

My Crush on Daniel Ortega

by Ann Bogle

A week later.

In this room, where love was spilled on the oldest bed, there is a draft. I begin the song again, the song about the eye, and I smoke and drink coffee. I am crouching, and I am waiting, because the dream of the clarinet tells me to begin again.

February 20

Daniel Ortega dances the mayfly with women on the campaign trail. He rides in on horseback, Godivas in tow. The week of the election, I do my taxes in North America. I remind myself that he is married, but it doesn't stop me from thinking about him. I blot from my mind the deaths he has ordered. His soldiers are rowdy and young, eager to kill for an ideal.

Violetta Chamorro travels again and again to Washington. She limps in on crutches. She is here for the better medical care and to take our money. There is a dim recollection that she is a martyr. Somoza killed her husband while we were on Somoza's side. The sides change. Her children, her son and daughter, put out the Sandinista newspaper.

March 27

Politics kills romance.

I tear apart the sheets you wrinkled, sleeping with my friend, and I wonder if I can learn to be louder while making love, as loud as you

were while I stood on the other side of the wall, in the kitchen, feeding the cats. You're not legally married, and neither am I, as we keep telling each other.

My friend says that you and I are like hands, back to back. She matches you in loudness, and she can forget me and your wives, as she rolls with you in my husband's bed. She says that places mean nothing to her. That it's crucial for self-preservation.

April 3

My taxes are still not done. The documents I need are filed in a box in the closet. I've paid them thousands of dollars, and they want more. I open and close the closet door, and the documents snap at the hem of my robe.

My throat is sore, but I won't quit. When I get the prescription, I'll take two and go out. It's raining. I dance along the street with my headphones on and keep my eye peeled for Daniel Ortega.

I am never alone. The music runs the cord to my ear. The cats sleep at my head. The men call and call. They stay in orbit. I am protected only by gravity, and I am not a planet. I slip. I let them nearer, by turns. I veer toward one then another.

Her letter arrives, printed. She speaks simply, as if I were a child. There are things she won't be telling me. I read quickly for a reference to her betrayal. She writes out of concern for me and out of curiosity. Our week together was refreshing, she says, but not relaxing. We talked so much. We lost the toothpaste. Our visitors were all poor. Maybe one of them took it.

The toothpaste didn't turn up, I tell her. I am seeing the new man, but I don't know what his fate will be. Sorry to hear her new one is trouble. It's worth it only at certain moments, and then what choice

do we have? The house is full: three of a kind and two of another.

Finish it, she says. Put it behind you and walk on. Put them all behind you and continue on alone, without these crutches.

March 24

My friend had a dream that she was away when the fire started, and that I was stuck in the upper floors of the building. She waited helplessly on the street for my rescue. They put me in the hospital for smoke inhalation, and three days later, I was shot at in the same building. She stood on the street below waiting for them to carry me down. Again? she said. Again? And she thought that what had happened was her fault.

April 3

The most reliable suitors are the traitors, the ones who come first in their own minds.

The phone rings, but it's not the right caller. I pick among relative evils. One I want is bad for me; one I love is married. There is a hope with the new man that I'll wait for him to catch on to me. I'll take off my clothes in protest of this taxation and get on his back, side-saddle.

March 29

In the dream about the married man, I read his poem. I had let myself into his office and ransacked his papers, looking for an indication. Ours was not a one-night stand because his brow was wrinkled, sadness there like a mark. We read the book about Anna and Levin without being Anna or Levin.

He says that I should be on my guard, that my trouble will be that I

arouse strong emotions. In the dream, he climaxed while I read the right side of the poem, the column about Anna. I stopped reading when he came and thought: We missed each other.

April 3

I do not fool myself by thinking death will not come. I plan for it. I kill time until it arrives. Sal says that when he gets sick, he lies in bed, thinking uncharacteristically of death, wanting sympathy. I tell him, not in answer: Death is my constant companion.

When Tom Petty counts squarely, he says foe. One, two, three, foe.

When I come to you, there are two yous, a you and a you. With one of you, I spill my guts. With the other, I stroke your brow. You all have a dog bite above your left eyebrow. Gay men used to wear earrings in their left ears. Now everyone wears earrings in both ears.

Time advances. One space between words, two between sentences. When I'm not working, I rehearse the language of newspapers: teezy, pica, reefer, jump, hed, sig.

. . .

