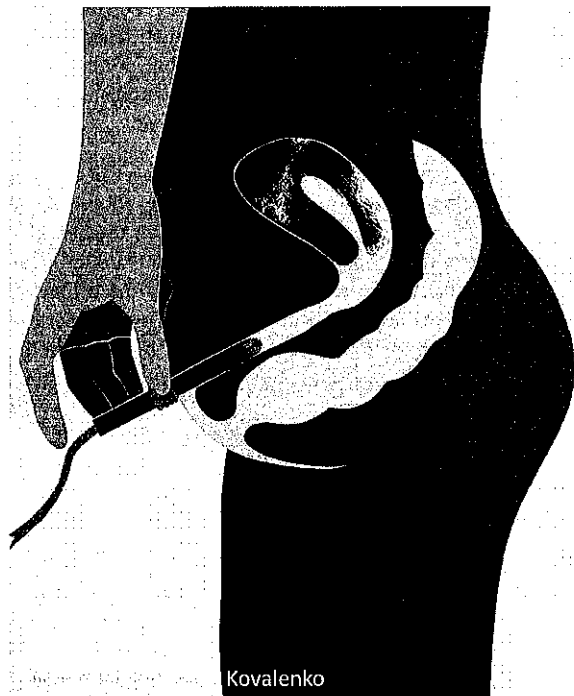


Mrs Bevan distributed the liquid. Ben gave me a horrible grin. I felt my skin lightly dissolving as I pressed my finger against my thumb.

Many years later, Ben and I became friends and, gradually, something a little more than that. His smile became kind; his laughter, gentle. The first time I let him pull up my shirt—all the way over my head this time—I couldn't stop thinking about those difficult first biology lessons, that clear, mildly corrosive liquid, and how I'd shivered to think what a whole bottle could do.



Kovalenko

Maia Jenkins is a London based writer. She has just completed an MA in Modern Literature at University College London and is now working on a novel. She also holds a BA from King's College London, where she was a founding member of the literary society journal *Of Cabbages and King's*. While at university she received the Henry Neville Gladstone prize and the Sambrook Exhibition. In October 2013 she won the GQ Norman Mailer Student Writing Prize and will be published in a forthcoming issue of GQ.

THE SILENT P

A chance encounter over urinal cake

by Erica Plouffe Lazure

He walks past her, bladder full, on his way to the men's room.

Take me with you, she says.

Where?

Into the men's room. I want to see the urinals.

She says this like she is a child who has just heard there is a Monkey House at the zoo and wants to tag along. The heel of her shoe is broken. She sits on the hotel lobby floor, twirling the pair by their sling back straps with her pointer finger.

Don't you have a room to go to?

Just make sure no one else is in there, she says. I want to see the cake.

Cake?

The urinal cake. I love cake.

A urinal cake isn't cake-cake. It's like, a pink hockey puck. Surrounded by plastic.

I don't care. I want to see cake. Her knees are bent, wide-legged, in spite of her skirt. He asks her name.

Tara, she says. P-T-A-R-A.

You spell your name with a P?

It's a silent P, she says. Her head sinks between her knees, into her lap, her dark hair a cape around her shoulders. She has answered this question a thousand times.

Like in Pterodactyl?

Her skirt makes a thin tent across her thighs, making visible a stretch of bright blue panties.

Like in Ptarmigan?

Yes. Her legs extend so her bare toes touch his shoes. She is not exactly the kind of girl you'd think to take by the hand and spirit away late night into the men's room, murmur *come with me*, begging, muffled into her ear asking for her room number,

he thinks. There's a homey quality to her that suggests it's off the table. What kind of stones does it take to pull that off? What kind of woman would let you?

The kind, he decides, who begs to see a urinal cake. Ptara taps her toes against his shin, then extends her leg so her big toe strokes his thigh.

Will you show me the cake now?

She has been drinking. No. They have been drinking, which is why he'd darted to the men's room before he got on the elevator. It's late.

You don't want to go in there barefoot.

Piggyback?

Maybe I am one of those kinds of guys and she is one of those kinds of girls, he thinks. Maybe here is a woman who'd let me have her, bare feet and all, in the men's room.

She stands when he offers her his back. He hoists her, secure, her arms and legs around his neck and waist. He can feel her breasts along his spine, her chin in the crook of his neck.

Okay. Cake, please, Onward!

The men's room light is harsher than he'd like. Her ankles are crossed at his belly, his hands are clasped around her thighs to keep her steady.

There are five urinals, all of which face the mirror. He doesn't tell her he's really a stall man. But he approaches a urinal and says, as though a docent: *This is the cake.*

It kind of smells funny, no?

It could smell worse. The cake is a deodorizer.

Like a Strick Up?

I guess.

It's not quite what I thought it would be.

What were you expecting? She tightens her grip around his neck, nuzzling into him. Any minute now, he thinks, she'll ask me to take her on the sink counter. Something.

Well, I was kind of hoping you could pee.

What?

You said you had to pee anyway right?

Yes, but...

Just. Pee. For me. I always wanted to know what it feels like when a man pees.

But you'll hear me.

No, I'll sing.

What will you sing?

The alphabet.

