

Unholy Union – Chapter 1

Elaine Curtis got out of her car and wrinkled her nose. Without thought, she whipped out a notebook and pen from her blazer pocket and wrote, *Eau de cow dung tinged with a hint of skunk wafts through the warm, early autumn air. Underlying this delicate bouquet, one detects the subtle notes of old motor oil and rotting compost. Welcome to Constable, New York.*

She lifted her head from its inch-close proximity to the notebook, her writing faint in the dying glow of the setting sun. She patted her pocket to reassure herself her audio recorder was there, though she wouldn't use it until absolutely necessary as she looked over the weathered farm.

Flanking the hard-packed dirt yard were two barns, one obviously newer and sporting nearly unblemished white paint. Cows lowed from its dark interior, no doubt the chief producers of the sweetish rancid stench that layered the air. The other barn was much older, its paint long worn away to expose wooden boards gone silvery with age. The emerald green nose of a tractor peeked out of the gloom of its shadowed door. A window in the loft weeping tufts of straw looked over the tire-marked space between the two structures.

The farmhouse sat several yards back beyond the barns, a tired-looking but sturdy two-story structure peeling white paint. It was situated in such a way as to make equidistant points between the three buildings. *The Bermu-dung Triangle*, Elaine wrote and snickered to herself.

Two pickup trucks sat before the farmhouse, one an old Ford rusting quietly in the yard sitting on cement blocks and a newer F-350. They were perfect complements to the barns. "Past and Present Still-Life," Elaine muttered, squinting to read her own writing as her pen scratched letters onto the paper.

The low hums of two vehicles pulling into the yard distracted her from her writing. A white utility van with the large letters NCP emblazoned on its side and a silver Explorer parked next to her Cavalier.

Carol got out of the Explorer, her red hair eternally frizzy despite the lack of humidity in the air. "That's Carol Boudette, not Burnett," she'd said the moment she and Elaine had met. "Make sure you get it right. I've had enough stupid jokes about my name and people tugging my earlobe to last me a lifetime."

Except for the red hair, Carol bore no resemblance to the famous comedienne. She had model-perfect features that irritatingly required no makeup. She had once been married to a professional hockey player. Elaine could understand the woman's frustration, especially since Carol rarely displayed any of her famous near-namesake's sense of the funny.

There was certainly no humor present in her demeanor when she was on a case. "No perfume, right?" she asked, looking critically at Elaine's outfit of tan slacks and sleeveless silk blouse over which her navy velvet-trimmed jacket hung. Elaine didn't own jeans and T-shirts, and she refused to wear her workout clothes when in a professional situation. If the clothes got ruined, so be it. At least she had worn sneakers for tonight's investigation.

She spread her arms wide as if submitting to a frisk. "Unscented deodorant only. The only phantom smells you might encounter from me are the remnants of the burrito I had for dinner."

Carol turned away without even a quirk of a smile. She watched as the rest of her team tumbled out of the utility van.

Dark-haired Jeremy Cason came from the driver's side, his spare frame clad in jeans and a yellow T-shirt with the slogan, "If Going Bump in the Night, Bump With Me". Despite the silliness of his wardrobe, he was just as serious about his hobby as Carol.

He stood next to Sami Jacobsen, the yellow of his shirt a relief to her black-and-white goth drama. Short and pudgy, the 23-year old looked eternally ready for Halloween. Jet black hair. Black eye makeup. Black lipstick. Black nail polish. Black clothes, tonight a ruffled blouse and jeans. An ocean of black set against the backdrop of her fish-belly white skin.

Despite wearing a look she should have left behind at least five years ago, Sami was easier to take seriously than the fourth member of the team, Byron Macaffey. Overzealous to the point of ridiculousness, Elaine found him hard to stomach. His hairy belly peeked out from under his polo shirt, bulging out over too-small jeans. He was already fidgeting with excitement as he looked over the farm. "This is going to be great," he said, a little boy's grin lighting his scruffy face.

Carol wasted no time. "Start unpacking the equipment, guys. I'll talk to the owner while you set up." The squeaking slam of a screen door brought their attention to a man stepping out onto the farmhouse's porch.

