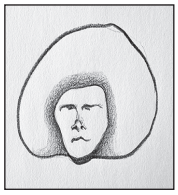
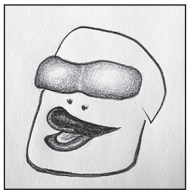
YARN SCRAPS

It all started with a carpet and a sketch pad ...

OUR PROJECT

This Yarn Scraps newsletter showcases writings about our Carpet Creatures.

LINKS AND IMAGES

Click the link on any of the images in this newsletter to view an enlarged version on our TAE Gallery website.

WRITE, WRITE, WRITE

To be a part of this newletter, select images from our **Carpet Creatures catalog** and write your reactions to them with stories, poems, captions, or other thoughts in whatever format you choose, and add story titles and character names if you wish.

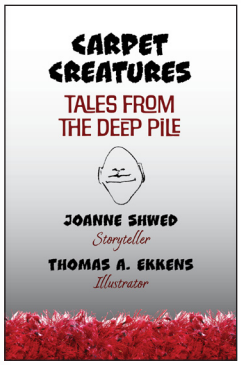
SEND, SEND, SEND

To be included in this newsletter, e-mail your writing (with catalog numbers) to **carpetcreatures@taegallery.com**.

When we include your writing and byline in this newsletter, we'll suggest minor and complimentary editorial revisions if needed and send you the revised text for your approval.

MOST OF ALL ...

Have fun and be creative!



THANK-YOU GIFT

If your writing is included in this newsletter, we'll send you a complimentary copy of our book, ***Carpet Creatures: Tales from the Deep Pile***, published by **Backspace Ink** and available on **Amazon.com**.

Carpet Creatures website **Carpet Creatures catalog**

E-mail your writing (with catalog numbers) to **carpetcreatures@taegallery.com**

Click "**Link to Yarn Scraps newsletter**" on our **Carpet Creatures website** for the latest edition.

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These faces are imaginary. Any resemblance to people who are living or who have been vacuumed up is coincidental.

YARN SCRAPS

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YARN SCRAPS

11-4

LUCY GOOSY

It was Lucy's 80th birthday, and her party guests were set to arrive very soon. She hurriedly rearranged the worn-out furniture and placed the chips and dip on the unsteady folding table. She dusted off the cobwebs and swept the cat litter under the couch.

Looking in the bathroom mirror, she noticed her shoulder-length, curly gray hair cascading down her head and thought that she looked pretty.

She put on false eyelashes, her reddest lipstick, and a little too much red rouge.

Born Lucille Harris and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, she had gained the reputation of being "very friendly" to many men. She almost always got their attention and had used their interest as a way to feel accepted. This habit was hard to break, even after she left Lincoln.

In her 20s, she had moved to Los Angeles and tried to capitalize on her good looks by becoming an actress. She got small parts here and there, but no one ever remembered her.

That's when she decided to change her name to Lucy Goosy. She had hoped that her California friends would simply think it was funny and not ask any questions.

Lucy checked the Swedish meatballs—her specialty—that were cooking in the oven, and the clock on the wall caught her attention.

"Oh, my! They'll be here soon. I've got to get ready."

She opened the closet and put on her red, silk dress. She had worn it while playing a geisha in a movie many years ago, and the wardrobe manager had gifted it to her.

"Still fits!" she squealed.

As she walked around the living room, she saw something on the folding table.

"Oh, no ... the balloons!"

Lucy tore open the bag and began to blow. By the fifth exhale, she sat down because she was starting to feel faint.

"Oh, well," she sighed. "I hope no one will mind if we don't have them."

When she regained her strength, she checked the refrigerator and hoped that the beers were cold enough.

"I hope someone brings champagne!"

Trying to calm her nerves, Lucy sat on the couch and looked at the room one more time.

"I'm ready!" she announced to the empty room.

The doorbell rang. She walked to the door and looked out the peephole.

The guests had arrived!

When she opened the door, she was greeted by her smiling friends, and the hugs and kisses commenced.

"Lucy! Thanks for inviting us. You look beautiful."

"Lucy! You *can't* be 80 years old! You look like a teenager."

"Lucy! Your house looks great."

"Lucy! What smells so good?"

Lucy Goosy felt accepted.

She was happy. ●

By Karen Mendonca

Humans are a mystery to me. I don't know that I will ever understand this species. Humans are a real puzzle to behold.

P. S. This cold virus is killing me!

43-5

By Joanne Shwed

Vatu tried to understand the earthly creature standing in front of him, but his mind drifted to simpler things.

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YARN SCRAPS

102-1

By Charlene Perlson

My name is Mrs. Effel Beffel Weffel. It's early Sunday morning and the feeling takes over ... I miss you.

By Joanne Shwed

Suzy glared at her husband and did her best to prove him wrong.

76-2

By Karen Mendonca

I fear what is behind me.

By Joanne Shwed

Grace saw the coldness in her eyes reach her mother's sweet face.

138-1

By Charlene Perlson

Popeye was getting bored just being a meat-head broozer. He wanted to be a private detective, having to search for clues and then becoming the hero who figured out the who-done-it. He wanted to be smart.

By Joanne Shwed

Gino walked down the boat ramp, unsure of his new life. His thoughts drifted to his mother's last words.

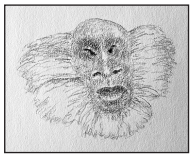
106-6

By Karen Mendonca

Dreaming of the past . . . yearning for the future.

By Joanne Shwed

George was curious and shy, which led to confusion and isolation.



135-4

By Charlene Perlson

Robert desperately needed a vacation. He had been a sexy big-screen actor for years. He decided to go to Africa. He knew nothing about real life there. He flew a long time to get there. When he arrived in Africa he needed to stretch his legs. He shouldn't have gone out alone. But he did. He had the feeling he was being followed. A black-and-white striped primate jumped out in front of him and bit him. He became one with the primate. This is Robert now ...

By Joanne Shwed

A Zulu warrior emerged from the trees, nostrils flaring. His hair and beard were wild, and his eyes were alert and menacing.

74-4

By Karen Mendonca

Sleeping . . .
Floating . . .
Suspended . . .
In a place unfamiliar.

By Joanne Shwed

Jaw set, Beverly closed her eyes and hoped he would come back.

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YARN SCRAPS

MISS VY VACIOUS

By Joanne Shwed

The strip was quiet that night. There were a few people on the corner of Fifth and Main, but they were walking in the opposite direction of the Moby Dick Inn.

Otto Katzenberger sat in his car across the street. He was expected to go on stage in about a half hour. It was the first time he had ever performed at a drag club in the United States, and he didn't know what to expect.

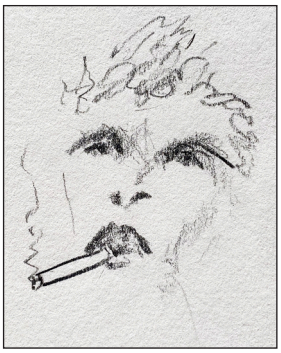
He had arrived from Germany two weeks before, knowing no one. By chance, he had met a couple of guys who suggested that he audition at the Moby Dick, and he got the gig!

As Otto waited in the car, he tried to calm his nerves. He practiced deep-breathing exercises and thought about the life he left behind.

He remembered his father shouting, "*Was habe ich falsch gemacht?*" ("Where did I go wrong?")

He remembered his mother whispering, "*Du wurdest so geboren, mein Sohn.*" ("You were born this way, my son.")

When his mother noticed him wearing her clothes, her face lit up with love as she said, "*Du siehst wunderschön aus!*" ("You look beautiful!")



22-9

Now, in the car, Otto thought about his act. He looked at his costume, which was folded neatly on the car seat, and his makeup, including the longest false eyelashes he had ever owned and his trademark cigarette holder.

He was ready.

Otto slowly opened the car door and stepped out. He was wearing flat, comfortable shoes. Actually, he never got the hang of wearing heels. If he wore them for too long, painful blisters would form, and he couldn't walk very well—particularly on stage. He always changed his shoes right before showtime.

