



# LIBRARY BONNET



8



"Can you smell how scared I am?"



Cover squirrel photo by Anthony See

# Library Bonnet #8

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Write:

**SQUEEZE ME!**  
**GRUNT! GRUNT!**

**CHECK SOFT DRINK** cans to make sure  
no bees or wasps have flown inside.  
Many people get stung on the lips or  
tongue.



# Your **Lib** hosts

I'm Julie and I've worked at libraries for a long time. I'm married to a cool dude named Doug. No kids. Cats! I like finding a little hard bit of hair product on my scalp I can scrape away with my nails. I wish I could go whole-hog vegetarian, but next thing I know, I've eaten a carnitas taco. And a real vegetarian wouldn't say things like whole-hog. I hate summer with a white hot passion. I always want my money back at the end of summer for failure to assimilate to summer clothes and outings. I just slink around in dark clothes, waiting for October. I love it when people tell stories and slip into accents and mimicry. I love reading a book with bare feet and a glass of iced tea at the ready. My feet don't read the book, that was awkward. I apologize.



Julie  


You could show  
 an IMAX film  
 on my forehead.



Tommy  


I live in Orange, California, with my wonderful mate of 16 years, Anthony. I am a writer, and an artist. I write and illustrate comics for Slave Labor Graphics, Inc. I have also done freelance writing and artwork. During the day, I work full time in a junior high school library, which is not quite as horrible as you might think, and sometimes even rewarding. Anthony and I have a sassy, spunky little Chihuahua mutt named Mr. Scoots. I occasionally suffer from allergies, and anxiety. They are my primary afflictions. (Best friend: see above.)

I don't  
 know why I'm  
 supposed to  
**CARE** about  
 any of this.



# Tommy's LIBRARY

WORK LOG

4/13/05

7:10

Arrive late, turn some lights on, check my personal email.

7:15

Make coffee, put Daisy Chainsaw on CD player in my office, wonder if any of the kids will think I'm cool if they hear it.

7:30

All books in book drop checked in, look around for anything else to do.

8:00

Call boyfriend on cell phone.

9:00

Boyfriend calls me on cell phone. I complain about having nothing to do, justifying it by claiming to have worked REALLY hard on orders and stuff the last few days. I only have nothing to do now because I worked so freakin' hard I FINISHED everything. This is possibly partially true, but more likely a bold exaggeration. Even I don't know the truth.

9:05

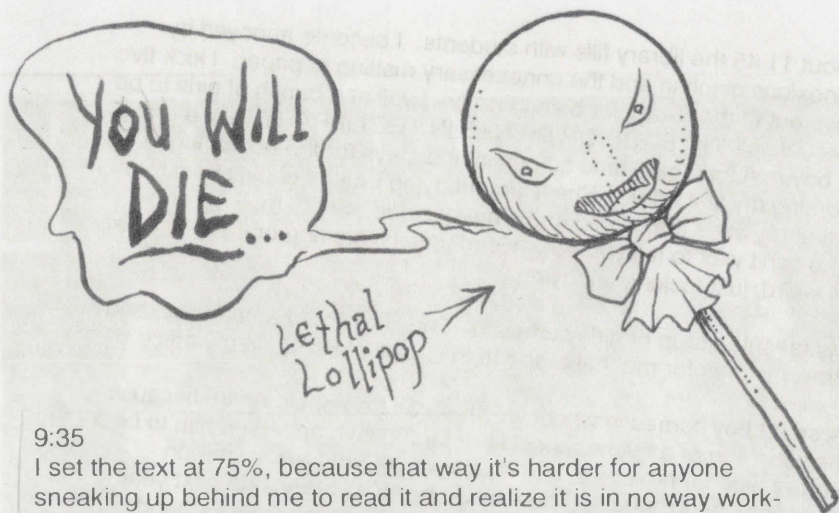
I realize I have 6 ½ hours left to go.

9:30

In a clever attempt to look busy, I begin slowly going through all the old stuff in my "Documents" folder on the computer in my office, reading old letters, old half-finished story drafts, you know—stuff from other days when I obviously had nothing to do. The best thing I find is something I saved from a district email—a "warning" about a new kind of drug the kiddies are passing around. The memo is called "Lethal Lollipops," and shows pictures of these different colorful lollipops that are apparently dipped in drugs or something. I wonder idly if the police go easier on an adult who is buying drugs FROM a kid, than they would on an adult who is selling drugs TO a kid. I make my leisure reading "productive" by deleting things I don't need after I've read them. I'm clearing space on the hard drive! It's serious computer work, folks!







9:35

I set the text at 75%, because that way it's harder for anyone sneaking up behind me to read it and realize it is in no way work-related. Tiny text looks official, especially if I furrow my brow, and look pensive and busy as I'm "evaluating" it.

10:10

Break time! A coworker gives me a special treat: Take two Ritz Crackers and smear peanut butter between them. Melt chocolate, dip Ritz Cracker sandwich in chocolate, thoroughly coating it. Lay on sheet to harden. It's delicious!

10:45

Back to the 'brary. Some instructors are using the library for testing, so there are all these kids in here working silently. It's a forest of tense silence. I'm screaming inside.

10:45 – 11:30

I find an honest-to-god work-related project to work on. I industriously check our database for titles on my "wish list" of books. Anything we don't already have, I add to the order we're working on. I feel absolutely indispensable.

11:30 – 12:00

7<sup>th</sup> grade lunchtime. I am on duty. First 15 minutes are quiet. I wonder why I haven't put away the small Christmas tree that sits by the window in the office. It's already April. I wonder why I haven't put up a new bulletin board display since Read Across America Week. Right now, it's just a broad blank expanse of solid green, with one stray die-cut red sun shape at the very top. I stare for a while at the long posters taped to the far wall that read "Books Open the Doors to Discovery." The word "Discovery" has fallen, and droops down over the top book shelves. It's been like that for months. Why don't I fix that?!



About 11:45 the library fills with students. I become annoyed by obnoxious giggling and the unnecessary rustling of paper. I kick five boys out of the library for being unruly. I yell at a bunch of girls to be quiet. I yell "NO FOOD OR DRINKS IN THE LIBRARY!!!" at a group of boys. A loud girl I hate comes in and stays for the rest of lunch, working my last nerve. She is so annoying I wish I could shoot rays out of my eyes that would make her explode. She's the kind of girl who can't wait to tell you how "weird" she is, proving that she's not at all weird, just fucking annoying.

My favorite group of girls comes in. They are smart and artistic, and draw pictures for me that I tape to the "Wall of Fame" in my office.

