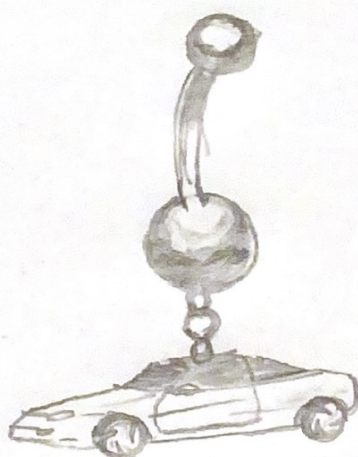


Two Short Stories

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Preface

The following stories are fictional; the first features a sex scene, the second contains a potentially graphic moment. Both were written for fun.

Nipples

To start with, I knew I was not straight since early adolescence. I am a non-heterosexual man. I liked playing with dolls when I was a child, and I was always more interested in making friends with girls rather than boys. I tried my grandmother's makeup. And I always favoured unisex fragrances.

However, it took me a long time to come out to my friends. I plucked up some courage to reveal my non-heterosexuality only at the age of 24, one extra year to kiss a man, and a couple more weeks to have my first sex. Shortly after, I decided to try as much as I could sexually in order to figure out my preferences and style: I tried bottoming, but liked topping more; I tried swallowing cum, but concluded that having my face covered in it was less troublesome. I was quite enthusiastic about mastering my skills in performing blowjobs. And I always used condoms for anal sex.

At the same time, I began to challenge fashion standards for men, often buying clothes in the women's department; I also pierced my right earlobe, and did so intentionally, as an homage, since historically it was a discreet way of communicating one's homosexuality. I stopped stealthily listening to pop music as I no longer felt ashamed about it. I began consuming more media on issues of the LGBTQ+ community: documentaries, podcasts, etc. Soon I realized that I lacked a theoretical basis, so I tried to educate myself more and started reading research papers. This allowed me to be vocal and consistent, to deliver coherent and valid argumentation regarding prejudices gay men face, problems within gay culture, stereotypes.

My life became much easier after leaving the closet, as I didn't have to hide a significant part of my persona, and I kept gathering feedback from my friends about positive changes in my attitude. It was also funny that I used to get offended when my classmates called me derogatory names, yet now I no longer treated these names as insults; it turned out to be a general trend in the community — the slur reclamation. I became confident and self-assured and my circle of close friends no longer consisted exclusively of straight people.

I didn't try sex with women, though. Despite the fact that I was reasonably open to new sexual practices, I was still quite afraid of sex with women. I felt like it would be an uncomfortable, anxiety-inducing, and most likely disappointing experience for both parties. I would say that trying something with a woman was an intriguing initiative, but not intriguing to the extent of actually giving it a try. So I only had sex with men and non-binary people, with no intent to pursue a romantic relationship.

But one particular sex date brought structural changes to my sexual preferences. I had sex with a guy who mentioned beforehand that he liked having his nipples played with. Since I usually strive to arrange everything so that both actors enjoy the process, while making out I pulled up his shirt and began gently touching his left nipple with my fin-

gertips. As he started moaning, I leaned my head towards his chest and put the nipple in my mouth. I started moving my tongue around it, with my right hand simultaneously playing with his other nipple. He pushed my head closer, which I perceived as a signal to try sucking on the nipple, so I thrust my teeth around it while still rubbing the tip with my tongue, and the intensity of his moans increased noticeably. Then I knew what was expected from me: I was supposed to act more roughly with both my mouth and my fingers, seizing the free nipple, while the guy began masturbating.

At some point I loosened my grip and went aside, towards his armpit. I moved my tongue against his armpit hair a few times. For a second I felt the texture of the nipple on my tongue again and lunged back, now grabbing the thicker right nipple with my lips, while simultaneously clenching the still-wet left nipple. I felt something defiantly new about the entire act of sucking nipples. I didn't want to stop, and I wasn't asked to.