"There's Vernon," Carol said, hurrying towards the man. "Come on, Elaine."

Elaine trotted to catch up to her, pulling the audio recorder from her pocket and clicking the Record button.

"What was his full name again?" she asked.

"Vernon Slaughter."

Slaughter. Nice name for a paranormal investigation.

He met them a few feet from the house, his face long and lined not so much from age as from a life of hard work. He wasn't a bad-looking man, but certainly not Elaine's taste. Too skinny and spare. *A young version of the farmer in that painting "American Gothic"* she scribbled in her notebook. It wasn't easy to write while also holding the recorder; she wondered if she'd be able to read her own handwriting later.

Carol offered him a manicured hand, which he shook. "Hi Mr. Slaughter. I'm Carol Boudette with North Country Paranormal. This is Elaine Curtis. She's writing a book about my organization's work."

Vernon waited with quiet patience while Elaine juggled her notepad, pen and recorder to free a hand to shake. "Nice to meet you both, ladies. Please come in."

Carol smiled, professionally polite. "Thanks. That would be great."

Elaine followed her into the house, with Vernon bringing up the rear.

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When she entered Vernon's living room, it was all Elaine could do not to yell, "Yee haw, partner!"

A brown cowhide rug anchored the matching overstuffed couch and loveseat. Elaine's pen scratched across her notebook before she settled on the comfortable leather of the loveseat.

This closeted cowboy comes out in the safety of his home. The framed print of John Wayne and bookshelf full of Louis L'Amour paperbacks scream, 'ride the range'. One wonders if he's made the pilgrimage to the Alamo yet.

Carol sat next to her while Vernon took up residence in a battered recliner. He looked tired, and Elaine regretted her snarky remarks in her notebook.

Why am I such a bitch tonight? But she knew why, and it wasn't Vernon Slaughter's fault. It wasn't Carol's fault either.

“Sorry the place doesn’t look good,” the farmer said, looking around the room. A light coating of dust fuzzed the oak tables. “I can’t keep a cleaning service, and running a farm doesn’t leave me time to do it myself.”

“Is the trouble with maid service a result of the paranormal activity you’ve experienced?” Carol asked.

“I haven’t experienced anything myself. Every time a woman comes over, she gets uncomfortable.”

“It’s just women who report strange things happening?”

Elaine scribbled in her notebook again. *Why is it men can be janitors but not work for a home cleaning service? Put those aprons on, boys!*

“I’ve given up on having lady friends,” Vernon was saying. “One in particular ran out of here screaming. She said this big black shape cornered her in the bathroom.”

Carol leaned forward. “What other rooms have there been activity in?”

“Every room in the house and the barn where I keep the tractor.”

“Will you take us to the barn?”

“Sure.”

They all rose, Elaine taking up the rear as she wrote furiously. *Ooh, a haunted barn where the ghosts say Moo instead of Boo!*

She winced. God, she really was a bitch tonight.

* * * *

Footsteps. Voices.

Female voices.

Excitement swept over the entity in the loft, and he moved to the edge for a better look. They entered the barn, the young but weathered farmer and two women. The entity mentally licked nonexistent lips, especially when he looked over the younger of the two females.

Her honey blond hair was pulled back in a casual ponytail, leaving her face bare for examination. Blue eyes scanned the length of the barn, flicking up toward the loft from where he observed. Her gaze slid over him, and she tilted her head down to study something in her hand.

Not study. Her hand flew over the square of white that shimmered in the growing darkness. Writing.

The man spoke. “I had to build the other barn ‘cause the cows are spooked in this one. One night they went crazy belling, and I had to let them out into the pen. They flat out refused to come back in here after that.”

The redhead, who’d probably been gorgeous ten years ago and was lovely still, stood with her hands on her hips, her legs spread in an assertive stance. Interesting woman, but a little too forceful for the entity’s tastes. Certainly not as alluring as the quiet strength of the blonde.

Redhead spoke. “Did the problem with the cows start up at the same time as the occurrences in the house?”