A smart boy comes in whom we shall call Son of Librarian, because he's the son of a fellow school librarian. I have approved him to be a library aide for next year. He is over-eager, and asks a million questions about what it will be LIKE, being a library aide next year. Some popular boys are searching for books about old rock bands on the search computer. Son of Librarian, trying to be cool, overhears part of their conversation, and tries to help by saying loudly, "Led Zeppelin? Yes, well, that would be *Zeppelin COMMA Led*." I cringe, and wonder if I have made a big mistake by agreeing to have him as an aide.

12:15 - 12:45

Finally MY lunchtime. Maple yogurt, apple, grapes, and some corn cakes (like rice cakes, only corn). One of my teacher friends, the ASB advisor, comes into my office and rants about how the principal cancelled his field trip. I ask why, and he replies, "Because she's a fuckin' bitch. Fuckin' BITCH. She's a fuckin' whore. Bitch. Slut." I agree whole-heartedly.



1:00

Lunch is over. I make another pot of coffee (Gevalia), and put Nina Hagen's "Nunsexmonkrock" album on, sort of loud, in my office. The library's empty, so who's gonna complain?

1:10

Begin printing out overdue list. It's miles long, and will take some time.





1:15

2 girls come in, asking for books about a "math person." I ask who. One girl says, "I dunno. I think the teacher, she say some guy, I think his name is Einstein?" I help them find books about Einstein, then when I'm about to check the books out to them, we discover that both girls have really overdue books at home, and multiple fines, so they can't check any books out. One girl says, "So why am I even here?!" I say, "Good question! Good-bye!"

1:30

I notice that someone has failed to remove the helium tank from the library workroom since the last "event." I look at it longingly, but know how many teachers' mouths have been on it. I paw through filing cabinet, looking for party balloons to use for helium-sucking purposes, but can't find any. I realize it would be feeble, anyway, since I'm by myself, and saying something in helium voice for my own solitary benefit is pretty sad. While overdue list continues to print, I do my taxes.

1:50

Coworker comes in to fill party balloons with helium for baby shower at 3:00. Can you even believe the fortuitousness?! I'm not even making it up. I eagerly join in, suck some helium, and say something lame in helium voice. Feeble.

3:00

I avoid the baby shower like the plague.

3:15

Have gathered up all my stuff, ready to bolt at 3:30.



It's 3 a.m.

I want to restructure my life. Can I quit it all,  
start over and work with..flowers?  
Or, books? I already work with books.  
How pathetic.

I should have dry-cleaned that black jacket.  
Fuckin guacamole

Sometimes I'm tough and have cool,  
tough-chick responses and sometimes  
I break like a little girl. Can I even the two up?

Another day of no exercise. I've got to  
get disciplined. I'm so inconsistent.

I hope no one hurt any animals today.

I've GOT to get a good cupcake.  
White cake, thick frosting. Toothsome cake.

Should I cut my hair? Would shorter look matronly?  
Or does shorter look modern and edgy?  
Do I look a lot older all of a sudden?

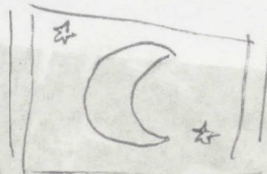
**Must work on a will.** If we died, who  
would get any of our stuff? That'd be nice,  
leaving a big mess for other people to sort out.  
What about the kitties? And my closet?  
First people would be sad, but then they'd  
have to sort out my closet, and the snarky  
comments would begin. Whew, Julie sure was a slob...

Just dreamed about my old house. Why do I  
dream about that so often? Remember that  
hydrangea bush? So pretty, that pink color, like pink

We could both quit, and move to the desert  
and eek out a living. Quiet desert evenings,  
cacti in the front yard

**I bet someone hurt an animal today. Shit.**

My parents are getting older. One day one of them will fall  
and break something or I'll call and they'll be all confused  
and little by little, they'll change into  
unrecognizeable, feeble people.  
They're still fine right now. call them  
tomorrow. I wish I could call them right now.  
I can never just say, I Love You.  
Love ya, Mom! What is my problem?



by  
Julie

# LOPEZ



Lopez is angry today, bloodshot and swollen. Lopez is my left eye. We call it that in honor of Lisa "Left Eye" Lopez, from TLC, who used to wear a condom as an eye patch over her left eye. I don't wear a condom over my eye, but I may someday have to wear a pirate-y eye patch. Even when I was still in elementary school, I would ask my optometrist, "Are you SURE there's nothing weird about my left eye? It feels wrong."

When I started wearing contacts, it was ALWAYS the left contact that would pop out, or get horribly irritated. I swear it feels like Lopez is misshapen, somehow, which would explain why my contact never quite sits right on that eye. But my eye exams never show that, and believe me I have asked. If I get a severe case of allergies, it's always Lopez who gets the reddest and the itchiest.

Sometimes Lopez even gets nasty styes, and I have to smear that gross styne medication all over him. It. Whatever. It's not fun, or sexy.

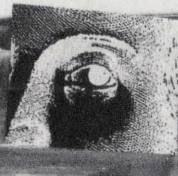
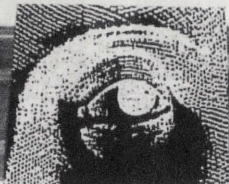
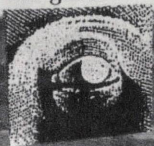
I'll go for months sometimes without any complaints from Lopez, but then one day I wake up and he's just all fucked up. Like he went to a raucous party the night before without me.

I hate it when people at work feel the need to COMMENT on Lopez's misbehavior, as if I don't already know. I'll come in to work, and the health clerk will do a double-take, and say, "Wow, is something wrong with your left eye?! It's all red and irritated!" I feel like snapping, "No, REALLY? I hadn't noticed."

There's a Liz Phair song called "Big Tall Man," and I love that song because there's a line in it where she sings, "My left eye hurts..." and I feel like she's singing that just for me. For me and Lopez.

I had a realization today that prompted me to write about Lopez for Library Bonnet. I had brought my artwork with me to work, so I could get some inking done on my comic book, "Autumn," during my breaks, and lunch. I've been having trouble lately for some reason getting Autumn's features right. I keep fucking up in this one particular way, and having to use white out to fix it, and looking at it in the mirror to get her face more even. I hadn't really thought about it in words, yet, until today. It suddenly dawned on me at lunch today that the problem I've been having is with one of her eyes. I keep making it slightly off-kilter from the other one. And which eye is it? That's right. Her left eye. Autumn's very own Lopez.

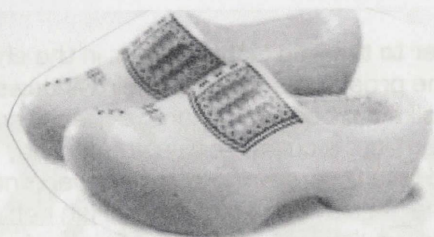
It freaked me out. I think Lopez is growing stronger, and developing the ability to affect my drawing. He's cursing me. Now I'm afraid of what his next move might be.