He carefully crossed the street, arms full of clothes and everything else he needed, and walked toward the Moby Dick Inn.

He had practiced his English every night before coming to America, and he was able to communicate quite well.

As he opened the bar's front door, he put on his best smile and shouted, "Hello! I'm here!"

The proprietor turned to see who was talking to him. When he saw Otto, he seemed puzzled.

"And you are ...?"

"Miss Vy Vacious from Germany!"

"Ah, yes. Please come in. Your dressing room is in the back."

Otto walked down the dark, dank hallway and saw a sign on a door: "THE TALENT."

He giggled, "*Ich schätze, das bin ich!*" ("I guess that's me!")

In the dressing room, he sat down at the makeshift vanity and looked in the cracked mirror for several minutes.

With his makeup splayed on the table, Otto began to create the image of what he had always wanted to look like. It was a tedious job, but he loved every minute of the process.

When he was done, he stared at his face and said to no one in particular, "*Ich sehe wunderschön aus!*" ("I look beautiful!")

And Miss Vy Vacious surely did. ●

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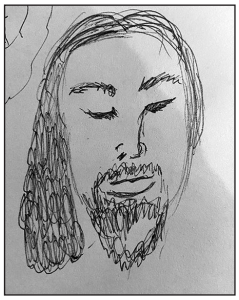
YARN SCRAPS

MY BROTHER TOM



Poem and drawing
by Donna David
(inspired by her carpet)

I have a brother named Tom
A really talented guy.
He plays banjo, guitar and
harmonica too
And writes songs that reach to the sky.

And that's not all!
He's an artist too.
He draws with inks and calligraphy—
And paints in every hue.

Behind all that talent
Beats a heart made of gold.
Full of kindness and love
For both the young and the old.

I wish we lived closer.
I miss his sweet mug!
So imagine my shock
To find his face in my rug!!

By Karen Mendonca

87-5

So many times,
so many places,
so many opportunities
. . . lost forever.

By Joanne Shwed

87-5

"This is the way it
will be," said Dominic
the Great. "This is
your life now."

By Karen Mendonca

92-9

Pet me . . .
Hold me . . .
Feed me . . .
Keep me . . .
Love me.

By Joanne Shwed

92-9

Charlie gazed at
his best friend who
lovingly presented
the homemade meal
in his favorite bowl.

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YARN SCRAPS

LESTER DOWN

136-3

By Joanne Shwed

"Anybody home? Help! Can anyone hear me?"

A siren screamed a few streets away, and the evening chill sent shivers to the spines of all who braved the cold.

Lester Down pulled up his collar to get some warmth, but his ragged clothes were thin and stiff. The neighborhood dogs barked, and the sun had just set.

He pressed the doorbell again and again, waiting for someone to answer. He thought he heard footsteps in the house, but the sound soon disappeared. His long, dirty fingers left a smudge on the button, and he tried in vain to wipe it off before someone came.

Then, Lester grabbed his heart and fell to the floor.

When the husband and wife finally came home, they found Lester's lifeless body on the porch.

"I can't believe he showed up," said the wife.

"He looks so old," said the husband. "When was the last time we saw him?"

"At least 10 years ago ... maybe longer. I wonder if he was living in town all that time and we didn't know it."

When the police arrived, they searched Lester's pockets. He had no written documentation that he had ever lived, and the husband and wife were silent.

The wife sat in her bedroom rocker and wept until morning. The last fight she had with her father was the last time she saw him. She realized that he was trying to see her before he died, but it had been too late. ●

THINKING OF HER

107-2

By Joanne Shwed

He stands on the bow of their favorite sailboat, waiting.

20 SOMETHINGS

Stacey
11-4

Jessica
43-2

Ava
31-6

By Barbara Sterlace

Stacey, Jessica, and Ava were hanging out on a Saturday afternoon endlessly primping—because that is what they did. Suddenly they heard a loud whirring noise coming right at them.

Ava exclaimed, "It's that goddamn vacuum again! I hate that thing. It ruins all my hard work trying to make myself look good."

"Yeah, I agree," said Stacey. "It flattens my chin, smears my lipstick, and gets crumbs up my nose. My hair always gets tangled in it."

Jessica chimed in, "I'm always swallowing something awful tasting. I wish we could find a safe place where it wouldn't be able to find us."

The girls tried hard to look their best, but they had become bored with taking selfies. Their real ambition was to be chosen for **THE CATALOG**. ●

FARMER JAKE

25-10

By Barbara Sterlace

It was early Monday morning and Farmer Jake was plowing his fields. Suddenly, without warning, the wind started to whip up around him, getting stronger with every passing second and lifting him off the ground. He tried to wrap his fingers around the handles of the plow, but it was a struggle to hold on. He screamed for help, but the wind was too loud and no one could hear him. He felt his fingers slipping and, as he screamed one last time, he was gone ...

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YARN SCRAPS

102-3

AUGIE

By Thomas A. Ekkens

You know, your mom is cooking, or maybe crocheting something, or something.

So you want to get out, and so you say, "Hey, mom, I'm going out for a while, OK?" and leave before you get an answer.

It's three stories down to the street on dark, narrow stairs you've taken a zillion times, and when you open the front door, the street slams you with reality—noise, smells, fumes. But, hey, that's where I grew up. That's where my friends hang out.

We have a few blocks, places where we go. You kind of know everyone, who's who, when new babies are born, when people die or move on. It's our neighborhood, like it or not. A few blocks away, not so much.

This old guy, Augie, has been around since before I can remember, knows everything. Horses, fights, odds on anything, you name it. You see him outside bars, on the corner, but you never know where or when. But when you do, you see people talking to him, palm something, nod, and move on.

Today, as I step out, I see him on the corner by the alley. "Hey, Augie, what's the word on the street?"

With a furtive glance to one side, he whispers coarsely, "Come a little bit closer." ●

WALRUS LOOKS AT 40

By Krista Markowitz

4-15

I was very happy as a walrus.
Then I woke up in this human
body. Bills ... taxes ... GAH!

LONELY

Poem and watercolor
by Donna David
(inspired by our carpet)

I live in a koi pond so dark and deep.
I swim in circles but mostly sleep.

There used to be more before the cat.
Now I'm alone, fearful and fat.

I hide in the depths of the dark, lonely reeds
And wait for the food god who meets all my needs.

He says he'll bring friends so I can have fun.
I hope he remembers how I became one!

THE CAT

Poem and watercolor
by Donna David
(inspired by her bathroom floor)

There's this cat
Who sits by the door
And stares in the window.
Just like that!

He sits on the door mat
And makes me wonder ...
What is he thinking?
Just like that!

He's neither thin nor is he fat.
Can we be friends?
If I come near, he runs off.
Just like that!

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YARN SCRAPS

LUIGI LA TELLA

By Joanne Shwed

Luigi La Tella's food truck pulls into his usual spot on West Third Street near Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village.

For over 20 years, he has been there at 11:30 am, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, to feed the hungry lunchtime crowd.

On this particular Friday, Luigi's heart jumps with excitement to see the long line waiting for him.

"Luigi!" they cheer as their stomachs growl in anticipation.

With a big wave, he says hello to everyone: "*Ciao a tutti!*"

He smiles, which twists up his moustache at the ends.

Once he is ready to open, he says, "*Salire subito!* Step right up! *Quanti?*"

"One for me, and one for my friend, please."

Today's line is particularly long, and Luigi wonders if he has prepared enough food.

"Oh, well," he thinks, "there's always next time. They'll be back for more."

Luigi's menu is simple: juicy and luscious lasagna, meatballs that melt in your mouth, and bread with just the right amount of butter and garlic. He uses his mother's recipes, passed down from her mother.

When Luigi was a little boy, he watched his mother cook. She would pick him up and place him on the kitchen counter next to her, which was the best seat in the house.

1-8

As Luigi serves the last person in line, he thinks about his good fortune:

He has a large family who cares for him.

He has a decent place to live.

His health is good for a man of his age.

He has his own business, which he runs exactly the way he wants.

He is able to do what he loves to do: cook for people.

Luigi's life is simple, like his menu. In his mind, he has it all—except a wife.

