

Mondo Ben

by Jamie Grefe

The girls smashed LP records over Ben's head. It was not funny, despite their giggles. Two girls in vests hogtied his ankles and wrists with a severed lamp cord and barbed wire, spun him dizzy around the room. A crash from the bathroom: one girl in a doctor's smock poured his medications and skin care products, lotions and ointments, in the toilet and flushed. She cranked faucets, ran the bath full blast - plugged the drain with a handful of vinyl shards and hair clumps. The bedroom carpet, stained and bloodied, was being singed with a Zippo lighter by a girl with black-rimmed glasses. Girls in checkered aprons threw forks and plates at his bruised neck. Ben struggled and writhed in agonizing spasms, victim of an evening turned brutal. Go-go girls swung into him with modified Sluggers, fashioned of nails and knives. A few of the nails stuck, had to be held down and wrenched out or driven in. A girl revved a chainsaw, split the coffee table in two, toppled the bookshelves, and pulverized the washing machine, the oven, his mahogany desk, and the microwave, too. Sporty girls impaled his golf clubs in the television set. A Yma Sumac record skipped and scratched across the inside of Ben's brain.

In the living room, Ben hung chained and coughing. He dangled upside down from the ceiling by thick steel loops, head wrapped tight in black tape. A group of office girls took turns slapping him in the face, laughing in spite and fury. Girls in bunny costumes ravaged the house, flung pillow feathers to the floor. Outside, more girls arrived in black Hummers and on Japanese motorcycles. They tore up the lawn honking their horns, screaming his name to the suburban night. It was all too much. The house moaned and collapsed, burying Ben in a pile of shingles and brick. Ben did not ask for any of this. One girl in a rubber Frankenstein mask dragged Ben's body out from the rubble. The girl ripped off the tape and the chains, strapped Ben's body to the back of a juiced-up Harley and ripped around the yard, parading him to a cheering crowd of new

girls who had just arrived in a tour bus. Girls speaking Italian uprooted his one and only tree in the front yard. Girls in Stetsons and spurs dowsed the perimeter of his house in cleaning products, detergents, and gasoline, waited for the fire call. The sky moved and pulsed in falsetto chirps.

Ropes descended from a swarm of helicopters circling overhead. Girls in black fatigues slid down quick and silent. They secured him in a choke hold to the jeers and honks of the other girls, pepper sprayed his eyes. His body was lifted up in a stretcher and flown from the scene of this, his withering life. Gigantic girls with axes chopped at the fallen beams and mashed remnants of Ben's house, stomping out any trace of the man named Ben. "Nonexistence is sublime," one of them said to another. Another swung and replied, "No more Ben, forever." They smiled and chopped. "We have arrived, Ben," the girls all chanted in unison. The ground rumbled a reply. His torn up lawn burst open with holes and earth-girl after earth-girl crawled up from the dirt, ran and covered the heap of the house in grass and twigs, stomping and roaring, rejoicing in the spectacle of no more Ben. Someone lit a match. Fire roared to the glee of the girls and the voices hushed.

From across the street, Paul watched the girls and cowered in the safety of his house. He started to shiver and itch at his arms. His stomach tightened in twisted knots of panic. Three smiling girls in white wedding gowns stood on the lawn in front of his house. They were watching him watch the scene. Paul's mouth gaped in a silent scream as the grinning brides came closer and closer. Paul's throat stuck when he heard them call his name. He gulped. Under the sway of enchanting denial, he unlocked the door and let them come in.