## Holland Trip by Julie

For the first few days in Holland my cold worsened and my ears plugged up. On the airplane, I watched mouths move on the screen above me but I could only detect a faint whine through the standard-issue headphones. It was nice, actually...I couldn't hear the scary airplane noises of big machinery moving and things shifting and the seatbelt sign pinging off and on. I was in a fuzzed-out state, cottony with cold medication. But after we landed in Amsterdam I wanted my ears. The Dutch accents, the bicycles whizzing by, the questions from waiters that I couldn't quite hear, even though they spoke flawless English; everything was muffled. At the Swissotel it took us a while to figure out that you had to leave the room key card in a special slot to keep the lights on. We felt like stupid Americans ("well shoot, you gotta leave the card in the thingy!"). I had cheese the first chance I got, goat cheese melted on bread and sprinkled with pine nuts and honey. I couldn't taste it, but the texture was Dutch and different. There was graffiti everywhere, scrawled boldly on the walls of marble churches and stippling the wooden scaffolding that held up old buildings. A tattooed city. The canals drifted past tall, skinny houses pressed closely together, each with a hook just below its pitched roof, for hoisting goods into the windows. I imagined the cramped, worn stairways in each house, creaking. It'd be hard to sneak in after curfew in Amsterdam. At the Rijksmuseum I saw dark, shadowy Rembrandt paintings and two beautiful old dollhouses, decorated like Dutch homes from the 1700s, with teeny blue and white Delftware, copper pans and tufted chairs. I longed to get in there with my hands and move things, to feel if the tiny bed was as cushiony as it looked, but both houses rested behind a barrier. Outside in the cold air my chest developed a deep, tubercular cough and I'd have to stop every now and then and honk and hack, while my husband looked on, alarmed. I tripped over a broken cobblestone and went down, bloodying my knee under my jeans. We found a café where rich hot chocolate restored me, and more goat cheese arrived, in a curl of crispy puff pastry. We had ventured into the museum district and two frighteningly stylish locals sat next to us and chatted in Dutch. She was black and wearing a complicated, nubby sweater dress and boots and a chunky stone necklace, he was older and silver-haired and wore green-framed glasses and a dark red leather jacket. I tried not to pull out my "Amsterdam: Day By Day!" book in front of them.



Pot was available in "Coffee Shops" full of guys with dreads piled into their tams. I never partook. I was already stuffed to the gills with antibiotics and prescription cold meds. I pursued my own vice: aude kasse. Old cheese: thick, dark yellow Dutch cheese. The chocolate was all good, too. Unapologetically full-fat chocolate, plump and melting on my tongue. The locals all rode bikes or walked, all long limbed and blond and strong. I reflected on some of my lesser lunch breaks back home: driving my car to Del Taco and eating a burrito in the parking lot. I could picture a Dutch person crinkling their nose at the thought. They zoomed down the street, fresh flowers and produce in baskets on their bicycles, jangling their bells at us to get out of their way.



It's a Moment  
To Remember





We wandered over to the Red Light District, in the shadows of the oldest church. The prostitutes stood in their windows, some with little scenarios (polka dot bed, pink phone, a creepy sort of 50s era girliness), some with just a curtain and a stool. They stood there in their bikinis and fake tans, staring coolly at everyone gawking at them. I caught one girl's eye and smiled, Hi! Heh heh...I'm out here and you're in there...you're a whore! The groups of young English dorky guys jostled each other nervously as they looked in the windows. We passed through the district quickly, because a couple of men tried to sell us crack. That was the only place that felt potentially dangerous to me, the sex and the drugs and the groups of men, drunker as the sky got darker. Otherwise Amsterdam seemed like a fine, old city, full of serious art and purposeful people. Little things: my husband had herring for breakfast every morning. I looked away. I liked how when you order sparkling water it always came with a lemon wedge and a little plastic masher to get all the juice out. Tulips blooming like crazy from window boxes. Watching BBC channels and enjoying their world-view news and snarky British humor. On day five I got a weird rash from taking a new antibiotic; an eruption of angry red bumps all over my left hand. After ten days, the trip was over and we made our way to the Amsterdam airport. I immediately heard American accents as we waited to get on the plane home, their patented blend of perky, loud and a subtle one-upmanship. *Did you take a canal boat ride? Did you get to Gouda and Delft?* At last, my ears were hearing everything. I silently watched it all, and stared at my hand rash.



# DREGS

by  
Tommy

I had nothing clean to wear this morning, so I rooted through the dank far reaches of my closet like a pig after truffles, and found a back-up pair of jeans that were dirty and wrinkled, but not smelly, so I put them on. They have 2 holes in the crotch, so I just have to be careful how I sit. They're not HUGE holes, but they're enough to be concerned about. Then I pulled out a t-shirt that's terribly wrinkled and had a small stain on the front, so I quickly splashed water on it and rubbed, and got the stain out. By the time I got to work, it had dried, and the stain is gone. So I'm wrinkled from head to foot, and have to sit like a lady to avoid exposing my junk. I AM wearing underwear, but you know, don't wanna show THAT, either.

Once I got to work, I realized I'd forgotten to brush my teeth, so in a blind panic I dug through my file cabinet for my emergency grooming stuff, and found the toothbrush, but discovered the old toothpaste tube was already cut in half because I'd been down to the wire, and trying to get the last dregs out LAST time I did this. So I had to slit one of the halves open, slaying it like a fish or something, and scraped enough old rubbery toothpaste off the inside lining to brush my teeth. I spit it out into my coffee cup, and hid that behind my desk. What a lovely morning!





# GNASHKINS

Library Bonnet eavesdrops on Tommy and Julie:

Julie: Do you remember those weird little dolls, something about chewing...crunching...what the hell were those...

Tommy: Chewing? Dolls that chewed?

Julie: Grinding...

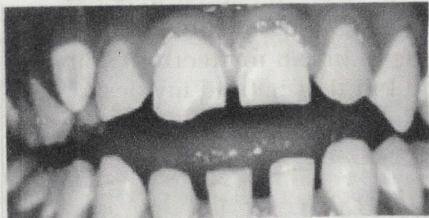
Tommy: Gnashing! The Gnashkins!

Julie: You have such a great memory! Yeah, the Gnashkins. Did you have any? Do you collect those, too?

Tommy: I WISH. I don't know what happened to mine! I totally wish I had some. I wonder if they're on eBay. You never see them at the conventions or anything.

Julie: I'm trying to remember what they looked like. Wee little dolls, right? (sings) "Fits in the palm of your hand.." God, that song was even weird.