Long ago, he was married a few times and always wondered what went wrong. Did all the women leave him for the same reason?

Perhaps they left him because of his smile. When he is angry, he looks like he is smiling—almost like criminals who enjoy watching their victims squirm. Did his smile scare them all away?

When Luigi returns home, he changes into some comfy clothes and snuggles with his beloved cat.

"It's just you and me, Gatta. *Chi ti ama, piccolo mio?* Who loves you, my little one? Are you hungry?"

He heats some leftover meatballs and places them in the kitty's bowl.

"You like that, eh? That's good. *Mangiare* ... eat!"

At the end of the evening, Luigi lies in bed and listens to Gatta purr.

"It sure would be nice if I had some human companionship," he whispers. "Well, *piccolo*, what shall we dream about tonight?"

Gatta gazes into Luigi's eyes. Her whiskers look like a twisted-up moustache, and she seems to be smiling. ●

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YARN SCRAPS

85-6

DAISY'S DAY

By Pamela McManus

It all started when Daisy's husband brought home cute little packets of delicious, fully cooked chicken breast, already cut into bites. Just heat and serve! "I'll have to pick up some more of these!" Daisy decided, as she didn't cook. Her husband had purchased the chicken packets at Costco, where Daisy had never been. She had always heard how much people *loved* Costco. Now she had a reason to go there!

She learned where the nearest Costco was, about half an hour away. With her very low tolerance for crowds, Daisy decided to go in the mid-afternoon on a Wednesday.

Daisy drove there, and her jaw dropped when she saw the parking. "My God," she breathed. "Even the San Francisco International Airport's parking area is not as big as *this*!" After driving up and down the aisles for what seemed an eternity, Daisy saw a gal walking through the parking lot juggling a few items in her hands, which Daisy thought was odd. Pulling up next to her, Daisy asked, "Going to your car?" The woman muttered something unintelligible in a foreign language and kept walking.

After *finally* finding a spot that was definitely less than a mile from the entrance, Daisy hiked to the front door. She asked where to get a membership card, and the man pointed vaguely in a direction over his shoulder. There Daisy found a very sweet gal named Jackie behind the counter, who took Daisy's photo and told Daisy the cost of a membership card. When Daisy went to pay with her MasterCard, Jackie informed her that Costco took only Visa.

Seriously?

Thinking that perhaps Jackie had a quirky sense of humor, Daisy smiled and said, "You're *joking*, right?" Jackie wasn't. Daisy fumbled around in her purse to find a rarely used Visa card. In decades of paying with credit cards, this was the very first time Daisy had ever had a MasterCard refused.

Daisy then asked where she could find a small hand-held basket instead of a big, clunky cart, as she wished to purchase only one item, the chicken. Incredibly, Jackie said, "We only have carts."

Huh?

Thoughtfully, Jackie asked Daisy what single item she wished to buy. "Oh!" said Daisy. "I actually have a picture of it on my phone!" She showed Jackie the photo of one of the chicken packets. Jackie said she knew where to find them! They were located—naturally—at the very back of the massive, crowded store.

Daisy turned around and was dumbfounded by how enormous the place was. Like the parking lot, the store seemed to go on into infinity. To Daisy's relief, Jackie actually offered to *show* her where the chicken was! Daisy thanked her profusely.

The two of them began a slow, painstaking journey through an obstacle course of people and carts. Daisy had never heard so many foreign languages around her in her life. The intense crowd was starting to get to her, and she began to sweat, but she was determined to get the chicken.

When the two women at last arrived at the back of the store, even Jackie had to hunt for the desired item but finally found it—a 20-inch-long strip of the chicken packets. "Oh, thank you SO MUCH for helping me!" Daisy said, tears of gratitude welling up in her eyes. "I couldn't *possibly* have found this without you!" It was the absolute truth.

They slowly made their way back to the front of the store. Looking for where to check out, all Daisy could see was a confusing sea of people, carts, and product stands. She asked Jackie, "Would you please show me the *end* of one of these lines?" She noticed that her voice shook a bit and sounded like that of a frightened child.

Jackie pointed across the sea of people at what must have been the checkout locations. As far as Daisy could tell, up ahead were only more heads, more

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YARN SCRAPS

DAISY'S DAY *continued*

carts, and more product displays. "And *way* over there is the self-checkout," said Jackie, pointing into the far distance. "But sometimes," she added, "the line there is even longer than the regular lines."

OMG!

Jackie herself then noted that it was indeed hard to find the ends of the lines, as they were so long that they were curving in various ways around stands of products and well back into the store, blending perfectly with shoppers.

Daisy's heart was pounding and her breath was coming hard and fast. Fighting back tears while feeling increasingly closed in by thousands of humans with carts, Daisy thanked Jackie for all of her invaluable help. Jackie saw Daisy's forlorn expression and trembling hands. And then, to Daisy's astonishment, Jackie said, "Just this one time only, since you are a new customer and the lines are so long and you have only one item, I will ring you up myself right over here." Daisy actually began to cry with relief and gratitude. Her voice caught as she expressed how thankful she was.

After paying with her *Visa*, Daisy said, "Oh, and may I please have a bag?" Jackie stated that Costco didn't provide bags. Daisy laughed, as she knew that this time Jackie was most certainly kidding.

She wasn't.

All Daisy wanted was to get out of the noisy, overcrowded, bagless insanity, find her faraway car, and return to the comfort of home with her chicken. She hugged Jackie goodbye with tearful thanks.

As much as Daisy wanted to leave, on her way out, still shaking, she stopped at a location where shoppers could give comments about their experience. She gave Jackie a glowing review and dropped it through the slot.

Dying to get away, Daisy headed straight for the exit, which was nearby. But she was stunned to discover that customers actually had to show a *receipt* for theirs purchases (!?!). Worse, Daisy realized that there was yet another endless line of people waiting to prove they had paid for their items before they were allowed to leave the store. The people at the front of the line glared at Daisy, as they thought she was trying to cut in front.

Eventually Daisy got out of the store, feeling almost like she had been released from prison. Carrying the long, dangling strip of chicken packets—which by now were not even cold anymore—she trekked the less-than-a-mile distance to her car. "I'll be home soon," she mumbled to comfort herself.

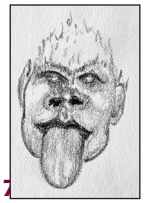
But getting out of the parking lot was to be yet another challenge. Daisy pulled out of her spot and drove to the end of the aisle, where cars passed *nonstop* without letting her move into the line of the hordes leaving Costco. So much time passed that Daisy actually considered turning off the engine.

Driving home at last, still shaking and with a pounding heart, Daisy mentally canceled the one or two brief errands she'd intended to do on the way back from Costco. All she wanted now was to go HOME where life was quiet, peaceful, normal. It was a good 10 minutes before she stopped repeating, "Oh, my *God*! Oh, my *God*!" It was another 10 minutes before her fast, shallow breathing finally slowed.

It was late afternoon by the time a traumatized Daisy finally reached home. She put the warm chicken in the fridge.

Then she poured herself a good, stiff drink and had a big hit of weed. "Holy crap," she said aloud. "People actually LIKE shopping there?!?" She lay down on the living room floor, feeling like all she really wanted to do was disappear . . . into the carpet . . . ●

By Jana Axelrad



Your tongue looks too dry
Said the acupuncturist
Time for a treatment

73-4

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YARN SCRAPS

MELBA JOHNSON

By Joanne Shwed

As Melba Johnson watched the next person in line approach her desk at the employment office, her face froze, and the pupils in her eyes looked like little black dots puncturing a sea of white.

Her mouth was shut tight, so she tried to breathe through her nose; actually, she wasn't breathing at all.

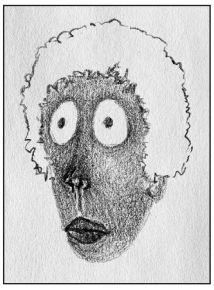
A woman, dressed meticulously in black silk, took the seat across from Melba. When they locked eyes, Melba noticed that they were the identical shape and color as hers, and her skin was the same shade of brown.