Since he can't see his dick on account of her feet, he suspects that she can't see it either. She adjusts her hold on his body, releasing his arms.

C'mon. It'll be fun.

He figures he's come this far with this woman on his back. His bladder is full. He unzips and she begins to sing:

ABCDEFGH...

She sings loudly, the tiles echoing her notes. His yellow stream is silenced, aiming for cake.



Tell Ourselves Stories by Sarah Pedigo

Erica Plouffe Lazure's fiction has appeared in *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, the *Greensboro Review*, *Meridian*, *Eleven-Eleven*, *Inkwell*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Booth Literary Journal*, *The New Guard*, and elsewhere. She lives and teaches in Exeter, New Hampshire.

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Women

'The Fairer Sex'

When the thieves came as she was leaving for church. Dressed in civvies on her day off, Priscilla Azevedo, a 29-year old captain in Rio de Janeiro's military police, sat parked in the driveway of her house in her green Ford Focus. As she waited for her mother and grandmother, she saw two armed men approaching. A gun pointed at her head, she surrendered the vehicle. She was blindfolded and driven away.

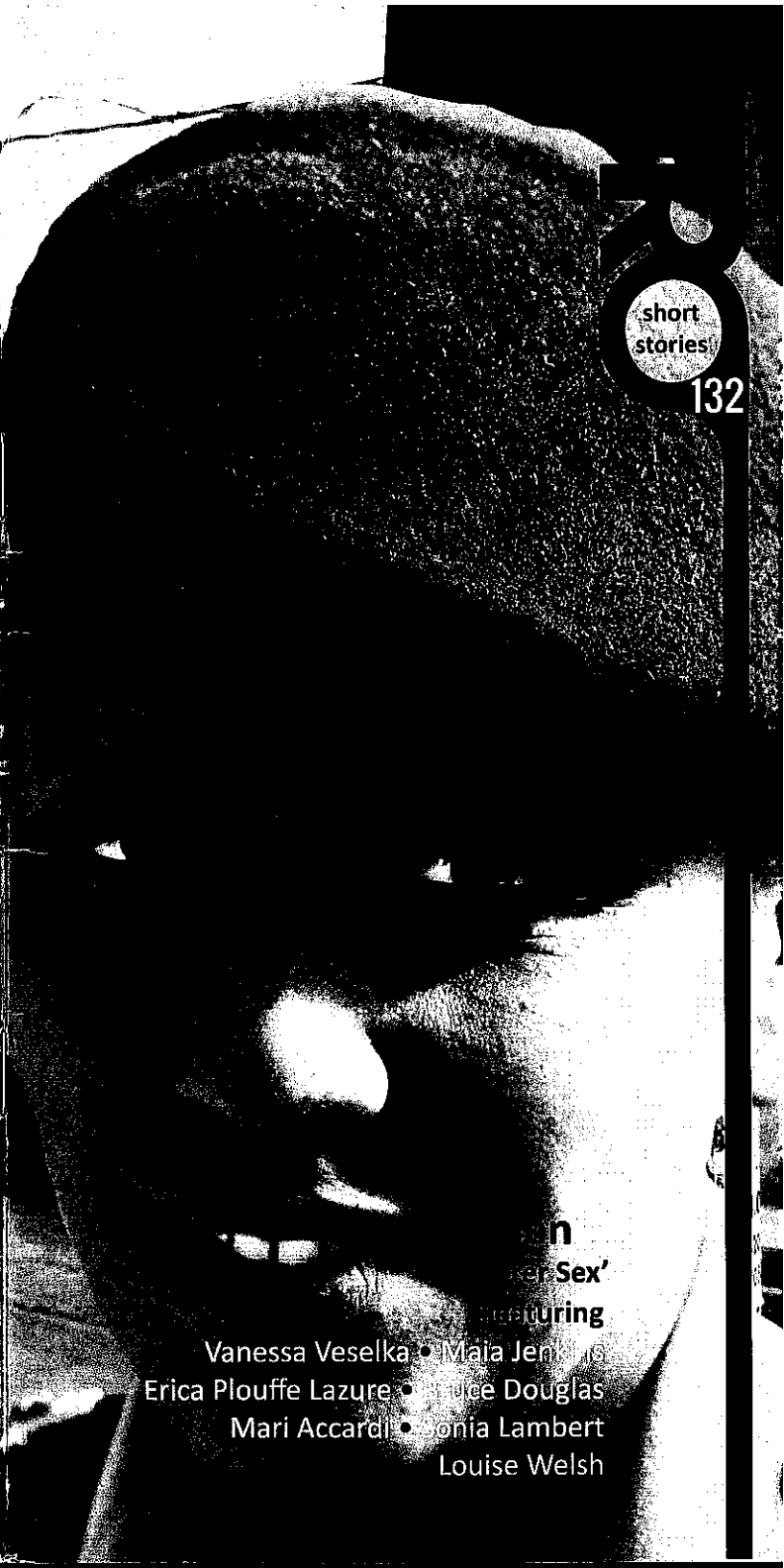
From Pacifism and Its Discontents:
Interview with Major Priscilla Azevedo

by Bruce ...

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short stories
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'...er Sex'
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