On Ash Wednesday we brought the Lebanese man to what I tell myself is a crackhouse. The Lebanese man's mother is from the Dominican Republic, no matter what your understanding was. You said she was from Honduras, but those are the fire victims. His father was the ambassador from Beirut to Santo Domingo. He grew up in Spain. After midnight, he told us about the Jesuit priesthood. He said that until he had been with a woman, he had not known God. He said, pounding his abdomen: Until man knows woman, he cannot know himself.

The man whose house it was had asked for my phone number at a poetry reading. I had known him in the past as a cook at Muther's Kitchun. I had had the impression that he had taken a turn toward stupidity, that he had used up too much acid. He was against tobacco. He let the whole-wheat carob brownies burn in the oven, as the men lit up the ladle with the gray, thickening cocaine. He told me to go outside if I needed to smoke cigarettes.

Jennifer Casolo is caught with weapons in her yard. She went to Central America as a missionary and came back as a chief.

CAST (in order of appearance):

Women:

I (me, my)
Godivas
Violetta Chamorro
Her daughter
My friend
Your wives
Anna Karenina
The Lebanese man's Dominican mother
Jennifer Casolo
The woman who dumped the man with the long hair
The new man's old love
Jean Rhys

Men:

Daniel Ortega
His soldiers
Somoza
Violetta Chamorro's husband
Her son

You
My husband
The new man
My friend's new man
The married man
Levin
Sal
Tom Petty
Gay men
The Lebanese man
His father
The man whose house it was
My old boyfriend
The man with the long hair
Frankie, the mafia son
The Assemblyman
The news anchor
The Texan in the Dewar's profile
Vronsky

Animals:

Horses
Cats

April 4

The new man spends 19 hours in my bed then leaves to buy pot. He wants to come back afterward, but I tell him I have things to do. I remind him that my old boyfriend is coming to town. He says he'll call at eleven. At eleven I'm eating old macaroni, hoping he'll call, planning to ask him over and to kick him out early, but I don't get the chance. He doesn't call.

I put on the headphones. By sheer telepathy, I am not able to make

the man with the long hair call, but I think of him.

March 28

The new man spends 15 hours in my bed. At 5 o'clock, I drive him to work, and on the way, the man with the long hair passes us and waves. He has on dark glasses, and wisps of hair escape his ponytail. I drive erratically and let the new man out. In my rearview mirror, I see Frankie, the mafia son. This town is too small. I don't want to live here anymore. I go straight home, with a firm plan to straighten the upholstery.

I realize that the man with the long hair will follow me, but I don't know why he would decide to since we were going in opposite directions. I tell myself to go inside and brush my teeth, when he pulls up behind me in his father's car. I recognize the New York Assemblyman plates.

He meets me in the middle of the street and kisses me. He takes my hand and points me toward the pizza shop at the corner, but we never get there. He walks, and I float beside him. He wants to know how my infatuation is coming: Am I over him yet? No, I tell him, it's still with me. I like to be near him to intensify my suffering. He asks me who the man in the car was, and I ask him if he wants coffee. By then he has walked and I have floated down the street and through the park. He pauses to wave at the news anchor in the intersection. I wave, too, not realizing that I only know the news anchor from TV.

We go inside to two cups of coffee on the table. There are no other traces of the new man. I wonder if the man with the long hair knows that we just got up, but he isn't talking. He's sitting on the couch, waiting for his coffee, reading my journal. He injures my peace, but we flipped for it. I listen from the kitchen to his silent reading and wait for him to ask again if all my sentences are short. He doesn't ask. He says he likes it but doesn't get it.

He tells me about running into the woman who dumped him and that she is cold toward him now. He asks how would I feel if he were cold toward me. I tell him he is cold, though he tries not to seem so. He asks if I'm involved with the new man, and I say, no.

April 4

The new man's old love is in the past. He says her name, and her name means love. I tell him there are things to look forward to, but I'm no more certain than he is. I think ahead to Texas. I think of meeting the Texan in the Dewar's profile. That wouldn't be love, but it could be fun. Perhaps fun is just around the corner.

My husband calls while the new man is fucking me. I'm on the bottom and yelling, "I don't want to hear it." The answering machine is blaring, and I'm plugging my ears. My husband says our name for each other over and over, in a slow decrescendo.

April 5

The new man falls off his horse doing a trick for me. I show no mercy. I leave him in the mud, caked with tears. I want him supple, and he wants merely to be soft. No amount of mercy will change that.

During our druid times, my friend says: There are no other lovers.

April 6

My husband reads Jean Rhys to me over the phone at four in the morning, and I can't remember why I left him. Neither of you rides a horse. Anna Karenina crumbled in the stands when Vronsky fell off his horse.