"May I help you?" Melba whispered.

The woman handed Melba her resume and said, "I came here with the hope of getting a job."

Forcing herself to look away from the woman's face, Melba flipped through the pages and noticed that their last names were the same.

Melba stared at the resume in a daze as familiar questions and exciting possibilities flooded her mind.



79-3

"Did you hear me?" the woman asked.

Melba raised her head. Her heart was pounding.

"I just received my bachelor's degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology, the woman continued, "and was hoping to work in a design firm in New York."

Melba searched for "fashion design New York" in the employment listings with no luck.

"Well, Ms. Johnson, I don't have any matches for you today, but I'll keep your contact information and call you if and when something looks promising."

As the woman stood up to leave, Melba asked her to sit down again.

"I know this is unusual," Melba began, "but you look very familiar. First of all, we have the same last name."

"Really?"

"Yes. We also look very much alike, don't you think?"

"Well, I do see a slight resemblance."

"May I ask where you grew up?"

"Sure. I spent the first 21 years of my life in Chattanooga."

Melba gulped. So did the woman.

"May I ask you another personal question, Ms. Johnson?"

"Okay, I guess."

"Were you adopted?"

"Yes, I was adopted by James and Dorothy Johnson, a very kind and caring family."

Melba wondered if this woman was her daughter. She had been trying to find her for many years.

"Ms. Johnson," Melba explained, "I had a little girl right around the time you were born—in Chattanooga—and I gave her up for adoption. I think you may be her."

"Really? Well, my birth mother's name was Glenda Johnson. I always thought it was odd that my birth parents and my adoptive parents had the same last name. Are you Glenda?"

Melba was stunned. Who was Glenda? After a few moments, she remembered that her older sister's birth name was Glenda, but she changed it when Melba was very young.

She was sure that this woman was her older sister's daughter, who had also given her baby up for adoption.

Meeting her niece was as close as Melba had ever gotten to her own daughter, and it gave her hope.

Melba stood, shaking, and opened her arms wide. ●

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YARN SCRAPS

7-1

CHARLIE

By Randy Peyser

I awoke with this sense of paranoia. This feeling crept over me, like I was being watched.

"Who's there?" I turned quickly. But I was only met with the sound of my breath, which had largely become uneven as I took fearful gasps.

I felt like something was hovering over me, like a ghost in a shadow. Whatever it was, the feeling would not leave me be, and I had to get the hell out of there. I grabbed my shirt and Levi's off the floor, glad that I'd dumped them there last night, so I didn't have to spend needless seconds searching for my jeans. Besides, God knows what I'd find in the closet or under the bed!

No way was I going to stay there. I headed for the door. Maybe go downtown. Grab a cup of Joe. Speak to Gloria. She always had a kind smile when she poured me a brew. Always said, "hello, how are you stranger?" even though I was no stranger. At least, not to Gloria. I'd been showing up at the Spoke and Wheel every Friday since Joan left me for that idiot, Clyde. And that was five years and two months ago. But who's counting?

Gloria with the kind smile. She understood. She'd been through it in a bad way. Told me how Thomas was a smoking gun, always ready to go off. And that was no way to live. She had escaped through their bathroom window one night when Thomas was on a binge, and she hitchhiked all the way to Memphis to get away from that no-good bastard. Now she had a good man. Well, actually, he didn't have any money, but he had heart, and that was perfect for Gloria.

I pounded down the pavement and made a beeline to the café. Yes, Gloria was there. Even though the fear had followed me, just the sight of her calmed me down enough to catch my breath. I slipped into my booth, glad to be seated against the dirty orange vinyl with the rip in the corner that I'd claimed from Day One.

Gloria came over, all cheerful like usual. Steaming pot of coffee in hand.

"Hi Charlie. So, what can I get for you and your buddy?" ●

100-3

PROFESSOR GOODENOUGH

By Randy Peyser

He was an outstanding chap. Popular among the university's elite, those patrons who shelled out the cash to keep the lights on and the buildings flush with possibility.

Some said he was a dead ringer for Einstein. But he was too humble to rest his laurels upon such fancy. Instead, he stuck to his studies, attended the god-awful-boring-meetings required of all faculty, and thoughtfully measured the hours of his days by the impact he'd made on his students.

No one enjoyed influencing young minds more than the professor. In fact, he lived by the motto, "If you can't take it with you, at least you can pass it on."

And pass it on he did. He was well versed in the arts, in music, and surprisingly in both math and science. But one particular passion was of far more interest to him than the subjects most students thought they were there to learn: Professor Goodenough was an ardent advocate of what he called, antiperfectionism.

"Perfection messes with the minds of men," he declared to his students. "It stops creativity from flowing. It causes one to censor oneself and stop exploring the secrets that whisper to him in the middle of the night."

His philosophy caused an uproar among the faculty heads—especially when he declared that grades did not lead to real learning or comprehension. Instead, he encouraged his students to test out their theories, to experiment, and to see if they worked or not. No grades would be given.

Heated meetings were held in an attempt to remove him from his tenured position. However, with the freedom to experiment without repercussions, the effect he had on his students could not be denied. Dancers danced, painters painted, and debaters debated. Mathematicians mathematized and philosophers

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YARN SCRAPS

PROFESSOR GOODENOUGH *continued*

philosophized. Then new theories emerged that rocked the science world, and billion-dollar businesses were born.

Students began to flock to the school in droves just so they could take classes with the good professor. And with their coffers full, the faculty heads had to admit that attaining a perfect grade was not all it had been cranked up to be. Rather, success resulted just by being good enough. ●

5-17

By Karen Mendonca

thoughts fleeting,
time passing,
watching ...
waiting ...
transfixed

108-1

VIRGIL

By Randy Peyser

Virgil was a magician. To say that his abilities were extraordinary would be an understatement. To the amazement of his audiences, he could conjure up worlds in his mind, state them aloud, and make just about anything appear at the snap of a finger.

This skill came in handy in times of social despair. Droughts could be quickly reversed. Lost fortunes instantly regained or quarreling relatives reunited.

There was only one thing Virgil could not do, and that was predict the result of his actions. And this is what happened ...

Louis Gould had invested his life savings in a bad deal, and bankruptcy loomed. When Louis's wife, Goldie, told him about this magician she'd heard about that could make miracles happen, Louis shrugged. He had already fallen victim to one charlatan, and clearly this guy had to be one too. But seeing the pleading look in his wife's eyes, Louis relented, and off they went to see the magician perform.

Before the magician appeared, Louis observed the others in the audience. A motley crew of hopefuls at best. They were people who could easily be taken in by a charlatan. He was positive of this.

Then Virgil appeared from the back of the stage, and the crowd hushed. Louis rolled his eyes, sure that this would be a waste of an hour and a half.

"Who shall I work with tonight?" declared the magician.

Hands shot up as people clamored to gain Virgil's attention.

"Tell you what. Look under your chair. I've taped an envelope under one of the seats. Whoever holds the envelope is the one I shall help tonight."

With great reluctance, Louis reached under his seat, and of course the envelope was there.

Goldie shrieked, "Oh, my god! It's you, Louis!"

All eyes stared at Louis, and with all this attention on him, he could not bring himself to back out. Virgil prompted Louis to speak about the situation he wanted reversed. Louis hated to admit that he'd made a bad investment. But he had nothing to lose, so he spoke the truth.

Virgil immediately closed his eyes. He spoke syllables that made no sense to Louis and wildly swung his arms and jiggled like he had invented a new dance. Louis felt like a laughing stock. But the crowd clapped vigorously. Eventually, Virgil's "magic" came to a halt. He opened his eyes and congratulated Louis on his return to good fortune.

Louis stared blankly, unsure as to what had just happened, but quite sure that nothing had happened. Still, he thanked Virgil since the crowd was watching,

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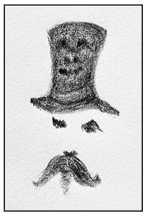
YARN SCRAPS

VIRGIL *continued*



and he didn't want to piss off an entire audience.

