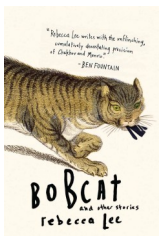


Bobcat and Other Stories



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If you like short stories don't skip this new collection, *Bobcat*. Rebecca Lee's stories about architects, matchmakers, academics, depressed children, a writer's spouse, and student plagiarists are absorbing and continually offer fresh surprises. Lee writes fluid yet beautiful prose that cuts immediately to the chase.

In the story "Min," the title character's father, Albert, works in Hong Kong to resettle Vietnamese refugees for the UN. One summer Min invites his college friend to visit Asia with him for the summer. Although they are close friends, Min and Sarah are not in love.

While there, Sarah discovers that the promised job that Albert has chosen for her is to find Min a wife. Sarah's only training is to read the notes Albert's mother left when she selected her own son's bride. Here are a couple examples: "Possibility" Midnight black hair, walk is like a leopard, carnal desires strong, and "Monkey woman, scurries through the day, loves confusion."

Twined with this bride-search thread is another one about Albert's work with refugees and how a compassionate Filipina nanny views his treatment of the Vietnamese.

In "Slatland" a rather bizarre professor of psychology, Dr. Roland Boland Pine, counsels a ten year old with depression problems to look at herself and her troubles as though floating in the sky above them. As an adult geologist, Margit is now in an unhappy relationship, so she uses the same technique with her fiancé, "Rezvan Balescu, the Romanian liar" as she calls him. He mocks her pop psychology and rants often about North Americans taking their silly emotional problems too seriously while people in the rest of the world are starving. Every day he writes long letters back to Romania and also receives letters from Rilia Balescu, who Rezvan states is his baby sister. Margit doesn't believe him and steals both his incoming and outgoing mail. She discovers that Dr. Pine speaks Romanian and is listed as a translator. So she brings her fiancé's letters there to seek his help again.

"Fialto" describes an architectural residency outside of Chicago, at a retreat property owned by the great architect Stadbakken. Here each young architect is given a day-job to help him or her envision possibilities for new buildings. The narrator's job is to milk the cows. He wonders if Stadbakken thinks that his building designs need to become more grounded. Another resident, Reuben, tells the narrator that Stadbakken is absolutely against love affairs while the new architects are working and living communally, yet soon it becomes obvious that the great designer shares many private meetings with Sands. This delightful story about love and art also describes sharing a living space with four other very creative people and what happens when men and women switch roles.

Posted by Dory L. on September 21, 2013

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