

Home

THREE
HOUSES

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ANNETTE
GOGGIN

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SCHOOLHOUSE

Thank you to Shirley Carmony, my eleventh-grade English teacher, colleague, mentor, and friend, both in and out of the schoolhouse for over thirty years. We said, “That’s going in the book!” for years, and I wrote the first story in your condominium.

Thank you to my colleagues, especially those who offered a plethora of wisdom in my early days. I needed it.

Thank you to my students, both past and present. I have loved teaching you and knowing you.

CHURCH HOUSE

Thank you to my parents and family for making the church my second home and for pointing me to Christ.

Thank you to the wonderful church folk who put up with me as a PK, prayed for me over the years, and helped me raise good kids. I needed you the whole time.

FARMHOUSE

Thank you to Christina and Gus for gracing the farmhouse. We miss you at home but are proud of you where you are.

Thank you to Mark, my editor and best friend. I’m so glad I get to share a farmhouse and a lifetime with you.

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him” (Ps. 34:8).



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INTRODUCTION

The stories in this book are true. In some cases, the truth has been edited. The names of students and many other people have been changed. This book is not the whole truth. My life, just like everybody else's, has some gloomy stories, but those don't fulfill the purpose of my book. This book shows that there is still goodness in the world. I hope readers will see that goodness with me, crack a smile, and maybe even laugh.



Schoolhouse





KAITLYN'S CAR

“I know I’m tardy again, but I think my car is on fire! I wouldn’t be late if it weren’t for that piece-of-junk car I have to drive.” Kaitlyn entered first hour late again, making the big splash she usually made when she was tardy. The class and I were used to her tardiness, and we had her spiel about the car pretty much memorized. It was always the same theme—the junky car—with variations, today’s variation being fire.

She handed me her pink tardy slip while we all told her not to be a drama queen and assured her that the car was not on fire. A few kind souls offered words of comfort and encouragement. Several cynical students, especially those who didn’t have a car, advised her to quit complaining. The realists in the room told her to get up earlier. Kaitlyn got herself settled down, and we went back to having English class.

KAITLYN'S CAR

The class hadn't taken even half a page of notes before an office runner came to the room with a call card. He handed it to me, and I saw that it was for Kaitlyn. The office runner said, "She needs to come to the office right now. Her car's on fire!"

Kaitlyn's "piece-of-junk" car burned itself out in the high school parking lot that morning. Kaitlyn had seen it coming and did not mourn the death of the car. She was hardly ever tardy after that.



HITCHHIKING



My black 1973 Mercedes diesel sputtered and died, and with the momentum the car had left, I edged it to the side of the road. An attempt to restart failed. Mark and I had owned the once-glorious car for a few years; as the car had aged, it had become less charming and more problematic, just like some people, but nobody who would read this story. Eventually, my husband, who loved the car and couldn't give it up, used it as a farm vehicle, but it was years away from that role on this early November morning in 1991. At this point in its life, the Mercedes was the car I drove to work, and its temporarily ceasing to be a vehicle made my morning inconvenient.

The inconveniences that day were many. As my dad would say, I had more problems than a cat in a roomful of rocking chairs. Two inches of snow didn't go well with my teacher shoes, and the wind added a cutting edge to the cold. This unfortunate event with the car meant that I

HITCHHIKING

would be late to school. I was too far from town to walk, and cell phones were still in the future.

Another “big” factor was my size; I was due to give birth later in November. What’s a girl to do? I had never hitchhiked before, and I didn’t like the idea of getting in the car with the next random stranger who pulled up. What if it were a bad guy? Options, however, were non-existent, so I said a prayer for safety and decided to wave down the next car that came along.

At 7:30 a.m. a country road is no thoroughfare, but eventually a car appeared in my rearview mirror. As I flagged the car down, I could tell it was a Buick. I felt better already. An elderly woman rolled down the passenger’s window. “Do you need some help?”

“I do. My car broke down; if you could just take me to the church at the first intersection when we get to town, I can call someone or have somebody there take me to work. That’s my church.” I knew I’d be okay if I could get to my church.

The elderly couple who had stopped, strangers to me, invited me to get in the car. I got my bags, heaved my large self in, buckled up, breathed a warm sigh of relief, and looked to my left to find that I was sharing the back seat with an old friend. A familiar face looked good, even if it was on a cock-a-poo.

Buddy, the brown cock-a-poo sitting beside me, knew me through the animal clinic where I had worked since high school. As the kennel girl, I got to know the pets who boarded, but I rarely got to know their people. Buddy had been a frequent guest, and I clearly remembered the nametag on his cage: Buddy Baumgartner. Buddy and

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I exchanged pleasantries, and then I focused on human contact.

“You must be the Baumgartners,” I offered. Mrs. Baumgartner turned to eyeball the psychic they had just picked up, and Mr. Baumgartner slowed the car, questioning the wisdom of picking up hitchhikers.

“How do you know us?” Mrs. Baumgartner asked, a little suspiciously.

“Oh, I know Buddy. I work at the animal clinic.” My day took a sharp turn toward better at that moment. Any friend of Buddy was a friend of the Baumgartners. We chatted as they took me to the church. I got a ride to work, called Mark, and he took care of the car. A small town can’t be beat on a snowy morning when the car breaks down.