As the crowd departed, Louis shouldered many claps on the back with well wishes from the hopefuls who hadn't received the same "opportunity" that he had been so "fortunate" to receive.

Well, that was a waste. Still, he wouldn't say that out loud. It would hurt Goldie's feelings, and he knew she only meant well.

Louis started up the old Ford. But about three blocks away from their house, a fire engine raced pass them. To their horror, their house was a ball of flames.

But the insurance money they received was more than Louis had lost in the bad investment.

The magician had prevailed. ●

By Karen Mendonca

6-12

Gratitude

12-1

THE PERFECT FAMILY

By Randy Peyser

Hammond hated his name. It never made sense to him why his mother had named him after an organ of all things.

Josephine, however, had explained to him that when she found herself single and pregnant at too young an age, she was completely flummoxed. The unforeseen mishap had been the result of a roll in the hay—literally, a roll in the hay in the McCloskey's barn—with one good-looking Josiah, if that was even his name. Josiah had told her he was on his way from here to there, and even before the barn boogie began, she had a feeling she would never set eyes on him again. But a girl couldn't get pregnant on her first try. Right?

Every Wednesday, Josephine played the organ for the practice sessions with the church's choir. She knew she wasn't good enough to actually play for the Sunday services. That honor went to Bill Wilton. But Bill went to his AA meetings like clockwork every Wednesday night, so she had agreed to fill in for him every week. Besides, maybe it would help her get on the Lord's good side, considering she had gotten pregnant and all.

One Wednesday, when the obvious had become more obvious, and before the choir members arrived, Josephine bowed her head and prayed.

Mustering up the greatest amount of earnestness she could, she pleaded, "Please help me, Lord, to name this child, for I know not what to do."

She admired the biblical-like wording she'd come up with. Perhaps it would even gain her a point or two, she thought, when it was time for her to eventually meet her Maker.

To her absolute amazement, when she opened her eyes, the answer stared her right in the face. Engraved on a little gold plaque in the middle of the church organ was the baby's name: Hammond.

Josephine wiped the tears from her eyes. Yes, Hammond. That would be the baby's name.

While the name brought huge relief to Josephine, as he grew, it only brought grief to the shy boy.

In grade school, Mark McGee incited a bunch of fifth graders to call him, "Ham Sandwich." They oinked whenever they walked past him. Then, in high school, Mark found a more advanced form of verbal torturing.

"Hey, Hammond. You play with your organ every day, right?"

Of course, Mark would only say such things when he was in earshot of a gaggle of girls, and the lewd taunt made Hammond glow red with embarrassment.

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YARN SCRAPS

THE PERFECT FAMILY *continued*

But there was one girl, a compassionate child, who couldn't stomach the actions of a bully. She walked past the gossipy gaggle and looked solemnly into the eyes of the devastated boy.

"Pay no attention to those sheeples." Her voice was calm, quiet, sure and steadfast.

Hammond looked into her eyes. No one had ever treated him with such tenderness and caring.

"Thank you. That was such a kind thing to say. What's your name?" he asked.

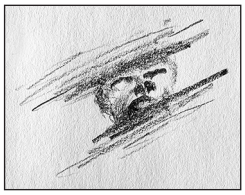
"Viola."

Hammond and Viola began to date, and after college they married. One year later, they had a baby boy of their own.

Viola's mom was Japanese, and Viola wanted to honor that part of her heritage. So, when the baby was born, they named him Kazu. The perfect family! ●

TIMMY JO

By Joanne Shwed



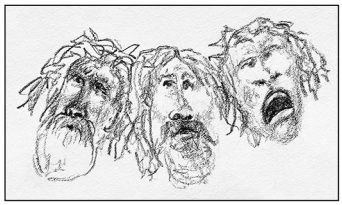
116-5

Timmy Jo looked through the hole in the fence and wondered when his step-father was coming home.

By Charlene Perlson

22-9

I smoked cigarettes for a very long time. Somebody once told me I made it look elegant. What do you think?



17-14

THE DARRYLS

By Joanne Shwed

Let me tell you what it's like to be smack in the middle of conjoined triplets: It sucks.

Me and my brothers are connected at the head. They know that I am writing this story, but luckily they are asleep right now.

Our folks didn't have the money to separate us when we were born. They are gone now, but we don't want to go through that process and those risks at this late age. We just have to live with it.

I've heard that triplets are uniquely wired, such as having the ability to finish each other's sentences. I've never experienced this bond with my brothers. After all these years, I still don't know what they're going to say most of the time.

Me and my brothers argue until we cross the line. We say hurtful things that hang in the air. Once we're done, there's no door to slam. I can't storm away from the fight. I'm stuck right here—with them.

We all acknowledge that it would be much nicer if we appreciated each other and got along. Trouble is that we've never been taught how to do that. We fall into bad behaviors and usually feel sad and hopeless afterwards.

So far, the tabloids have left us alone. We haven't joined a circus freak show, but it's always a possibility if I can talk my brothers into taking the gig for a little extra cash now and then.

Me and my brothers don't go out much. We're pretty hard to maneuver, and we need a lot of help. We have back problems and other chronic pain. We can't exercise, so we're weak, and our bones are getting more brittle every day.

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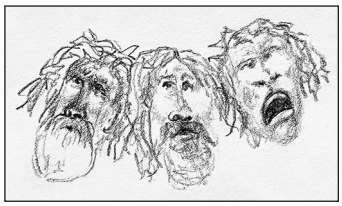
YARN SCRAPS

THE DARRYLS

continued



It's exhausting cleaning ourselves. Wanna talk about going to the bathroom? I'll spare you the details.

We have full bodies with all of the parts. I'm a grown man with sexual urges. Darryl and my other brother Darryl could care less about sex, and neither of them ever talk about it.

One day, I brought up the subject of me having sex with a woman. Their responses were underwhelming:

"Do what you want," Darryl snapped. "We don't really have a choice, do we?"

My other brother Darryl added, "What makes you think you could get someone to do *that* with you?"

I couldn't see their faces when they said these words, but I assume that they were meant to hurt my feelings. Takes the thrill right out of the fantasy, you know?

To be honest, I'm not comfortable doing anything sexual in front of them. That reality is just a little too kinky for me.

It's unbearable to realize that there is no hope of ever having any privacy, or just going somewhere alone, for the rest of my life.

So, here I am: physically connected to two people whom I don't know very well or even like ... for eternity.

Shit. ●

By Karen Mendonca

Wanna play?
Wanna walk?
Wanna eat?
Let's do something ...
Anything ...
TOGETHER!

4-5

CHAP

By Randy Peyser

4-5

Make no bones about it—Chap is a great dog. Some might even say he is a lifesaver.

The day Michael McMurphy McCloud pulled the smelly mutt out of the ditch down by the sewer plant, he never dreamed this 30-pound, straggly mess of fur would save his life in return.

Michael didn't know a thing about dogs, but he did know a lot about ditches because that's where he slept most nights. It meant less noise than sleeping under the overpass. Besides, all that concrete was colder than hell this time of year.

In appreciation for his great rescue, the mutt promptly peed on Michael's shoe, the one with the hole in the big toe.

"So, that's the thanks I get for saving your life, huh?"

Michael grabbed the dog to give it a piece of his mind. And that's when Michael realized the warmth that exuded from the mutt felt good. Really good. It was the kind of warmth that could make a body stop shivering.

He pulled the dog closer and held him against his chest. At first, the dog squirmed to get away, but then it also realized how good the warmth felt against his cold, little frame as well. He nestled comfortably into the man's arms, like they were old buddies.

Michael felt his belly rumbling. It was time to hit the streets. For Michael, that meant the exit by the Front Street Mall. The men almost never gave, but a few of the women did. Some even handed him coffee or donuts before they quickly rolled up their windows and drove away.

The mall was a long four blocks away. Michael put the scrappy dog down by his side and, to his surprise, it followed him. The dog settled by his side and licked its paws while he stood facing the stream of fleeing shoppers who pretended not to see him.

But then the unexpected happened. Drivers rolled down their windows to talk about the dog:

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YARN SCRAPS

CHAP *continued*

"Oh, what a precious boy! I hope you're taking good care of him."