Tommy: "...gnashing their teeth...*the Gnashkins!*" Yeah, that song didn't really have staying power. The dolls started out small, then after the first year they got a little bigger. They had those big heads and big teeth.



For children 3 years  
and up





Julie: All the better for gnashing. The girl ones were so funny looking, with the long eyelashes, lush purple hair, and then those big, awkward mouths. Were there any animals?

Tommy: I think there was a petting zoo...a little gnashy lamb, and bunnies, and goats...shit. Why don't we have these???

Julie: And wasn't there some failed spin-off, for older kids? For some reason Carrot Keeper is ringing a bell.

Tommy: Oh yeah. It was a Gnashkin that you'd bring to the dinner table with you, and if you didn't like say, your carrots, you could stash them in the Gnashkin's mouth. All secret-like.

Julie: Jesus. Did you have one of those?

Tommy: I think I did...I DO remember making a Gnashkin throw up...you snapped its mouth open and shut with a lever in the back, so it was perfect for faux vomiting.

If anyone has a Gnashkin, or knows where to find them, please let us know!



## Nancy Drew

by Julie

I read my sister's old Nancy Drew books throughout my early adolescence and loved them. I'm trying to figure out why, because the reader was never really let into Nancy's head or knew her vulnerabilities. That's probably because more than one person wrote under the name "Carolyn Keene" so Nancy wasn't really fleshed out, she was merely a franchise, an engine to keep a profitable series alive. Didn't matter to me. In chapter one in *The Clue in the Crumbling Wall*, Nancy races home in the rain, and is greeted by her beloved housekeeper, Hannah Gruen. Nancy soon discovers someone stole the rare rosebushes she had planted the day before. Nancy also finds a pearl in an oyster that a door-to-door oyster monger sells to Hannah. She takes the pearl to a local jeweler for a quote and then some man steals her purse. And this is all chapter one! I loved all of these weird elements: a housekeeper, an oyster monger, Nancy going to the jeweler's all by herself, getting mugged. Nancy was a good girl with a wealthy lawyer daddy, but her world was still inhabited with shifty adults, liars and thieves. Nancy's world wasn't remotely like mine. She wasn't scurrying around a weedy tennis court during P.E. dodgeball, being told she'd get her ass kicked by tough Mexican girls, or at Mrs. Bruce's after school, nervously awaiting her turn at the piano recital. She was tooling around in her coupe with gleaming, titian hair, with chums she was keen on, with no fears about going anywhere by herself, and in *Crumbling Wall*, snooping around a decaying old mansion, discovering a clandestine whelk-ink business run by bad guys, and rescuing a crippled old lady who was trapped in a tower. That's why I loved her. None of this stuff was in my neighborhood.



## *Satans Got Me [sic]*

When I was riding Jasper  
the saddle slipped, I fell  
I hit my head and must have died  
Now a big hole's opening up  
a crack in the ground I never saw before  
But somehow I know it's for me

I looked at my toe just long enough  
to see a shiny claw, nearly green, clamped on me  
Not sure if it's Satan or a helper demon  
But it's dragging me past everything I know  
and my dress isn't tearing and my stockings are still clean

There's Sister at her crocheting  
and Mama at her canning  
I round the corner and see Velvet – *Oh Velvet!* –  
Licking her paws like always  
And that hurts the most, not being seen  
and having such a fearsome-big thing happening  
and no one knows or will ever know  
Until they're gone and dragged into the ground like me  
Because there must not be a heaven

Or maybe I'm a sinner  
Bigger than I realized  
and the ground is all I get  
I tried so hard  
to be a fine person  
But here comes the hell-crack  
yawning wide and red  
and somehow the flap of the clothesline sounds like summer

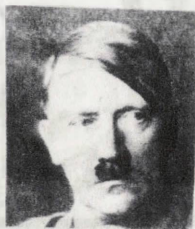
by Julie



A.



B.



C.



D.



ANSWER: The girl in box "C" is going commando.

A.



B.



C.



D.



ANSWER: The man in box "D" is screaming loudest.

HEY, KIDS! IT'S THE  
ONE OF THESE  
THINGS IS NOT  
LIKE THE OTHERS  
GAME!!!

Great for restless  
tykes on RAINY DAYS!  
(EXAMPLE)



A.



B.



C.



D.

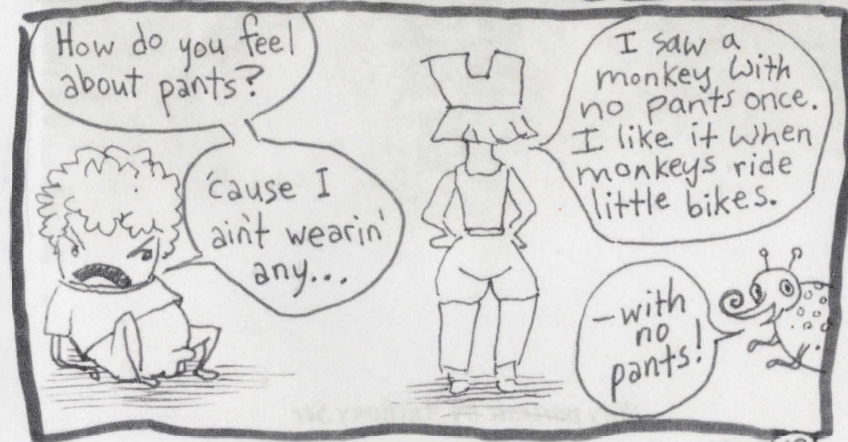


Can't you figure it out, you  
stupid idiot?! Boxes "A", "C", and  
"D" are baby PUPPIES, while  
box "B" is clearly a baby  
KITTEN. Now **SHUT UP** and  
do the rest By YOURSELF.



# SNIP IT.

by Timmy  
& Judy



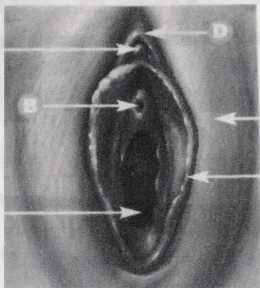
A.



B.



C.



D.

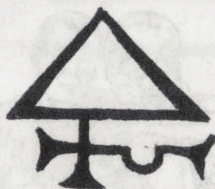


ANSWER: Hello Kitty in box "D," because she's clean.

A.



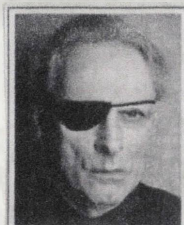
B.



C.