I hadn't paid this much attention to nipples before, as I had considered nipple manipulation to be a borderline questionable practice explicitly associated with breastfeeding, the mother figure, and Oedipus; but during that exact sex date, I started questioning my opinion. It appeared to me that playing with a partner's nipples could be a pleasant and acceptable part of the process.

So when the guy left, I decided to explore porn materials involving women to see if this was a common practice. And it was, both men and women would suck nipples; men would do this more frequently, so there was certainly nothing questionable about one's desire to suck or lick a nipple. Undoubtedly, I cannot claim that one's urge to engage in nipple stimulation (specifically a woman's nipple) necessarily stems from a desire for sexual involvement with one's maternal figure. Otherwise, if stimulating nipples indicates a desire for sex with one's own mother, what does that make an intercourse between man and woman? Hence, as long as one does not harm the other person, as long as it is done with mutual consent, there is nothing wrong with such a practice.

After a few more sex dates with men that included playing with their nipples, I had already started imagining how it must feel to perform the same sequence of actions with a woman's nipples. I would call this line of thinking a research interest, a curiosity. Peripherally, I started contemplating the way it must feel while performing cunnilingus (as opposed to rimming, the only relative equivalent for gay men). I constructed some kind of comparison chart in my head, watched several close-ups of men licking and sucking women's vaginas, and came to the preliminary conclusion that cunnilingus might be quite an enjoyable experience if done with attention; it is also practically easier and less stressful than rimming, for obvious reasons.

Eventually, I became determined to have sex with a woman and try all of the activities I had been educating myself about, and arranged such an event with a friend of a friend. I was obviously scared and nervous and to be fair, I didn't manage to cum — but this had sometimes happened to me even during gay sex, so I wouldn't consider it an ultimate

indicator of failure. I concluded that sex with women is not uncomfortable or unpleasant, I didn't register any recollections of my mother and had a genuinely great time. Female nipples turned out to be more beautiful and sensitive, and licking a woman's vagina allowed for much more entertaining techniques, while also eliminating fears of engaging in an embarrassing situation. In fact, during that first encounter, the secretion from my friend of a friend's vagina was somewhat buttery and sweet, which is incomparable to how cum tastes.

So I started having sex with women exclusively. I would still identify as a bisexual or pan-sexual person, meaning that I wouldn't completely exclude the possibility of having sex with men, but my sex routine shifted drastically, both in terms of potential sex partners and choices of porn for masturbation. I still have an earring in my right earlobe, although I have decided to pierce the left one as well (I wouldn't ascribe this decision to any matter of sexual identification), I have nothing against being anally stimulated by a woman, and I still browse both men's and women's departments when shopping for clothes.

Matters addressed in a 2011 Dodge Caliber

My father and I sit in a 2011 Dodge Caliber, in what he calls a Brilliant Pearl Black Crystal coat — though I know it is called Brilliant Black Crystal Pearl. The trim level is titled SXT, according to the rear badge. I have come to my hometown for my grandmother's birthday; it is my second day here, and we are waiting for my mother at the back door of her office. The birthday dinner is taking place at a seafood restaurant, and we are already a bit late for the reservation. To my left is a gift box wrapped in silver paper, topped with a red stick-on bow. A robotic vacuum cleaner is inside the box.

I usually occupy the back seat of the car, despite my father repeatedly suggesting that I sit in the front, which I refuse to do: primarily because I like having the entirety of the back seat to myself, yet on repeated occasions he called this custom of mine terribly bourgeois. Today I can justify my actions: if I sit in the front, then when my mother comes, it will take time for me to move to the back and for her to adjust the seat to her comfort, since it is tacitly agreed that Mother always sits in the front. A dress covered in cellophane hangs on the left grab handle; she asked us to bring it so she can change clothes before the birthday dinner. Therefore, I will have to leave the car regardless to free up the back seat for her to get dressed there, and if my father questions my decision to sit in the back, my only solid argument is how long it would take to readjust the front seat when my mother arrives.