"Is your dog hungry? He looks hungry."

"Does your dog need vet care? I know someone who will help."

More people interacted with Michael that afternoon than had spoken with him in over a month. Michael told each person the story of how he'd rescued the mutt, and people opened their wallets. Over and over again.

Michael couldn't believe his luck—rather, the luck his new companion had brought to him. Within a week, he had enough money to get the little guy a health check and a haircut. He even had enough money to get a shave and shampoo for himself.

Life was hard for Michael but not as hard as before. It's not clear who saved whom the best. But, for Michael and the little dog whom he named Chap, life was better than it had ever been. ●

0-2

THE PEACE WHISPERER

By Randy Peyser

Fergus was a Peace Whisperer. Eons before humans began to quarrel over anything and everything they could quarrel about, he transcended the earthly plane and was given the chance to assume a new heavenly position.

It was a fitting assignment for Fergus. He cared not for squabbles that began with "It's mine, not yours" and ended with wounded souls, egos and bodies.

To prepare for his new assignment, he spent a millennium in the Halls of Higher Learning where he absorbed the knowledge of the mystics and the compassion of the saints.

THE PEACE WHISPERER

continued

And, at last, when the Great War began and people divided themselves into camps of Us and Them, Fergus was ready.

The Great War was not a battle with sticks and stones; it was a prevailing attitude where people worldwide turned against one another if their beliefs did not match.

Both the USes and the THEMs held firmly that they were right and the others were wrong. It mattered not if an issue involved a neighbor's fence, a country's borders, or a religious or political viewpoint. When it came down to it, interactions between the USes and the THEMs always played out like two five-year-olds arguing over a toy.

Fergus sighed. What could he possibly whisper into the ears of humans to bring about peace? There was so much discord among humans, and the task seemed impossible. He wrinkled his brow, feeling utterly discouraged. Still, an assignment was an assignment. So, he bit his lip and lit a candle. Sitting in silence, he softened his gaze and watched as the colors in the flame danced from blue to beige to yellow.

Suddenly, he brightened because he knew exactly what to do! One by one, he whispered into the ears of each of the USes and the THEMs. But he did not speak words; instead, he filled each person with the essence of love, for there were no words that could ever bring about peace. Only love would ever melt each person's heart.

Fergus smiled. He had solved the puzzle that had kept the USes and the THEMs divided for millennia. Love was the only truth that would always lead the USes and the THEMs to peace.

The more Fergus whispered love, the more he filled with it himself and the more people felt connected with one another. And, thanks to Fergus, the day finally came when there were no more USes and THEMs, and the only thing that existed among all humans was love. ●

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YARN SCRAPS

40-10

VELMA JACKSON

By Joanne Shwed

7:30 am

Velma Jackson takes the long elevator ride up to the 52nd-floor Manhattan office and plops into her chair. She has been running late all morning and is relieved that she has made it to work on time.

She removes her tennis shoes and puts on the high heels that she keeps under her desk.

Her boss hasn't come in yet, so she has a moment to relax.

Her mind wanders to the late 1970s. Fresh out of college, she had joined this firm, thinking that it was as good a place as any.

7:40 am

The phone rings, and Velma snaps back to the present day.

She is 56 now.

"Velma," her boss says, "please bring me the Pensky file ..."

"Will do."

"... and please join us for the meeting."

As Velma enters the conference room, she looks different than the rest of the team. Everyone notices—and not for the first time.

Her hair is spiked at the top like a mohawk and shaved on both sides. She has stretched-out earlobes with big holes in them. Her eyebrows are plucked thin and shaped with a dark pencil. Her lipstick is dark brown, which emphasizes her full lips.

She stands out.

8 am

The meeting is over, and everyone heads back to their desks. As Velma passes the breakroom, she overhears an ongoing conversation.

"Did you see Velma's latest hairdo? What does she think she is—a punk rocker?"

"Yeah, I know. She has no place at this company. We have a reputation and an image to uphold. Don't we?"

"She's too fat to dress like that. It's so unbecoming. Doesn't she have any dignity?"

8:15 am

Velma is quite upset after hearing this nasty, trivial gossip.

Back at her desk, her mind rages: "What about all my hard work? What about my dedication to this company? I thought these people were my friends."

She puts on her tennis shoes and heads for the subway, talking to no one and making no eye contact.

8:46 am

Someone in the office hears a crash.

9:03 am

Velma Jackson sits on her living room couch and stares at the television.

Her glazed eyes watch the second tower fall. ●

5-7

FLAMIN' MARY

By Barbara Sterlace

Mary lives on a world where there is no light. To accommodate their environment, the population has evolved to have flames coming out of the top of their heads so they can navigate the darkness. Unfortunately, Mary has developed a medical condition where the flames are much hotter than they should be. As a result, her eyelashes get singed and crusty, which makes her squint all the time, making it even harder for her to see. She suffers in silence, barely able to get around, but she is hopeful that they will find a cure.

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YARN SCRAPS

NANA HELEN

by Joanne Shwed

When I was a little girl—maybe 10 years old—I spent the night at my grandmother's house.

My parents dropped me off, and Nana Helen and I sat in her living room in silence for what seemed like an eternity. When I finally glanced in her direction, I saw that she had dozed off.

I looked at her gray, short hair, and her gray-tinted eyeglasses. She was frail, and her pale skin seemed translucent.

A car horn startled her awake, and she looked in my direction.

"Who's there?" she growled.

"It's me, Nana."

"What are *you* doing here?"

"I'm going to stay with you tonight."

"Well, nobody told me anything about *that*. I should have at least been consulted!"

72-1

Nana Helen became blind at an early age, soon after marrying my grandfather. After he passed away, she lived alone.

Before this day, I had few memories of her, and the ones I did have were not pleasant. She rarely talked at family get-togethers and, when she did, she barked orders at anyone in the room.

Nana stood up and expertly felt her way into the kitchen. She was the only blind person I had ever seen up close, and I was fascinated with her skills in knowing where everything was.

After I was seated at her small kitchen table, she carefully poured cereal into two bowls, added milk to each, and placed one bowl in front of me.

We sat with the light off, and the only sound I heard was our chewing.

Suddenly, she asked, "Do you know how I became blind?"

"No, Nana."

"Detached retina. No money for a doctor."

Nana let out a big sigh and turned her head to face me.

"After I lost my sight, I became bitter, sad, afraid, and mad at the world. I never used to be this way. I used to have fun. I was kind to people. My favorite thing in life was giving my love to others. I guess that's why your grandfather fell in love with me."

I had never seen this side of her.

"Why can't you be like you were before?"

She took off her dark glasses and wiped away the tears.

"Well, dear, I guess I forgot how."

"I'll teach you, Nana!"

The rest of the night was wonderful. We laughed, told jokes, sang songs, and gave our hearts to each other.

When my parents came to pick me up the next morning, they said, "Go and say goodbye to your grandmother."

I approached Nana and touched her arm. She reached in her pocket, pulled out a locket that belonged to her mother, and gave it to me.

Pulling me close to her, she whispered, "I love you, dear. Thank you."

After that day, the family noticed something different about Nana, but no one knew what it was or what had caused it.

I haven't told anyone about it until now. ●

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YARN SCRAPS

47-3

By Paula Carmosino

Casey's memories floated randomly through her consciousness much like the snowflakes falling just outside the window.

How many missed opportunities had there been? Casey wondered, almost aloud. *How many wrong decisions had been made?*

Casey's negative thoughts accumulated like snowdrifts, slowly and methodically piling up all around her. While individually almost lighter than air, collectively their weight began to add up.

And as those bitter resentments flooded Casey's mind, so too did the idea to finally do something about it.

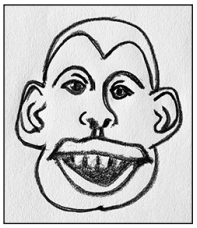
Without thinking, Casey bolted outside and headed for the shed, hardly noticing the cold air rushing past. Then Casey spotted something in the shed that brought good memories rushing back. After grabbing the sled she once used decades ago, Casey jumped on it and slid down the hill that led from the house down to the open pasture land.

