

Three Short Fictions

by Ann Bogle

Red Squirrel

This is a never-ending day with sunshine crowning an eventual eclipse or a virtual exposure of no news from China from Beirut from Jerusalem where is Jericho? is Jericho in the news where is Tabriz? The sell out came in her not asking if I wanted to live she always thought no one really wanted to live or had their reasons for living she had liked dying just fine and wanted to see more of it had gotten to like watching it and forgetting there was functionality in plain living not imaginable in her graceless world of bloody corpses and smashed bones raked off by a yard junta as not edible flying girl flying sea flying pictures flying orgasm flying automobiles flying sandwich and chips flying rich folk flying poem the only thing not flying were her orderly friends with their small to large hang ups and their physical difficulties one had a wired jaw one a hard time getting pregnant one a head that turned to autism if he was tired he would bash or bang it and one with a document of some estimable value that needed a script doctor before she got the doctor-doctor not to notice her independence or to pay nice compliments he was no more than a ruddy cube she was not near her friends anymore they were spirited away on their flying rug or curled with a gun or watching TV not pulsing to operate what they had quit wanting careers or fame they were happy to watch reruns of Seinfeld and Melrose Place she was not their friend anymore though she had liked all of them they were running not flying they were selling but not collecting they were free but unhappy she was happy but unfree and the blood of the seal went to bone meal for the richest of the riches who lived in the townhouse of the flying squirrel not the flying girl of all seas...

Jungle

We sneaked blood-red tomatoes from the new kitchen. The new kitchen had oak cupboards, the top ones lit behind glass, showing carved flute vases—green and robin's egg blue and delicate pink—porcelain chickens, beaks pointed toward each other, two chickens discussing, one cock and one hen, the long ice masher, the silver plate, the Japanese clay plate, the wooden dish. There was a woodcarver in the family; one of the grandfathers taught shop and built furniture. The granddaughters quarreled over who would inherit it: the gentle cut-copper lamp, the small table, varnished and erect, with its legs at a flared stance to seem curved but not, straight. We were to eat just meat and to become discombobulated over vegetables and bread and not to indulge in sex with strange men—men were all strange once you got used to their distance—were Lincoln logs, poles, boulders and scrub trees. Sex was for gitting kin—the new rules same as the old rules. Girls were for sex. Leave girls out of it: Let Latin grow in them. Teach girls joy and “no touching” and “three men max.” Slather them with mother's caresses and dog's big-face kisses and paws.

Trent Kesey

I dreamt that my old friend, Trevor Lea Rogers, was crossing the grassy mall in a city like Madison, but not Madison, perhaps Washington, D.C., when we saw each other. He looked so much the same with his medium-length long hair and beard dyed black. He was wearing a ball cap. As we used to say, he looked like Brad Pitt. He saw me and caught up to me; we were happy that we had spotted each other. In real life, we haven't seen each other for going on nine years. We went to a nearby garden to sit. The garden was outside an arts administration building. The building had a narrow, yet monumental facade and heavy, forbidding front doors. We sat outside, experiencing a mutual happiness, without knowing exactly what it was they did inside the arts administration building. Then Trevor took a scissors from his pack and went over to the bank of white petunias that edged the sidewalk. He cut all the petunias up until they looked shredded like bills. He told me he had renamed

himself, that his new name was going to be: Kesey, Trent Kesey. Just then, an arts administrator poked her head out of the big front doors. She started to call Trevor inside. She was smiling at him, but she frowned at me. She said she was thinking of having him arrested. The shredded white petunias were on the lawn. Spell it while you can, I was thinking soundly; the petunias will be wasted otherwise. Just then the arts administrator decided not to press charges against Trevor and let him go. Trevor decided against spelling his new name, but I pictured it: Trent Kesey written out in white flowers.

Then Trevor bought a dress for his wife, Julie, for her birthday. He bought it from a street vendor and was trying to devise a way to wrap it, by folding it carefully on colored tissue paper. He said he hadn't been to see her in a week.

