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*Ghost Hunters: The Church**By Sara Thacker**Chapter 1*

Cold seeped through the thick blankets, turning her chilly room into an icebox. Macy Cole pulled the covers to her chin, hiding from the frigid temperatures. Hadn't she turned the heater on? She shivered, wondering how much colder the room could get before she was forced to slip from between the warm covers and check the setting on the thermostat. Once up, she'd find something to work on and never make it back to the bliss of sweet dreams.

The temperature in the room dropped further. Macy ignored the cold even though her toes ached. She pulled her blankets overhead, hiding from the chill. Being cold wouldn't normally be a problem, but this went beyond cold, more like an arctic blast. Poking her head out of the covers, she was shocked by how much colder the room really felt.

Tonight wasn't supposed to be freezing, at least that's what the weatherman had said. She should have known better than to listen to only one weather report.

Macy crawled from between her warm blankets. Swinging her feet into the open, she cringed as the super cold air hit them. "Oh my, this is worse than cold."

The floor felt like a block of ice. She yelped and squeaked as she pulled her feet off the floor, but a little cold wouldn't stop her from her mission to warm up the room. Six feet away her space heater sat unplugged. All she had to do was race over to the small appliance, grab the cord and plug it in.

Macy stood, ignoring the cold pain shooting up her legs. She took one step and stopped. The warm floor shocked her senses. She stepped back, feeling the icy pain of the freezing floorboards and the chill of sub-zero air. Turning towards the bed, she froze in place when she came face to face with a woman. Her heart thundered. She swiped at her eyes, wondering what gunk was blocking her vision, causing her to see things. Her eyes were clear.

She wanted to scream, but her voice suddenly disappeared, leaving her stranded with a stranger and no one to help. Damn, how could this be happening? A stranger in her house. No weapons, no defense. She'd locked the place up tight, she was sure of it.

Looking deeper at the woman, she realized she could see through her. Macy's hand shook as she reached out to touch. Figment of her imagination or real, slid through her mind as her fingers slid through the shoulder. The hairs on the back of Macy's neck rose as if they had a mind to run away in fright. The eyes of the thing changed, growing round like she was frightened. Macy pulled back her hand and the thing looked right at her. It was intelligent and frightened.

“Ar--Ar--Are you really here? Or are you a ghost?” Macy’s voice shook almost as much as her knees.

Without a pop or a hiss of the air the ghost disappeared in a flash. Macy lost her balance, and fell backwards, grabbing at nothing but warm air.

She lay in on the floor wondering if she should call someone. Who would help her? The police would know she was a nutter if she called about this. The ghost wasn’t the first odd thing that had happened since she’d remodeled the church. The man downstairs still freaked her out when she caught him prowling around the place. But this was the first time she’d seen the woman so clearly. And in her bedroom. Usually she stayed in the studio.

Macy’s mind churned over the image she’d seen. Why would that sad lady in white be wandering around her house. The old church had been here for years. She wasn’t positive of the exact date, but it had been a long time since the building had been erected by the local people.

She sat up and checked the clock. It was only four-twenty, too early for breakfast but not too early for coffee. She pulled on her sweats and socks, still chilled out from her room going icicle. The TV would take away some of the woo-woo she still felt so she flipped it on as she passed it on the way to her coffee pot. The volume was low and the image fuzzy. Macy pulled on her morning glasses and focused. “Paranormal Investigators” and a number flashed on the screen. Without think about implications, she scribbled down the number, hoping they could provide her with some resolution of her problem with her “*friends*”.

She didn’t really want them gone or maybe she did, but it would be nice to know if

she was seeing things or if the ghosts really were here and living with her.

Macy shook her head at the coincidence of finding the number for a ghost hunter right after seeing the woman in white. Had the ghost known the commercial would be on?

The coffee machine gurgled to life and Macy sighed in relief. Even if the ghost had been real, nothing bad had happened. Maybe she shouldn't call. Life in the big church was almost fun. She took her coffee to the small kitchenette table she'd crafted out of crates and turned back to get the creamer. She heard a loud crash. The mug had slid off the table and shattered. She had to call Paranormal Investigators now. There was no way her coffee did that on its own. They'd find the answers she needed.

