

matters familiar



e. g. fabricant

Matters Familiar is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2012 E.G. Fabricant. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 0615727042
ISBN-13: 9780615727042

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011917205

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the written permission of the author.

Cover designed by E. G. Fabricant

Cover photograph property of E. G. Fabricant

Printed in the United States of America

DEDICATION

For Frank and Betty, for the gifts of life and love—theirs,
mine, and ours—and
For M. A.; BeeEss; Tomiss; Jerome; J. L.; Fuffy; and The
Brat, for helping me fill in the blanks.

CONTENTS

1	Ashley Alert	1
2	Boys Will Be Men	24
3	Chosen	34
4	Gemini	52
5	Intentional Walk	72
6	The Jewel of Genoa	100
7	Medalists	139
8	Meridian	145
9	Pallbearer	171
10	Pipe Dream	193
11	Robbin' Hood	225
12	Term Limit	260

1 Ashley Alert



She pushed her ginger curls away from her ear and laid it carefully against the door and listened. *All right!* She clapped her hands and squealed, thought better of it and almost as quickly shushed herself. She sailed into the room and onto her trundle bed, one knee aboard and a straight leg trailing. She glimpsed the lacy blouse, pinafore, and Mary Janes on her image in the mirror and frowned. *I hate me! Why do I have to be so girly all the time?* Out came the tongue. *Oh, well...* Pushing her round, black eyeglass frames up her nose brought a hint of a smile. *Very Harry Potter.* Daddy'd won that one, liking them over those wiry things Mommy picked out.

She reached behind all the “educational” stuff on her bookshelf and brought out her latest guilty pleasure. She gladdened as she traced the image of the wild-haired girl on the cover, airborne in vapors and gaily pinching her nostrils. *Betty has red pants with green polka dots—and yellow socks! I could be her, 'cause our hair's almost the same color.* Looking

up again, she frowned at the pastel clasps holding her locks. *No barrettes for Betty!* She tore at them, flung them aside, and shook her head fiercely. Freedom was pleasing.

Settling in cross-legged, she cracked the book and laid it reverently across her thighs. Page One—again; there he was, in all his blue-eyed, dirty-sheep splendor. She turned the page and read softly to herself, savoring every word:

“Mother walked in and said, ‘He still smells awful.’

And that’s when they got the first clue. The tell-tale bubbles in the water.

‘He’s probably just a little nervous,’ said Mother, hopefully. ‘His stomach must be upset.’

But Walter’s stomach wasn’t upset. Walter’s stomach was fine. He felt perfectly normal. He just far—“¹

The door cracked. A laundry basket. Her Mother.

“Come on, Ashley! It’s the second Wednesday—you know that. We’re late for your play date at Ryan’s and there’s tap class, after that.” Rosemary Butterworth looked up and saw her panicky, slack-jawed daughter hugging a book to her bosom. She shoved the basket onto the toy chest and put her hands on her hips. “What’re you reading?”

Ashley’s eyes fell, as did the book. “Nothing...”

Rosemary took it. “*Walter the Farting Dog?! Where did you get this?*”

Ashley pushed her lower lip out and her dark eyes

¹ Excerpted from *Walter the Farting Dog*, ©2001 by William Kotzwinkle and Glenn Murray. Published by Frog, Ltd. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

blazed. “Found it.”

Rosemary scowled and tucked the book under her arm. “We’ll talk about this later. Get your sweater and your shoes.”



Alex Butterworth nudged the front door open with his briefcase, juggling his keys and the daily mail in his other hand. He slid inside, shoved the door closed with his heel, and pitched the keys onto the hall table. Dropping the case by the banister, he stretched, sighed, and scratched his scalp. *Another day in the particular Paradise that is the San Bernardino Unified School District.* He’d barely begun shuffling paper when the door burst open behind him. Ashley grazed him behind the knees and hit the stairs hard.

“Hey, half-pint! How ‘bout some love?” Alex’s voice trailed off as she ascended; she turned, briefly, her face wreathed in anger. The *thump-thump-thump* of her footfalls receded until replaced by the echo of her door slamming. He turned back to see Rosemary standing in the doorway, clutching Ashley’s wrap, book bag, and dance regalia. She wasn’t a lot happier. “We need to talk,” she said as she climbed the stairs.

Oh, boy. Alex calculated he could weather the gathering storm a little better with some nourishment, so he made for the kitchen and stuck his head in the refrigerator. As he took inventory he tried to guess the basis for this complication *du jour*. He shrugged and settled on string cheese and a low-carb beer. Leaning against the counter, he took a couple swallows and paused when he detected his wife’s low, insistent monotone leaching through the ceiling. At that, he drained the bottle and went after another. He chose the back route to the family room and planted himself in his recliner. He had both the TV remote

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



E. G. Fabricant

writes and lives in San Jose, California. This is his first collection of short stories.

Sample and download stories by E. G. in your favorite eBook format [here](#).

Connect to E.G. online at E. G.'s [website](#)