The farmer considered. “Around the same time, I think. About six months ago.”

“Has anything else odd happened in here?”

“Not that I know of.” His attention turned to the blonde. “Are you gonna use my name in your book?”

The entity’s attention sharpened. Book. How interesting.

The woman’s voice was husky, sexily low-pitched. “I don’t have to. That’s entirely up to you.”

“I appreciate that. My friends and family would never let me live it down if they heard I was worried about ghosts.”

The redhead: “We’ll use the utmost discretion in regard to your case, Vernon.”

She walked out with the farmer, leaving the lovely blonde alone in the barn to scribble notes. The entity drifted down to look over her shoulder.

...and I’m left wondering what kind of ghost hangs out in a barn in upstate New York scaring cows. A spirit with low self-esteem? Someone who was lactose-intolerant in life?

Silent laughter. He really should get away from her. She had potential to be what he liked, and that wasn’t good. Yes, he needed to turn around and go back to the loft. Not spare the pretty little writer another glance.

Instead he moved around her to get a better look.

Her scoop-necked blouse revealed the recently departed summer’s tan still bronzed her goosefleshed skin. She shivered at his nearness, the chilling air the only hint of his presence. Her nipples grew noticeably hard at the peaks of her taut breasts.

A slender belly. Gently rounded buttocks. Lithe, definite muscle tone. She took good care of herself. Not one iota of excess fat. Definitely a woman to stay far away from.

Close up, he could see fine lines creasing the corners of her eyes and the corners of her mouth. She was no young girl. She was a full-on woman, beautified and sculpted by at least 30 years of life experience. Comfortable in her own skin, perfectly ripe and seasoned.

He had to touch her. The old compulsion, as comfortable as a well-worn pair of slippers, slipped over him. The consequences of such an action faded to the back of his mind, and he obeyed the irresistible urge.

He surrounded her with his invisible presence, hypnotizing the intangible essence that was her being. She went under immediately. Her arms dropped senseless to her sides. The audio recorder she held hit the dirt floor with an audible *thump!* The pen landed soundlessly, and the notebook fluttered down like an injured seagull, white pages flapping. Her eyes stared blankly into space, and her lips hung slightly parted as if waiting for a kiss.

He explored her, reveling in the softness of the skin covering her lean muscles. She shivered as he touched her breasts, sampling the pebbled hardness of her nipples. Her clothes were no barrier to him; he was as insubstantial as air. There was no doubt she felt him in the suspension of the trance. When he slipped between the soft petals of her sex, she responded with a whisper of a groan, and warm honey seeped from her flesh.

He concentrated his attack there, delighted when the flow of her sweet cream thickened. He slid inside her core, and her hips bucked as if to take him in deeper. He obliged her, filling her womb with as much of himself as he could concentrate into.

Hot. Wet. Eager.

He used her gently, knowing the outcome of such intimacy but unable to stop himself. His self-imposed exile had failed, and there was nothing to do but enjoy the ride for as long as it lasted.

Her breath came faster. He massaged her clitoris even as he plunged in and out of her body, no difficult matter for a disincorporate entity. He entered her mouth and anus, finding the most sensitive spots to rush her to ecstasy.

Her lower body flexed, and she moaned with the rhythm of the light convulsions. As gentle orgasm swept through her, the energy poured into him, feeding him. Had he possessed vocal cords, he’d have screamed in bliss. It had been weeks since he’d truly fed, a mere blink of

an eye for a creature billions of years old but an eternity for one whose hungers were never fully sated.

Her spasms passed, and he sipped the last of the energy before disengaging from her body. She shuddered and blinked, coming out of the stupor quickly. She staggered for an instant, weakness nearly sending her to her knees.

She looked around in confusion before stooping down to reclaim her audio recorder, pen and notebook. She shivered violently. "Damn drafty barn," she whispered before hurrying out of the building.

He watched her leave. Now that her end had been set in motion, he had decisions to make. Keep her while he could, or set her loose to face the inevitable on her own? The next few hours would determine how she would meet her fate.