*Chapter 2*

A cold chill traveled up his arms, Mitch Reyas squinted at the camera screen wanting to see something, but not just anything. It had to be real. Something moved across the room. Ghost? Maybe. He held his breath, not wanting to scare away any entities. The screen flashed a bright red figure on the far wall. The hair on the back of his neck bristled.

“What the hell?” Geoff McNial gasped beside him.

“Did you feel that?” Mitch asked.

“Stop, let’s back track.”

They both took a few steps back, retracing their path into the room. “There it is again,” Mitch said.

“Oh, it’s only your reflection on the glossy door. See,” Geoff raised his arm in front of Mitch. The red image on the screen copied him.

“Damn, I thought we’d gotten something.”

“It’ll happen eventually.” They moved through the room, not finding anything else. “Thanks for selling off your skateboard collection. You know you didn’t have to.” Geoff stopped moving forward, and turned on his flashlight, illuminating the century old house they’d borrowed for their first outing with the thermal camera.

“I know, but it would have taken months of both of us working two jobs to get the cash for all of this.” Mitch stepped forward, sure he’d seen something and then backed up. “Dang it, just another reflection from that window.”

“I’m just damn glad you’re in this with me.”

Mitch smacked Geoff on the shoulder with his fist. “I couldn’t think of a better person to do this with. One day we’ll catch a real ghost on film or maybe something else spectacular. In the meantime, we can build our business. You know, debunking and helping people find solutions.”

“Yeah, I think we have a client. They left a message on my cell phone.”

“Really? Who? Where?” Mitch couldn’t believe their luck. A real client. Wow, things just kept getting better and better.

“A woman who owns the old church downtown. You know the one where they gutted the inside and turned it into a house. Her name is Macy. She sounds like she’s seen something interesting.”

“Macy? Hmm.”

“You know her?”

“No, just a cute name.” Mitch scratched his head, thinking about the hot babe with beautiful eyes he’d seen in one of his classes last spring. The lecture hall had been packed, but Macy had been a breath of fresh air in a world filled with cynics.

“You sure you don’t know her?”

“Yeah, I’ve never met her before, but I’ve always wondered about that place.”

“You think we’ll find something good?” Geoff turned off his flashlight and continued sweeping the room, looking for a tell-tale red flash of heat from a real

apparition and not their reflection.

“It’ll be fun even if we don’t find a ghost. We need to do some research on the place.” Mitch smiled to himself as they finished their sweep of the farmhouse. They’d advertised around town, gotten a spot on the local cable channel, but so far no one had wanted Paranormal Investigators to come in and hunt for ghosts. This could be the break they’d been waiting for. Having Macy’s house as their first real investigation was a plus he hadn’t expected.



Geoff listened to the voice mail again. Macy offered to pay whatever they asked if only they could find out what was going on in her house. He couldn’t help but smile. A real live client begging for their services. Now they only needed to finish the research on the place and write up their investigative plan.

The door flew open and Mitch rushed in amongst leaves that blew in on the wind. He took off his jacket and shook another leaf to the floor. “What’s that goofy grin on your face for?”

“We have a real client. Your uncle Joe is great for volunteering his house, but you know...I mean, like I appreciate his help, but think about it. A real client.”

“It’ll come together for us,” Mitch said.

“I know. Joe’s a great guy, but how many times can you investigate the same house over and over again. Do you think we need to hire someone for research?”

“Not liking the bookwork there, hey Geoff?”

“It’s not that. Ignore what I said. I’m just caught up in dreaming about the future.”

Geoff pushed the other chair out from under the kitchen table. “So listen to this.”

“You want one?” Mitch pulled a pop out of the fridge.

“No thanks, I’m too keyed up already, with that I’d be flying.”

“I can see. You going to tell me what’s up?” Mitch sat across from Geoff, smiling at his infectious joy.

“Yeah, yeah. Boy, I didn’t sleep at all last night. I kept thinking about this church.”

Geoff flipped a page in his notebook and checked the facts, not wanting to get anything wrong. “Okay, here’s the deal, seventy five years ago there was a man, Charles, who asked this woman, Ann-Marie, to marry him. He showed up at the church on his wedding day to find another groom in his place. Her father hated Charles and thought that if he substituted in man to his own liking his daughter wouldn’t have the guts to not go through with the ceremony. Especially with all those people looking on.”

