

“CRAZY GLUE”

BY ETGAR KERET

(625 WORDS)

She said, “Don't touch that.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“It's glue,” she said. “Special glue. The best kind.”

“What did you buy it for?”

“Because I need it,” she said. “A lot of things around here need gluing.”

“Nothing around here needs gluing,” I said. “I wish I understood why you buy all this stuff.”

“For the same reason I married you,” she murmured. “To help pass the time.”

I didn't want to fight, so I kept quiet.

“Is it any good, this glue?” I asked. She showed me the picture on the box, with this guy hanging upside-down from the ceiling.

“No glue can really make a person stick like that,” I said. “They just took the picture upside-down. They must have put a light fixture on the floor.” I took the box from her and peered at it. “And there, look at the window. They didn't even bother to hang the blinds the other way. They're upside-down, if he's really standing on the ceiling. Look,” I said again, pointing to the window. She didn't look.

“It's 8 already,” I said. “I've got to run.” I picked up my briefcase and kissed her on the cheek. “I'll be back pretty late. I'm working –”

“Overtime,” she said. “Yes, I know.”

I called Abby from the office.

“I can't make it today,” I said. “I've got to get home early.”

“Why?” Abby asked. “Something happen?”

“No . . . I mean, maybe. I think she suspects something.”

There was a long silence. I could hear Abby's breathing on the other end.

“I don't see why you stay with her,” she whispered. “You never do anything together. You don't even fight. I'll never understand it.” She was crying.

“I'm sorry, Abby. Listen, someone just came in,” I lied. “I've got to hang up. I'll come over tomorrow. I promise. We'll talk about everything then.”

I got home early. I said “Hi” as I walked in, but there was no reply. I went through all the rooms in the house. She wasn't in any of them. On the kitchen table I found the tube of glue, completely empty. I tried to move one of the chairs, to sit down. It didn't budge. I tried again. She'd glued it to the floor. The fridge wouldn't open. She'd glued it shut. I didn't understand what would make her do such a thing. I didn't know where she was. I went into the living room to call her mother's. I couldn't lift the receiver; she'd glued that too.

And then I heard her laughing. It was coming from somewhere above me. I looked up, and there she was, standing barefoot on the living-room ceiling.

I stared open-mouthed. When I found my voice I could only ask, "What the hell . . . are you out of your mind?"

She didn't answer, just smiled. Her smile seemed so natural, with her hanging upside-down like that.

"Don't worry, I'll get you down," I said, hurrying to the shelf and grabbing the largest books. I made a tower of encyclopedia volumes and clambered on top of the pile.

"This may hurt a little," I said, trying to keep my balance. She went on smiling. I pulled as hard as I could, but nothing happened. Carefully, I climbed down.

"Don't worry," I said. "I'll get the neighbors or something. I'll go next door and call for help."

"Fine," she laughed. "I'm not going anywhere."

I laughed too. She was so pretty, and so incongruous, hanging upside-down from the ceiling that way. With her long hair dangling downwards. So pretty. I climbed back up onto the pile of books and kissed her. The books tumbled out from under my feet, but I stayed floating in midair, hanging just from her lips.