We sit in complete silence, he sometimes thrusts out his lower lip until it gets dry and shrivelled, which I notice as I take sporadic glances at the rearview mirror. Something is clearly bothering him; probably the fact that every time I visit, he asks about any updates in my personal life, and my answer remains disturbingly unsatisfying, for I do not have a significant other, which reinforces his long-standing suspicions.

On this day last year, he assured me that I could rely on his sponsorship in any matters of the heart. The seating configuration, along with him pouting his lower lip every so often, was the same as today, although we occupied a different parking space and there was no dress on the grab handle, as my grandmother was celebrating her birthday at home. I didn't specify the kind of sponsorship he was offering. Throughout that conversation I was carried away by a fascinating discovery: I noticed something shiny in a gap between the seats, stuck my fingers inside, and pulled a small coin with a portrait of Elizabeth II. I flipped it and there was a picture of a sailboat with the word Canada engraved on it — the Canadian dime. I had surmised previously that the car was imported from North America due to the complications my father faced during the vehicle registration process, because the rear turn signals of the car are red, which is not compliant with European regulations. My finding also explained the naming of the trim level, as Dodge had renamed the trim levels for the 2011 production year, and the SXT should have been called Heat instead. However, these changes were only applied to the US market models,

so if this car was bought by its previous owner in Canada, then there should not be any discrepancy regarding its trim level name. Furthermore, the dime explained why the front grille is not chromed, since it was supposed to match the body colour only for the base-level SE model in the US, and if this Dodge had been bought in the US, it should have had the chromed grille surround instead, featured in all of the configurations, except for SE. That day, I had located the origin of my father's Dodge Caliber, finding indirect evidence that it had originally been produced for the Canadian market.

Now, I assume, he wishes me to dispel his concerns, which have escalated yet again by me not bringing any encouraging news about my relationship status, preferably right here, before the birthday dinner, so that we could all be sitting at a polished solid wood table, unencumbered by displeasing thoughts, savouring oysters, crab, and prawns.

Regrettably, I cannot remember where I put the dime I found last year, despite initially intending to keep it as a cherished little trinket. From time to time, when reminiscing about the sensational discovery of last year, I keep wondering: why did the top management of Dodge decide to rename the trim levels in 2011, only to change their minds the next year and eventually stop the car production that same year? Original names were SE, SXT, R/T and SRT4, the latter two were the high-performance versions with a more aggressive appearance. What prompted the decision to rename SE to Express and SXT to Heat? There was also a variant presented sometime in the middle of its production cycle called SXT Sport, but I know very little about it. Besides, the base trim level for Dodge Nitro — another Dodge vehicle being offered during the same period — was also named SE. From what I recall, not only was there the SXT version of Dodge Nitro, but also the one named SLT, and they underwent a similar labelling change in 2010, becoming Heat and Detonator, respectively. Again, the names were changed back to abbreviations in 2012, with both models being discontinued the same year.

I see my mother exiting her office. She waves her hand at us and scuttles towards the car. My father and I open our doors simultaneously. Mother hugs me as I get out and gets inside to put on the dress. I approach my father, standing behind the car.

I scratch the mud stain off the edge of the tailgate. Earlier today he mentioned that when he was my age, two of his ex-girlfriends had already had abortions. I picture two slightly flattened fetuses, quivering inside a silver gift box. They are sticky, smudged with blood, wrapped in the umbilical cord.

Both of us twitch as my mother has pushed the car horn to signal her readiness for departure. She stops me while opening the rear door and asks me to sit in the front. I notice another Dodge Caliber, dark blue, entering the parking lot — the European version.

We are among the last guests to arrive at my grandmother's birthday party. As expected, the table reserved for us is made of solid wood and finished in a clear lacquer. My father is seated next to me.

To keep everyone entertained during the wait for the main course, the waiter brings a

basket of half-open clams with fortunes inside – the restaurant’s take on fortune cookies – and passes it around the table. My father opens one and reads aloud the printed note: “Good boys eat oysters, bad boys slurp on them”. Mine says: “There’s never a wrong time for a caviar tartlet”.