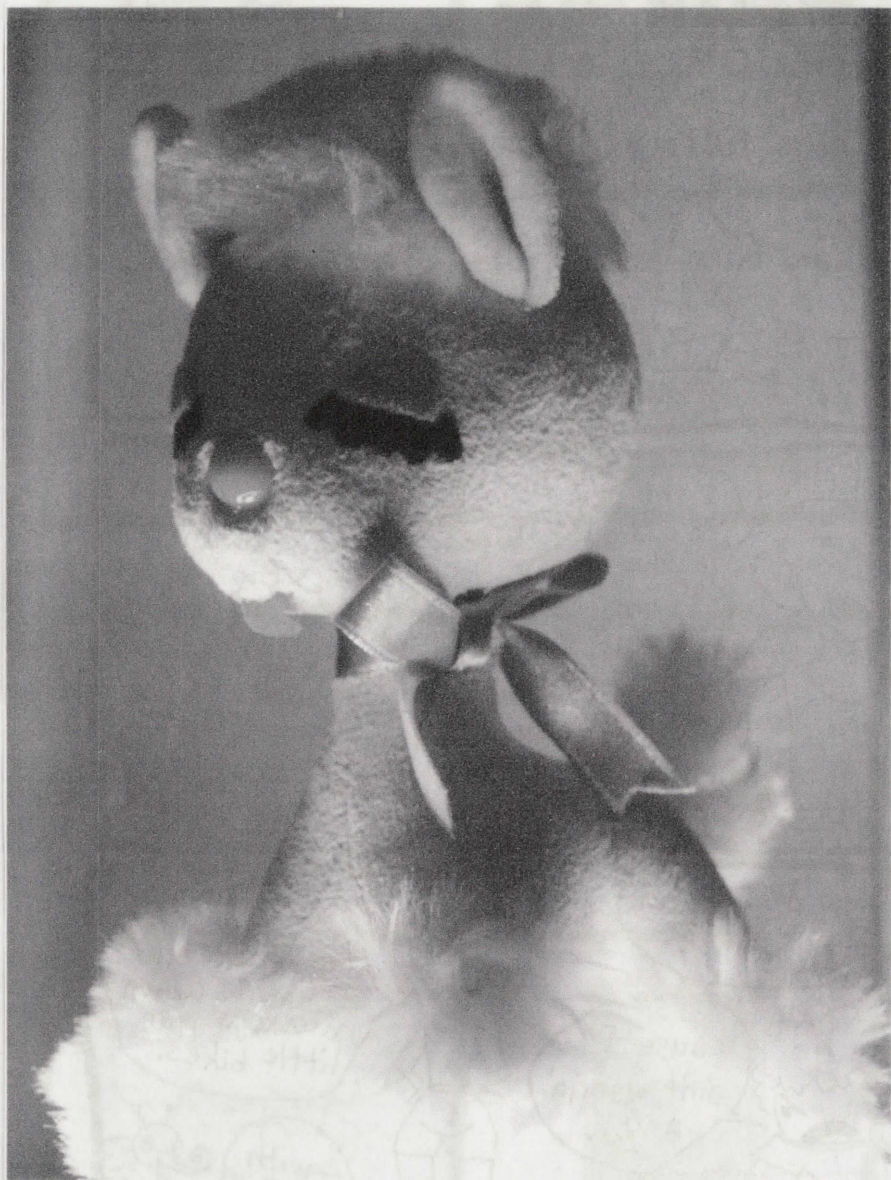
D.



ANSWER: If you can't figure this one out, you fail everything.



*Moody Lamb*



*Toy portrait by Anthony See*

## Last Summer in the Dunk-Tank

All summer I shivered  
wet in my bathing suit  
just when the sun  
would warm my shoulders  
you'd hit the target with another sure shot  
and down I'd go  
sputtering and choking, nose full of water.  
I'd climb up on the platform again  
bare feet flat on wet wood grain  
hair slicked to my head  
Waiting, hands in my lap.

The sky was wide, blue, and forever

And down I'd go  
Your aim always straight  
the floor falling away into the shocking cold  
your hand pulling me up  
every time

By Julie



# Was it a Fairy?!

by Tommy

## KIDS ARE RETARDED

One day I was sitting in my office, experiencing some hideous flu-like symptoms, the aching, the stomach cramping, just being totally miserable. These two girls wandered in, in that aimless way they have, not really looking at anything, and just sort of idling near the circulation desk. I grudgingly got up to go see what they needed. Here's the conversation I had with them:

ME: Can I help you?

GIRLS: ...

ME: CAN I HELP YOU?

1st GIRL: Mph... test...?

ME: What?

1st GIRL: Somebody sen' me here... for test...

ME: (to 2nd girl) What about you? Are you here for some sort of test?

2nd GIRL: ...

ME: Yes, I'm speaking to you, I'm looking at you, that WAS a question which requires an answer. What are you doing here?

2nd GIRL: I dunno.

ME: Sigh. WHO sent you two here? Are you from the SAME class?

GIRLS: ... I dunno. Somebody sen' us... for some test...

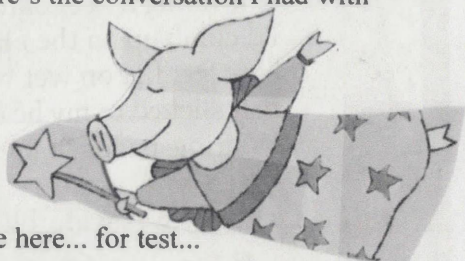
ME: Are you from the SAME class???

GIRLS: (shrugging, looking annoyed and hedging back toward the exit) I dunno! I dunno...

ME: You don't know if you're from the same class? Okay, can you tell me WHO it was that sent you?

1st GIRL: I dunno. Somebody.

ME: You don't know who sent you? Who just told you to come



here? Did it happen in your classroom?

1st GIRL: I dunno... Forget it... (starting to leave)

ME: WAIT. I don't know anything about testing in here, but you should at LEAST be able to answer me WHO told you to come here?!

1st GIRL: I dunno, jus' somebody tell me to come to library for test...

ME: "Just somebody." Hm. Was it a GHOST? Was it a FAIRY? Were they INVISIBLE?

GIRLS: (looking VERY uncomfortable at this point, and bordering on pissed off) I don' know! ForGET it, man! I don' know!

ME: Well, if they TOLD you to come here for testing, then you should probably stay here, but you need to tell me WHO the mysterious "THEY" is, so I know who to CALL! WAAAAS IIIIIT YOOOOUR TEEEEEEACHER?

GIRLS: ... (looking askance, shrugging)

ME: Was it NOT your teacher? Did someone OTHER than your teacher come into your classroom and tell you to come here? YOU ARE BOTH MAKING ME INSANE. These are SIMPLE questions.

(Sorry, there is no happy ending to this little story.)



