

Tangled Up in Glue

by Dianne McKnight-Warren

1

Shhhh, my husband is trying to write and we must all be quiet. Ever since he scored "genius" on an online IQ test he's been working on a novel titled *This Happened But It Wasn't Much*. When I tiptoe past his study I can see him sitting staring at a computer screen. He looks like he's reading the paper or playing Solitaire.

An apple crate sitting on its end in the corner holds his first draft, a stack of papers two feet high. Passages on each page are highlighted in different colors--blue, yellow, and pink--one for every plot. He keeps taking wrong turns, he says.

He tried to collate each of the colors into its own manuscript but he resorted to cutting and pasting. Literally. The result was three sticky messes.

2

He lives in his head and comes out to go to the bathroom or to order more guidebooks.

"I need a couple of place names," he says, tearing the brown paper off a copy of *Willkommen Bundesautobahnen*.

"You have a location?" This is good news.

"Narrowing one down. Istanbul. And Germany."

"Germany? Well they have nice cars." His scenes are mostly descriptions of cars--getaway cars in car chases. Sometimes they crash. I think he's plagiarizing movies.

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"And London"

"Three places, one for each plot?"

"There's only *one* plot" he says sufferingly, a word he'd use.

"I thought there were three."

"One is anti-plot and I added a plot to the first plotless one. It's literary--levels of ambiguity or ambivalence or something. You wouldn't understand. Please don't make me talk it out."

God forbid he'd *talk* it out.

3

He keeps me updated. "Franklin disappeared mysteriously," he says. Many of his characters do. After all, they're driving getaway cars.

"Franklin?"

"The guy who drove the almost mustard BMW."

"Almost mustard?"

4

"How's it going?" I ask through the door.

"I keep taking wrong turns," he says.

I have learned to be careful with suggestions. He's sensitive. "Maybe too many people disappear?" I say.

Radio silence. He hates suggestions.

5

No-one's interested in his work. I pretend to be but I'm not. It's not interesting, although the idea of a getaway car is beginning to resonate.

"I need an agent," he says at lunch. "Maybe I should do another bulk mailing?"

"Maybe send more than five pages?" I say, knowing that's a terrible idea.

"You think that would help?"

"Why not?" I lie.

"I'll send the whole blue one. I love you!" He hurries up the stairs to his study.

"I...I know."

"Do you love me?" he calls down from the top.

Before I can answer he closes the door.