“Whoa, lovers triangle. I don’t know, sounds dicey.”

“That’s not the whole story. Ann-Marie’s father is a bit of a control freak,” Geoff said.

“You think?”

Geoff looked up and caught the smile on Mitch’s face. This is what they’d dreamt of for years. He couldn’t believe that it was finally coming true “Yeah, well, Ann-Marie finds out about the stand-in groom and kills herself. Meanwhile, Charles realizes what’s going on with the new groom and starts hollering for Ann-Marie. Her daddy gets all into his face and pushes the young buck around, toppling him off the dais. Charles struck his

head on a wooden box used to help young altar boys light candles.”

“Now that’s a story. But what about activity?”

“I’m getting to it, just be patient.”

“I want to hear about Macy,” Mitch said.

“Macy? I thought you wanted to hear about the ghost activity.”

“I do, that’s what I meant to say.”

“Are you sure you don’t know her?” Geoff asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“It’s just that you get this look on your face when we talk about her.”

“I’m just excited about this case.”

“Sure. So Macy says that there’s loads of stuff happening.” Geoff glanced at Mitch, the goofy grin was gone and in its place the serious mask that was typical Mitch on the job. “She remodeled the church a few years ago. During the remodel is when things started to happen. Every since then there’s been problems.”

“So the thing about the other man, was that true?”

“What other man?”

“Charles and Ann-Marie.”

“Oh yeah, Ann-Marie’s father set it all up. He arranged the whole thing thinking that she would follow his lead like sheep to the slaughter. It was a money thing from what I read.”

“I’m ready to go out there and do this. So, what’s our plan?”

“Halloween.”

“Geoff, you’ve got to be kidding me. Halloween night. Please, that’s too much of a

cliché.”

“No, it’ll be the best night. Charles and Ann-Marie both died on October 31.”

Mitch took a long swig of his pop. He leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes.

“It’s just a day, and we have to jump in at some point, might as well get our feet wet with a case like this.

“I’m just thinking. They really scheduled their wedding to take place on Halloween?”

“Yeah, not the most romantic day, but time was of the essence.” Geoff could feel the excitement building. He’d been waiting for a chance like this. Their new equipment would work great for an investigation of an old church. He did feel a bit strange about going looking for spirits on Halloween, but what better way to start off their business.

“You mean because of daddy dearest?” Mitch asked.

“Something like that.”

“Okay, well let’s check everything and call back to confirm the date. I’m in, even though it’s Halloween night in an old church that was remodeled recently. Should be interesting.”

“Yeah, it should be great.”

“Hey, Geoff.”

“Yeah?”

“Maybe we should set a preliminary meeting with Macy.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Geoff took a good long look at Mitch. Something was off. “You want to meet with the client before we go in to investigate? What about keeping the relationship pure and simple before we investigate? What if she digs for

information and sets stuff up to trick us? I think there's another reason that you want to meet with Macy. You do know her."

"No, I don't." Mitch turned towards the door then hesitated. "Okay, so I haven't met her but there was a Macy in my history class last year. It could be the same girl."

Geoff could believe that he was going to have to ask Mitch this question. Hell, he would have place bets before today that he and not Mitch would have been the first to jeopardize an investigation with a personal relationship. "Is this going to be a problem?"

"No way, I won't let it be a problem. I promise to keep the relationship professional."

"Good, because you don't need that pressure on you."

"Your right." Mitch scuffed his foot against the floor, his cheeks flaming pink. "You take the lead on this investigation."

"Are you sure?" Geoff held his breath and his heartbeat slowed. Time felt like it stalled as he stared at Mitch. They'd discussed this in length, Mitch was the lead. Geoff could handle the responsibility but his talents were best used elsewhere.

Mitch opened the door and looked back over his shoulder. His jaw was set and his mouth drawn into a thin line. "I'm sure."

*Chapter 3*

Mitch pulled the black camera case out of the trunk of his ancient Cutlass Supreme. His car had seen better days, and he wouldn't mind buying a new ride, but one issue stood in the way, the equipment they were buying cost more than the down payment on a new car. He didn't regret spending the money on the camera, but every once in a while he wished he was driving a classier car than the decade old coup he'd purchased off his uncle Joe for a few thousand dollars. The thing wasn't a babe magnet. Then again, he didn't really have time for a girl in his life. But if this was the same Macy he remembered from his history class, he'd make time.