*I dunno, man,  
FORGET IT!*

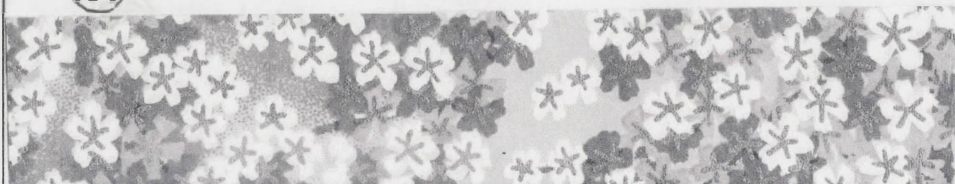




# JAPAN Journal

The first thing I noticed was it was hot and muggy. I guess I had pictured September in Japan to be a breezy, sweater-wearing time, with fall leaves wafting delicately over ponds. No...my husband and I arrive in Tokyo, take a cab to our hotel, walk over to a restaurant, it's eight o'clock at night and it's ninety degrees. Jet-lagged and confused, we select an Italian bistro. I looked up how to say bread, and I order that, and fruit. I get a hard, funny bread roll and a huge platter of beautifully cut kiwi and bananas. I keep telling myself, *I'm in Japan!* I think I expect a giant Hello Kitty to lumber by and wave at me. We take a little walk and find a shinto shrine. There is a well, and a little wooden scoop to pour water over your hands. Then you climb a few steps, pull on a thick rope and ring a clanky old bell, and clap your hands twice (my husband had read up on these and was shinto-ready). Then you throw a coin in the slotted wooden thing in front of the shrine, and clap again. The clapping alerts the gods that you're doing something good, I guess. There are skinny little cats all around the shrine, staring at us with wise, wary eyes. I pet one of them and call him a little monkey, and wonder if my English is strange to his ears.

There are cotton kimonos in the hotel room, and the toilet is very complicated, with jets of water and a loud waterfall that begins when you raise the lid, to mask any unpleasant sounds. There is a rampant politeness in Japan. I do not use the jets. Japanese television is disappointing and low budget. Talk shows, and endless cooking demonstrations. One little boy makes a curry omelet while someone in a big bunny suit watches him and scolds him when he doesn't cook the eggs long enough. Hurricane Katrina has just happened and we get CNN in English for a few hours during the day. It's all dire and horrific, with people defecating on the floor in the New Orleans convention center and I keep seeing a haunting shot of a dead old lady, covered in a blanket, in a wheelchair. I decide to focus instead on Anderson Cooper, determined to develop a crush on him. I like





his silvery hair, narrow eyes, and that he's so pissed off at our government.

Next day, we head to the Harajuku district. It's 10 am and already diabolically muggy, and I can't help but compare my fuzzy, sweaty up-do to the silken, swinging hair of the tiny Japanese girls who walk by. In fact, during the whole trip I will feel huge, sweaty and gallumping, like a cartoon hippo in a tutu dancing next to wispy Japanese ballerinas. Their miniscule bottoms are packed into wee jeans, and they click by in high heels. The women carry little cloths they use to dab their faces. Yes, it's that humid. I see tough looking boys whip out fans and fan themselves, which amuses me. There are "B-boys", Japanese boys who mimic American black rappers and their baggy clothing, but the constant fanning just isn't tough enough. For some reason it's a parade day, with men wearing diaper-like things and sandals, and they hoist a miniature shrine around town as other men follow, beating a drum. It's all very ancient. An odd, metallic sound fills the tree-lined streets. We look around for the source, find none, and finally ask a group of girls. We point upward, and make beseeching motions. I cup my ear, then dramatically shrug. The girls giggle, confused. My husband points again at the trees, and I try to make my hand look like a giant insect. More giggling. Later, an English speaking ex-pat we run into tells us it's locusts, filling the trees and furiously rubbing their legs.

I seek refuge in air-conditioning, and drag my husband into a patisserie. I eat a fantastic little cake, with fresh banana filling and creamy, hazelnut frosting. We see girls in Gothic Lolita frills and boys in lots of pancake makeup, red eyeshadow and long black coats. Teeth are bad here. There are lots of crooked, graying teeth. Girls laugh with their hands covering their mouths. Curious. I wonder when they'll adopt the Western customs of laser whitening and veneers, and feel relieved that they haven't. I like the coy smiles and endearing snaggle-tooth grins. There is mangled English everywhere,







on t-shirts and signs. "LOVE UNDER WAR." "PRETTY GIRL TIME".

One evening we venture into a sushi bar and sit down. It's full of 'salarymen,' ubiquitous Japanese businessmen who seemingly never go home after work. Three men eye us with mild curiosity, and we set about looking over the menus, not a word in English in sight. My husband orders "sake" with confidence, but this perplexes the young, pretty server. "Sake," he says again, smiling, pantomining drinking. "Hai!" she says, showing crooked teeth. Later we find out there's another word for sake, and the one we've been using, or the inflection anyway, means "salmon," like we sat down and began demanding salmon. I have just shown the server a picture of what appears to be tempura, when a stout salaryman appears in the doorway. He looks dismayed. The men look up and greet him, but there's a weird feeling in the air. We quickly realize our faux pas; we're in his seat, and now he can't sit next to his buddies. We get up and move down a place, gesturing wildly at the empty seat. One imposing man leans over, "Thank you very much," he says, in formal, precise English. I had said "begetable" very clearly to the waitress, as I had read to do in my book, and she had nodded, but my tempura comes with lots of tiny little fried fish. I eat around them, and the tempura is fantastic, thinly coated, crispy and fresh, sweet potato slices and eggplant and unfamiliar rooty things.

We go to the World Expo (it's hotter than hell, and huge and crowded, and we leave after just a few hours), go to a big botanical garden and zoo in Nagoya (I see an animal I fall in love with, a Slow Loris, like a slow-motion little stuffed toy), go to Kyoto and see a real geisha on the street and visit more shinto shrines. One shrine is centered around a huge, gnarled tree, the object of worship, and we both love that. We go to department stores with huge food halls in their basements. I love how the Japanese merchants have decorated for Fall with persimmons, pinecones and chestnuts. I had no idea





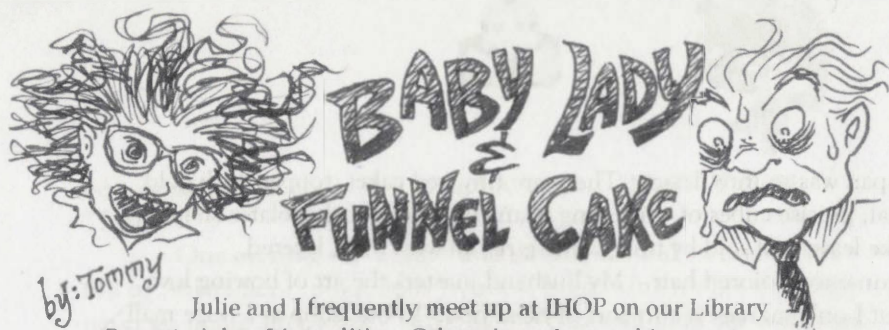
Japan was so into dessert. There are tiny, red cakes, topped with gold leaf, precise cubes of glistening bean curd, perfect chocolates shaped like leaves, all sold by tiny, pretty girls, all with long, layered, cinnamon colored hair. My husband masters the art of bowing low, but I only manage a curt sort of head nod. In one shop at a huge mall called The Cube, a girl in a reggae-themed store shows me several weird shirts, all fringed and chopped up, drizzled in paint. "Wow!" I say, not reaching for my wallet. "Wow!" she repeats, adorably.

