

Union (an excerpt), by Terry Doyle
Percy Janes First Novel Award

“This way please,” Ashley says, holding the door open and tilting her head. She shows me a small bathroom and hands me a plastic cup.

“Don’t wash your hands until I have the sample. And don’t flush.”

I step into the bathroom and when the door closes the ambient sounds are muffled only slightly. These walls are thin. I unzip and pull the bottle out of my underwear. The thermometer tells me that my little secret is still at the correct temperature. I lift the shampoo bottle-like tab on top. The sound when I squeeze some of the yellow liquid into the plastic cup is like a tsunami hitting breakwater. I’m so startled I almost drop the works of it in the toilet.

Plan B: I unscrew the top completely and pour synthetic urine into the cup just past the line marked on the side. I set the cup on the sink, screw the top back on and squirt the rest into the toilet – on the side of the bowl, above the waterline. I tuck the bottle back into the warm space it’d been previously.

When I open the door Ashley is not standing outside it, waiting and listening. I step into the hallway and she quickly materializes from around a corner, stretching white latex gloves over her hands. She walks around me to inspect the bathroom. She holds the plastic cup up to the light and pours a little bit into the toilet.

“You can flush and wash up now. Then come back down to the exam room.”

“Thank you.”