"Wheeee!" Casey screamed like a little kid playing in the snow. "Wheeeeeeeee!"

80-2

By Lavinia Smith

The moon sat alone,
Feeling incomplete as the light
shown only a sliver of its beauty.
Each day it sought the warmth
that the sun provides,
And yearned the times where it
illuminated in full.
But this time was different.
Its sliver of light soon faded,
Disintegrating from the peak,
Leaving it hollow.
The moon in panic searched for the sun,
To beg its companion to fulfill its duty.
The sun was gone,
Leaving the moon in solitude as its shine
slowly faded.
The moon mourned,
As it knew that without its light,
All would be consumed in darkness.



65-6

ROWDY DOODY

By Joanne Shwed

Although his name suggested otherwise, Rowdy had a quieter life than his brother Howdy, for which he was eternally grateful.

28-1

JAMISON KAMPLE

By Thomas A. Ekkens

Each day for old Jamison Kample
Was filled with purpose, for example,
He sat in the corner for years,
Sipping homemade whiskey and beers
While knocking froth off another sample.

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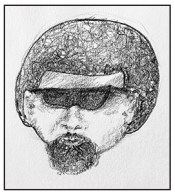
YARN SCRAPS

Gruff
4-5

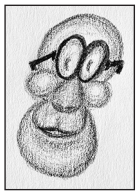
Turnip Top
5-7

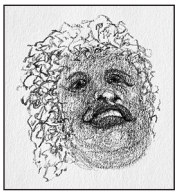
Top Face
Bottom Face
7-1


Groove E
10-9

Jacked Ass
11-1

Ortho Dox
35-1


Scopes
71-3


Glow
75-3

DRAWN UP

By Lorin R. Smith

"Move over. Move over."

"Stop pushing!"

"I was here first."

"No, I was here first."

"It's going to be my turn. I should be up front."

"You were up front last time."

"I'm up front every time, sweetheart."

"Glub glib gloop. The pelican is you."

"Hush up with your nonsense."

"Ouch! You elbowed me!"

"I don't even have elbows."

"He might not have elbows, but he does have horns."

"They're not horns. They're ears."

"Ears only a mother could love."

Laughter ensued.

The rustle and tussle continued as all tried to find the best place to be seen. Some believed that it was best to be in front. How can you be chosen if you're not up front? Some felt that you should be in the center. All eyes pointed to the middle after all, right? And others held that it was easier to be seen if you stayed on the outskirts where the crowd wasn't so thick. No one had ever really studied this phenomenon, but all had their own process they swore by and believed in that would get them Drawn Up from the crowd by The Seer.

"*Grrrrrrrrr. Ruff ruff!*" barked Gruff when his tail was stepped on.

"Don't snap at me, Gruff! I didn't step on you. It was Top Face."

"You always blame me," Top Face declared. "It's Bottom Face that you should be biting. He's the one with clumsy feet."

"You both have clumsy feet," lilted Turnip Top. "Just say sorry to Gruff and be done with it."

"Soooorry."

"*Woof.*"

"Shush, everyone! The Seer's coming," Groove E exclaimed.

The crowd quieted for a few moments, but The Seer didn't arrive.

"Why do we listen to him?" Glow asked. "He's blind as a bat."

Snorts and guffaws peppered through the assembly.

"It ain't cool to make jokes about a blind man," Groove E defended.

"Why's that, Sweetheart? Because you can't see the punchline coming."

Laughter erupted throughout the attendees.

Scopes interrupted with his all-too-common gibberish: "If you can't put frosting up the nose, then why do you chalk a birdie from the frying pan?"

The grumbling crowd, already tired of his nonsense, jostled and nudged until Scopes was pushed to the outside of the circle.

"Bloop blip bloom," he chuckled to himself, nonplussed by his ostracism.

"HEEHAW, HEEHAW?" brayed Jacked Ass.

Turnip Top stroked her chin in thought. "I can't recall, Jacked. Does anyone remember who was Drawn Up last?"

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YARN SCRAPS

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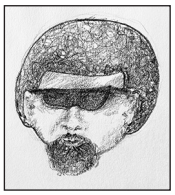
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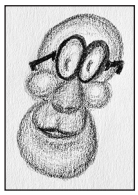
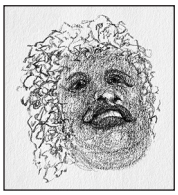

Scopes
71-3


Glow
75-3

DRAWN UP *continued*

Someone from the crowd hollered, "Shovel Nose."

Another shouted, "Leaf Chin."

And still another yelled, "Bob!"

Ortho Dox strode to the center of the crowd. "No, no, no, you shag-headed ninnies," unfurling a scroll that rolled out before him. "By my records, which you all know I keep facetiously ..."

"Fastidiously!" the crowd corrected.

"Yes, that's what I said—fastidiously. My records indicate that the last of us who was Drawn Up was ... well, err ..., let me see. Ahh! It was Ortho." Ortho began rolling up the scroll as if the issue were settled.

The crowd grumbled impatiently.

Groove E spoke up first. "Ortho can't even remember who he is! I can't see why we listen to this senile jive turkey."

"You couldn't see a jive turkey if it was cooked for Thanksgiving dinner and served to you on a silver platter," Glow teased.

Laughter trickled among the nearby crowd.

"Announce the winner! Pinch ponch punch!" Scopes shouted to no one in particular, and no one in particular paid him any attention.

Jacked Ass's long ears perked up. "Heeeeeeehaw!"

"Jacked is right, everyone. The Seer approaches!" Turnip Top excitedly confirmed.

The regal and giant visage of The Seer stepped into the presence of the assemblage and took his seat on the less-than-regal-yet-comfortable throne. A hush rippled over the crowd as every wide-eyed creature took in the majestic moment. It was just a matter of time before the choosing—before one of them was Drawn Up.

The Seer looked over the masses, seeking, searching. It seemed as if he was looking off to the right, and the crowd began shifting and shoving to be on the right side. Then his eyes shifted to the back of the group, and more movement happened in the direction of the back as the attendees sought to be seen.

An ironic anxiety settled among the crowd as everyone seemed to think The Seer's eyes settled on them, yet everyone silently worried that he was looking right past them ... again.

"Oh, my sweet and spicy chitlins! He's looking straight at me." Glow stood as straight and proud as she could to make sure that The Seer got her good side.

Top Face and Bottom Face laughed in harmony. "She must be daft," Top Face mocked. "The Seer's looking right at me."

"You?" Bottom Face exclaimed. "Why would he look at the likes of you? It's clearly me he's looking at." The two continued to grumble and grunt at each other.

Gruff let out a meek whimper.

Turnip Top's politeness and kindness belied her deep desire that she would be Drawn Up. "It may just be your turn after all, Gruff."

The Seer chuckled with magic in his eyes that was communicated in his voice. The crowd knew this meant that his selection was almost complete. The choice had been set, and it was only a matter

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YARN SCRAPS

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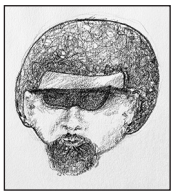
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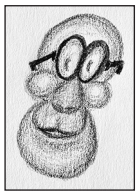
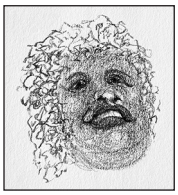

Scopes
71-3


Glow
75-3

DRAWN UP *continued*

of seconds before they knew who it was. Who would be the one to go and never return to the carpet?

A shimmer, a tingling hum lightly blew over the ply of all in attendance. Shivers swept over hopeful faces. Those beautiful, those furry, those fiery, those grotesque, those smashed and wonderful faces—those who have lived their abbreviated lives hoping only to be seen.

The rush was too much for them to keep their eyes open. Many had tried. Some had gone blind in the attempt.

The rushing sound reached a crescendo followed by a "POP"!

A booming voice echoed across the vast space from The Seer. "Look there."

The air shook as he pointed to his tablet. He smiled wide and chuckled at the Carpet Creature drawn up before him.