By the final days of the trip I am sick of not speaking the language. I tend to be a fussy orderer in restaurants (bacon EXTRA crispy, water with lemon, please) and here I can't do that, I can only point at pictures and hope they understand. I also miss watching television and reading magazines and the Katrina coverage is all so awful. I feel very far away from home, and seeing footage of angry people and patient dogs waiting on rooftops to be rescued makes me cry. I'm sick of Japanese food and I want a burrito. I love to travel but always begin to miss familiarity. My husband, thankfully, is not like that, and dug, with gusto, into fish heads and slimy chunks and cups full of bitter plum tea and learned lots of Japanese words. I did love: roasted ginko nuts, melon flavored milky tea, light, cotton kimonos on my skin after a long, sweaty day, the polite, older waitress who looked like my mom, the lack of sarcasm and irony, watching my husband happily fry up salmon on a tiny hibachi for breakfast, the little iron owl I bought at the Kyoto Folk Crafts center, the friendly waiters at PJ's, our neighborhood bistro with a funny lizard-fish in its aquarium, visiting Lawson's, their convenience stores full of fish balls and soft slices of cake and garish magazines and tiny toys. I liked the bullet train, so fast it looked like a movie trick, so silent and not covered in graffiti, while I looked out the window and watched Japan whiz by, green mountains and old graves, telephone lines and smokestacks, melon candy in my mouth, acutely aware I was somewhere else.



by  
Julie





Julie and I frequently meet up at IHOP on our Library Bonnet nights. It's tradition. Otherwise, why would we put ourselves through this?

### **BABY LADY:**

Baby Lady is this older woman of some ethnicity I can't figure out. She works the cash register, and appears to be a manager or something. She has kind of wild frizzy black/grey hair, and her eyes usually have a tired yet crazed gleam. Is she a gypsy? Is she Romanian? Iranian? I don't know. She has a thick accent. The weird part is she keeps calling me BABY, and calling Julie MAMA, as if Julie is the mother and I'm the baby. I'm fuckin' 34 years old, I ain't no baby. And Julie and I are fairly close to the same age. Baby Lady will say things like, "Oh how you doing Baby?! You good baby? You eat all your food?" and then she'll turn to Julie and say, "Hello Mama! He good baby? He give you trouble? Eh?"

Now how does one respond to that? It's crazy talk. Julie is not my MAMA, and I'm an adult, so we are always sort of at a loss for words, but she gets so EXCITED when she sees us, and goes on and on. "Baby, you clean your plate? You being good baby for Mama, eh???" The infantilization creeps me out, and makes me feel dirty. Or rather, it makes me feel like I have a big dirty diaper or something. I do not appreciate the unwanted mental picture of me in a giant high chair, with a formula-splattered bib. And it REALLY pisses Julie off, having the woman refer to her as "Mama," like she's some haggard old mom.

I love watching Julie seethe, storm out the door, and start hissing, "That fuckin' BITCH do I look old enough to be your MOM for Christ's sake?!" To clarify things, Julie is very chic and cool, and in NO WAY looks like anybody's "MAMA." That's why it's so funny to watch her suffer angrily through that whole ordeal. "Yes, he's been a GREAT baby. Ate all his vegetables. What-fucking-ever."

## FUNNEL CAKE:

Just when it seemed Baby Lady was working less hours, and we thought we could breathe sighs of relief, Funnel Cake started appearing at the entrance to greet us. He's an older man with one of those stiff large stomachs that looks like it's straining against his shirt at all times. I think he's actually swollen with desperation. He's a little too intensely welcoming, takes his job at IHOP a little too seriously. Stares straight into your eyes with a sick hunger that speaks of MORE than just pancakes. What does he WANT from us?! Here's a snippet of dialogue from him, as near as I can remember it.

"Hi and welcome to IHOP. We have THREE special menus tonight! Please, PLEASE check them out. Please. There are special pancakes, there are skillet breakfasts, and we STILL have... FUNNEL CAKES! It's true! Just look at the special menu, pleeeeeease... Is there anything else I can get you?

Is there? Because I'm here to serve you. Your waitress will be with you in a moment, but for now... I have you. Did I mention the funnel cakes? May I bring you something to drink? We have a special drink menu, would you-- No? Oh, okay. So, um...

THE SOUP! The soup of the day is clam chowder, I live alone in a mobile home by the train tracks, can I bring you any appetizers? What? No, no, I didn't say that. I'm sure I never said anything about living in a mobile home by the train tracks, you must have imagined it. And here's your waitress!"

SOMETIMES IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS  
WE DO THAT MAKE THINGS GREAT.

## NEW MINI BURGERS

Six mini cheeseburgers with mustard and grilled onions surrounding a mound of crisp golden-fried onion rings or fries.



# ARY BONN SHOW!



BITEY

## Checking in with Bitey, Our Mole Rat Friend

**LB:** So, how's it going? It's been a while.

**B:** Oh my god, you guys! Everything is GREAT. Can we hug?

**LB:** A little later, maybe? So, in issue #2 of *Library Bonnet*, we created a mole rat game, using you and a few of your...group...your pack?

**B:** (squeals) That was the best!

**LB:** How is, for instance, Cystie doing?

**B:** (looks downcast) The media arrived at our tunnel and in all the excitement, poor Cystie got smothered.

**LB:** Oh no! So, explain about the media...?

**B:** Your mole rat game! It was huge! We were all interviewed and I got to go to Fashion Week and sit right next to Madonna!

**LB:** Wow. Has it quieted down since then?

**B:** No, it's still all so wonderful now!

**LB:** Still digging through tunnels? Still scrabbling for roots? Still eating your own poo? Still blind?

**B:** (impatiently) Yes, yes.

**LB:** I can't remember...are you a boy mole rat, or did you shift genders at some point and try to overthrow the queen?

