

"B. Lynn knows two things about ministers: they have schizophrenic personalities and they tend to flock around dead people." In this collection of vignettes, B. Lynn makes many of such observations as she muddles through life confounded by a world she views through a lens distorted by the absurd.

Particularly Peculiar People

by Barbara Gibson Taylor

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Barbara Gibson Taylor

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Sleep

B. Lynn clings to the edge of the mattress like a barnacle stuck on the side of a sinking ship. It is a precarious position—uncomfortable, too—but it is as close as she can get to the relative safety of the open bedroom door and still technically remain in bed. She is tense, coiled, and prepared for flight. When the wolf that lives under her bed raises his grizzled snarling snout, she is ready to catapult out of her bedroom and down the hall to her parents' room.

B. Lynn stares at the dim yellow light in the hallway. She blinks once, twice. Her eyes wander and then freeze on her toy vacuum cleaner. With its battery-powered light and whirring motor sound it is a marvel of technology, and B. Lynn knows when she falls asleep it will snap to life and begin careening around her bedroom. It will bang into the furniture and zoom back and forth next to her side of the bed, pinning her in the glare of its rolling headlamp eye. It will become a crazed mindless toy out of control.

“Daddy? DAD!”

Her father charges out of his bedroom and breathlessly leans into her room, supporting himself on the doorjamb. *What's wrong?*

“You forgot to put my vacuum in the closet.”

He looks at B. Lynn for a moment, and then grabs the vacuum by its handle and flings it into the closet. *Go to sleep.*

She is satisfied that the treacherous thing has been adequately contained until she notices there is a flagrant violation of the Safety Code. “Dad! The closet door isn't shut all the way.”

He turns and, with one rigid finger, nudges the door a quarter of an inch to make the latch click solidly into place. *Go to sleep.*

She resumes her vigil and stares at the light in the hallway. A wave of terror suddenly rolls up her legs and whirlpools in her stomach. It sloshes upward, knocks her heart around and then gushes out the top of her head, leaving her lips numb and her feet dead as tree stumps. Dennis is missing. Without releasing her grip on the edge of the mattress, she scoots onto her stomach and frantically scrambles her right hand around on the empty and dangerous side of the bed. “Dad? DAD!” Her father’s shadow looms large in the doorway, blocking the light in the hallway. “I can’t find my Dennis.”

After giving the ceiling some consideration her father leans over, grunts, and blindly swipes his hand on the floor, just missing the wolf under the bed. He grabs Dennis the Menace by his vinyl cowlick and tosses him in B. Lynn’s direction. She snatches the doll and tightens her grasp on the mattress.

Go to sleep.

The house settles and groans and B. Lynn’s eyeballs are stuck wide open. She stares at the light in the hallway. A pile of dirty clothes in the corner of her bedroom distracts her focus on the light—are they MOVING? Eyes riveted, she watches and yes—they most certainly ARE moving. “Dad! I need a drink of water!”

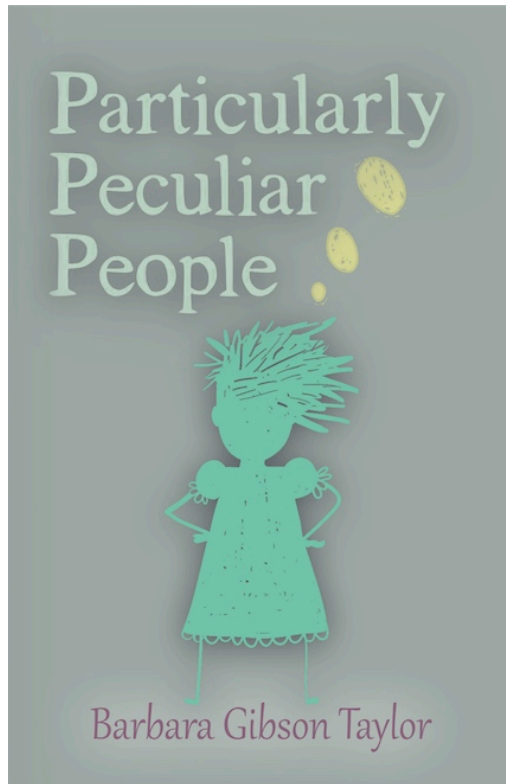
Her father shuffles from the bathroom in his tired pajamas and silently holds out a glass of tepid water. B. Lynn is slightly revolted by the toothpaste-spattered bathroom glass. She would much prefer kitchen water. But she takes a tentative sip and peers over the rim of the glass at her father. “Thank you.”

Go to sleep.

Her vision blurs and her breathing slows. But what the HECK was THAT noise? Heart pounding, she listens and hears it again... the WOLF! “Dad? Dad! DA-”

FOR THE LUVA GOD—GO TO SLEEP!

B. Lynn clutches the blanket and Dennis under her chin with one sweaty fist; hangs onto the edge of the mattress with the other. She stares at the light in the hallway. The vacuum cleaner bumps in the closet. The wolf under the bed shifts restlessly and yawns.



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