

"Ok," I say, "Ok".

"That's my girl, that's my bunny."

He eases me back away from the edge. A few more sloppy kisses, then he unzips my pants and tries to slide them down over my hips, but they're too tight.

He says, "Godamnit, help me."

I arch my back and slide my pants down around my ankles. He pulls them off. I'm sure that if I remain as still as possible nothing bad will happen. His breathing is ragged, uneven, he pulls off my

underwear. I try to stop him, but he pins my thighs with his knees, spreads my legs. I struggle briefly, but he pushes my head until it is over the edge again. I stop struggling, a bird trapped in his hands.

He enters me quickly, forcefully, in one long stroke. This pushes me perilously close to the edge. I concentrate on not falling over.

With a gasp and a sigh, he rolls off me, looks down and says, "Shit, bunny, I popped your cherry."

He gets up, naked from the waist down, and grabs fast food napkins from the backseat, tenderly places them between my legs.

"Thanks," I say.

He replies, "Anything for my bunny." Lights a cigarette.

I dab the napkins between my legs, ask, "Am I still bleeding?"

He looks at me and winks, "You're fine."

I place the napkins to the side. I won't look at them. I sit up to put on my pants, the headlights of the Corvette, look feline, predatory.

He says, "We should get going".

"Sure."

He flicks his cigarette into the lake, and I watch it sail out over the water, hang suspended in mid-air for a second, and then follow its trajectory until it's gone. He grabs the blanket, throws the beer cans in the trash, waits impatiently for me behind the wheel of the car. I get in, and close the car door without making a sound. We drive back to the north side without saying a word. At one point, he turns up the radio, plays air guitar. I practice what I should say to him:

"Well, that was a little rough" or "Next time you should ask", or "I'm really not that kind of girl."

But I don't want him to get mad, gun the engine, or never speak to me again. I'm not sure what I fear most. So I say nothing, absolutely nothing, except when we are a few blocks from my house, I quickly blurt,

"Right here is good."

The car screeches to a halt. I'm thrown into the dashboard. He says,

"Right here is good for me, too."

He leans over and kisses my bruised forehead,

"Be good."

I nod and get out of the car. My watch is cracked, but still running, 10:30 p.m. I can still make curfew. The neighborhood is deserted, kids in bed sleeping, or watching TV, eating blueberry Popsicles, the juice dripping on their chins, their sting ray bicycles thrown at odd angles on the sidewalk, or in driveways, as if stopped in mid-motion. The front porch light is on, but I dread facing my mother. So instead I walk up the drive-way, to the swimming pool in the backyard. I cup my hands, dip into the cool, blue water, and wash my face. At the screen door, I holler,

"Ma, I'm home. I'm sitting on the back porch".

She yells back, "Okay!"

I've never noticed that the porch light is always clouded over by large moths, the blue-gray color of the sky at twilight. And the swimming pool casts an aquamarine glow onto the side of the garage, and the trees whisper as the wind passes through them. I've never noticed how quiet it gets here at night.