**B:** I honestly don't remember. I think I may have shifted. (Laughs nervously). Does it matter? You haven't said anything about my new hairdo.

**LB:** That's very chic. Is that a big cut on your face?

**B:** (sighs). YES. During a pile up. For a root. Must you? Can't I just enjoy this little break, outside the tunnel?

**LB:** I'm sorry. Let's hug.

**B:** This has been fun!





# etc... *by Julie*

I just don't get all the endless fuss about the Ramones. They're still so worshiped after all this time and all those deaths. I can't listen to one of their songs without changing the station. I'm trying to figure out why their music never interested me. Bonehead singing voice. Those offensive pageboy haircuts. High-waisted jeans with leather jackets. Wait, back to the music. Too repetitive.

Tommy and I were at Toys 'R' Us and wandered over to a colorful little keyboard with fat keys, a phonics/spelling type of thing for kids. We pressed the lettered keys and swiftly found that when the F key was pressed, followed by the K key, a raspy, drawn out "FUCK" sound was produced, with a nasty hard K on the end. We were delighted, and pressed those keys over and over. Months passed, we returned to Toys 'R' Us and made a beeline for our naughty keyboard friend. Tommy pressed F, and then K, but instead of the satisfying f-bomb, there was just a giggle! Incredulous, we kept trying but were met with the mechanical, admonishing-sounding giggle every time. This only seemed to be when the F-K combination was attempted. It raised all sorts of questions...were there complaints to the toy company, and they were they then forced to recall all of the keyboards and rewire them? Did kids try it and lamely tattle on the keyboards to their Christian parents? Did the executives sit at a table, gravely listen to the reported "FUCK" sound and begin tersely firing off memos? And most of all we wondered: did we do this?

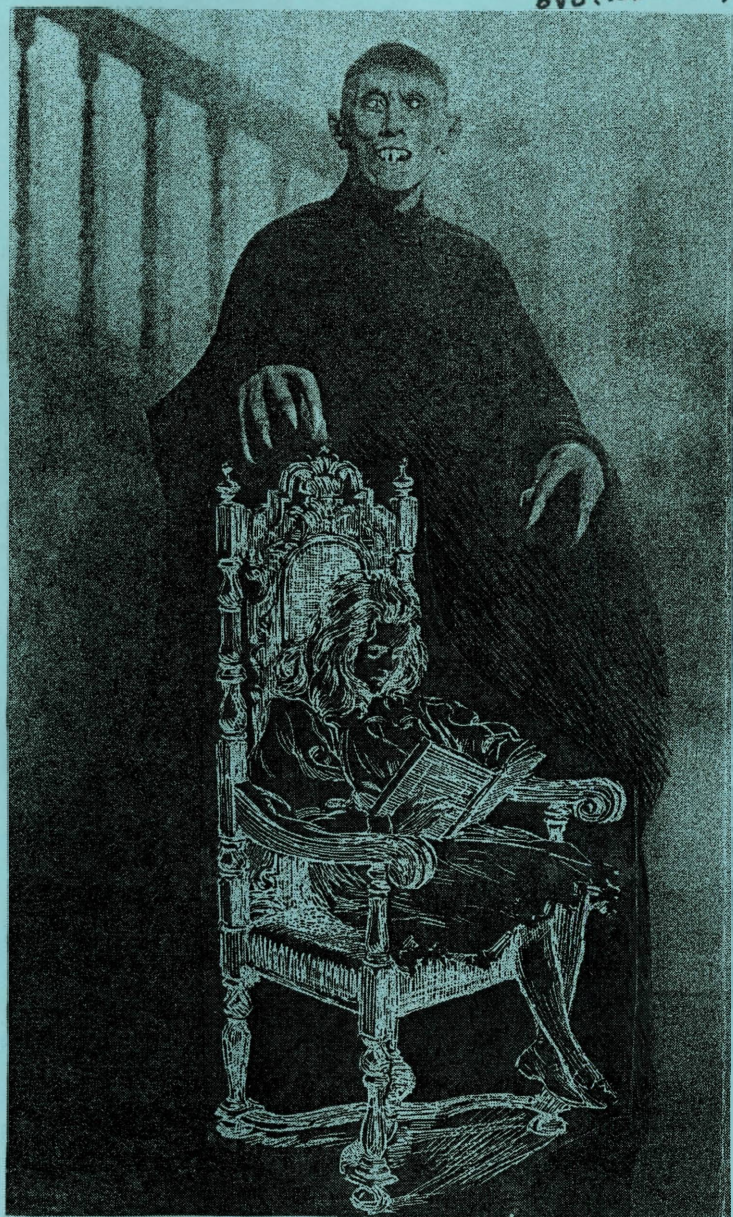
I could watch my cats, Tennyson and Sophie, for hours. I love the different ways they arrange themselves for their naps. Sometimes a tight croissant, with the tail wrapped close to the body, sometimes in a bunny pose, with paws tucked under, and my favorite, stretched out on their stomachs with their back feet splayed out behind them. Their eyes close when they're happy.

Email: Heenie@juno.com

Write: [REDACTED]

\$2.00 for back issues... Please check for availability first.

Don't forget to capitalize the "L" & the "B"!  
WebSite: [www.tommykovac.com/LibraryBonnet.htm](http://www.tommykovac.com/LibraryBonnet.htm)

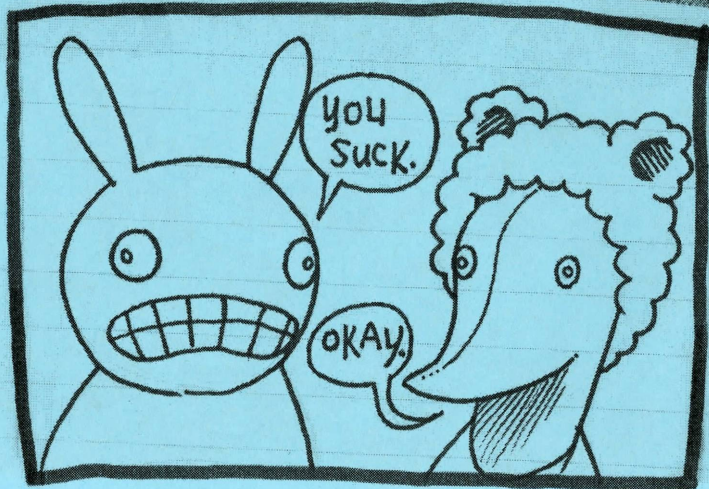


☺ This is the end of Library Bonnet #8. You may weep now. ☹



JUST BECAUSE  
IT FEELS CLEAN  
DOESN'T MEAN  
IT IS.

10 Tim will hop on that \_\_\_\_\_.



7 Ted \_\_\_\_\_ Ben at the shop.