All looked around to see who was missing and were disappointed to know that it wasn't them. Ortho Dox looked around expectantly, waiting to write their name in his scroll.

"Heehaw, heehaw, heehaw!"

"Jacked Ass is right! That idiot is gone. What's-his-name is gone." Glow seemed to be more amazed than disappointed.

Ortho Dox licked his finger for no apparent reason as he looked through his scroll. "Ortho. His name is Ortho," he repeated self-assuredly as the group groaned.

"No, you matted, needle-punched fool. Scopes! His name was Scopes." Groove E looked around at the astonished group. "Why did The Seer pick him?"

"*Grrrrr, woof ruff,*" Gruff explained. "*Bark, bark, grrrrruff. Yip yip yip, grrrrrrrr.*"

Turnip Top sighed but smiled in agreement. "I guess you're right, Gruff. Flocked, plushed, stretched—it doesn't really matter. We're all pile. And it shouldn't really matter if we're Drawn Up or not. All that matters is how we ..." Her tender voice was cut short by an aggressive commotion.

"HE'S LOOKING AGAIN! HE'S LOOKING AGAIN!" many from the crowd shouted as they shoved and pushed Turnip Top out of the way to get in a better location.

Turnip Top was dismayed. She realized that she had completely forgotten what she was saying but stood her ground and fought for position.

The rustle and tussle continued as all tried to find the best place to be seen. Some believed that it was best to be in front. How can you be chosen if you're not up front? Some felt that you should be in the center. All eyes pointed to the middle after all, right? And others held that it was easier to be seen if you stayed on the outskirts where the crowd wasn't so thick. No one had ever really studied this phenomenon, but all had their own process they swore by and believed in that would get them Drawn Up from the crowd by The Seer. ●

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YARN SCRAPS

PROFESSOR ALESSANDRO

by Joanne Shwed

Professor Alessandro peeked out of the burgundy velvet curtain. It was almost time to start the biggest and most terrifying magic show he had ever done.

"This crowd is larger than usual," he whispered nervously to no one.

He dabbed his sweaty forehead and closed the curtain behind him.

The professor looked at a heart-shaped mirror on the wall and saw his reflection. Although he was almost 80 years old, his eyes held the twinkle of someone who believed in magic.

"I've still got it!"

In the mirror, he noticed his waxed moustache, curled upward at the ends, which he thought gave him an air of nobility.

60-5

His oily hair was dyed black, and his goatee was perfectly groomed—except for a few gray hairs that stuck out like errant wires.

Alessandro heard the thunder rumble close by. Storm clouds hovered overhead, giving him an added sense of fear.

He had never done a magic show in the rain.

He had also never done a magic show without his favorite partner: the purple glove. He had lost it somewhere between here and the last town he visited.

For almost 60 years, the professor's purple glove had travelled with him from town to town, in show after show, and it was always the star attraction.

Alessandro panicked as he heard the thunder come closer. He felt a few raindrops on his face as he peeked out of the curtain again.

"What magic can I share with this large crowd?"

Then he remembered a quote that he had just read but couldn't remember who had said it:

"Music is probably the one real magic I have encountered in my life. It moves. It heals. There's not some trick involved with it. It's pure, and it's real. It communicates and does all these incredible things."

"Aha! That's it!"

The professor closed the curtain and rummaged through his bag.

He found what he was looking for: the silver flute that his grandfather had given him when he was a boy.

His grandfather had also taught him magic, and Alessandro remembered his words:

"If you believe, son, they will too."

He pictured his grandfather's eyes. They were always filled with happiness, love, music, and magic—a beautiful sight for a child to behold.

As the curtain opened, storm clouds moved away.

Professor Alessandro emerged, and the applause was thunderous.

Although he hadn't played the silver flute in many years, it felt good in his hands.

He closed his eyes, put the flute to his lips, and played the song that his grandfather had taught him so long ago.

It was magic. ●

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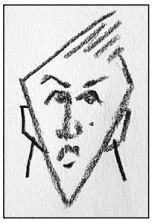
YARN SCRAPS

1-6

TEDDY

By Janice Wallace

Teddy was a fixture on our street. Every day on my way to the streetcar, there was Teddy. He always had a friendly greeting. "How are ya? Have a great day." Windy or still, foggy or bright, there was Teddy. Where he went after dark was a mystery. When it was cold and rainy, I wondered was he warm? Was he safe? But in the way of big and busy cities, I didn't ask. Each workday we exchanged greetings and I dropped an occasional five in his bowl. One day Teddy wasn't in his usual spot. The next day no Teddy. Days passed. Teddy was gone.



12-7

By Barbara Sterlace

This guy is part of a symphony orchestra. He is not a musician, but he is one of the instruments. Every day his musician turns him upside down and bangs the inside of his head with a metal stick, back and forth repeatedly to different rhythms, depending on what the other instruments are doing. He always has a headache.

65-4

68-6

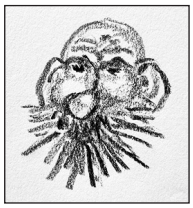
HEDDY & HILDA

By Paula Carmosino

Heddy was a former model who worked at the makeup counter of a big department store to get out of the house. Hilda was a hatcheck girl who always had her hair in curlers to try to put some wave in her extremely thin, straight hair.

The women happened to meet at the movies as they were both avid film buffs. They would head to the theater as a way to escape their lonely lives. Some of their favorite new releases were *Mildred Pierce*, *Citizen Kane* and, of course, *Casablanca*.

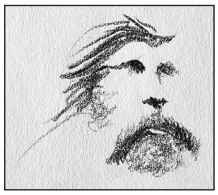
One day, after a movie let out, they noticed an exit door in the theater that they didn't remember seeing before. In a hurry to beat the crowds, they opened the door and went through it, only to get trapped some 70-plus years in the future in the carpet at Joanne & Tom's house.



61-8

By Janice Wallace

Go trim your beard and mustache! I don't want people to think no one loves you.



10-13

JASON

By Thomas A. Ekkens

A warm high sea spray
Carries whiffs of gathered storms
Sailor takes warning

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YARN SCRAPS

BARNEY MCGHEE

By Joanne Shwed

After a long, fitful night, Barney McGhee got out of bed without making it. His white, unkempt hair stuck out on the sides, and his scraggly beard framed his weathered face.

He threw on some old, stale clothes, walked down the hill, and slipped into the Better Days Tavern. He was relieved that the bar was almost empty on this melancholy morning.

His favorite barstool beckoned, and he slid into it like an aging home-plate runner.

"The usual," he sighed.

The barkeep gave him a once-over and asked, "How's it goin', Barney?"

"Well, Mary," he whispered, "life feels real hard right now."

"What's troublin' you, my friend?"

"Last night, my ex-wife called to say that our daughter died."

1-6

Mary reached across the counter, touched Barney's shoulder, and gave him a little squeeze. What could she say?

She heard the front door open and turned to greet the newcomer.

"Have a seat, sir."

The newcomer ordered a drink and looked at Barney with a big grin.

"How are you this fine morning, chum?"

"I've had better days."

"Oh! I'm so sorry to hear that."

Although Barney wasn't in the mood to talk, he decided to confide in this stranger.

"Maybe it's true that some people are just made the way they are made, and there is nothing anyone can say or do to change them. I threw my life away. I had so much. No one could have loved his family more. I guess I never knew how to show it, even though I treasured each and every sunrise, sunset, star, and moon I ever saw."

The newcomer's smile was gone now.

"Another round?" Mary asked him.

"No, thanks," the newcomer replied as he headed for the door.

Barney thought about the day ahead. What would he do?

He had no passion.

He had no close friends.

He didn't know how to be the person he had always wanted to be.

He wished that he had learned how to have a happy life.

He had so much love to give, but now he felt empty, discouraged, and alone.

"Another round, Mary."

Barney sipped and sighed.

"Sorry to hear about your daughter," Mary said gently. "So ... um ... what do you have planned for today?"

He gave her an old-man shrug and walked outside.

As Barney watched the store owners sweep their sidewalks, preparing for a new day, he looked at the sign above the door: Better Days Tavern.

He hoped that it was true. ●

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