The weight of the camera made his arms ache as he ran up the steps to the old church. He blew out a breath when he reached the landing and raised his arm to knock on the heavy front door. Anticipation ground through his stomach. Would Macy be as beautiful as he remembered? He stuffed the thought, putting it back where it belonged for the duration of this investigation. He owed it to Geoff to be cool, calm and rational. Before he could rasp his first knock, the door flew open. A red headed beauty stood before him, her green eyes danced with merriment and her smile welcomed him to step forward and...Mitch stopped his train of thought and wiped the grin from his face.

He wasn't here to pick up this gorgeous girl. He was here to debunk the paranormal.

"You must be Geoff."

"Actually, I'm Mitch." He held out his hand to shake and felt a warm burst of energy flow from her as their skin touched. There were moments where everything came together and he knew exactly what he wanted. This was one of them, but he couldn't act on those feelings. It would be unprofessional to become involved with a client. However, the minute they finished reviewing the tapes and made their formal presentation, he was coming back to get her.

"Macy, it's so good to actually meet you. We've been calling back and forth so much I actually feel like we've met." Geoff took the steps two at a time, his smile flashed like a movie stars.

Macy beamed back at him. "Oh cool. I'm so glad you're finally here."

She let go of Mitch's hand and he felt like all the warmth of the universe had left him. He watched as she reached for Geoff's outstretched hand. The wind picked up and a chill ran down his back. Jealousy wasn't something he tried to participate in but his anger fired as he watched Geoff and Macy interact. The hair on the back of his neck rose and a chill snaked down his spine. Whoa, what the heck was happening? He wasn't involved with this woman, but he felt like ripping into Geoff just so he could get some of Macy's attention. Dude, he needed to get his head on straight.

"So Macy, can we set up in here?" Mitch pointed to the small room off the entry way."

"Oh, yeah, sure. Come in, come in. That must weigh a ton. I didn't mean to leave you standing there with that heavy bag."

Somehow in the opening of the door and the placing of equipment Mitch found himself squeezed between the table and the wall with Macy plastered to his chest. All coherent thoughts fled as he looked down into her bright green eyes. The soft scent of peaches and cream enticed him to take a taste. His heart hammered in his chest and his arms tingled where she'd grabbed him.

"Oh, I'm sorry." Macy went to move but it only squeezed them closer together.

"Here, let me..." Mitch moved to the left and now he could feel the roundness of her breasts pushing against his chest. Her lips curled into a smile. He couldn't help himself. Leaning in, he felt the warmth of her body press more firmly against his. Their lips were almost touching. The anticipation cut through him as he imagined how her lips would taste.

"Hey Mitch, could you come out here? I need to test something," Geoff yelled out.

"Yeah." Mitch straightened, and watched as disappointment clouded her eyes. He cleared his throat, annoyed that he couldn't finish what he'd started. He stepped around Macy and paused. Looking back at her was a mistake. He felt his body tense and the pull to take her in his arms almost overwhelmed him. "I'll be back in a minute."



Macy watched Mitch walk away. Damn, why had she pulled that Geoff stuff back at the door? She'd know who he was the minute she'd seen him. Mitch Reyas. But God, if she admitted she knew his name then she'd appear stalkerish. Not that she had stalked him, really. Just followed him around campus until she found out his name and number.

She should have called, but there never had seemed to be enough time. Now here he was in her house searching for a ghost on Halloween night. How cool was that. She'd

have to be quiet about knowing him because if he found out he might just think that she'd lied about the ghost.

Not that the ghost really scared her, but something had to change. Her sleep patterns were erratic and Macy suspected most of that was due to the ghosts. Maybe she'd exaggerated a bit to Geoff about how bad it was, but she was sure they'd find something.

"Macy, you got a second?" Geoff poked his head in the door, the goofy grin still plastered on his face.

"Sure, let me grab a jacket." She seriously needed to talk to Mitch after this. Once the investigation was over, she wouldn't let anything stop her from asking him out.

"We need another hand," Mitch said. His voice was strong and sure, one thing she'd always liked about him.

Dang, she was feeling stalkerish again. Maybe she should tell him that she remembered him from that class. But what if he didn't remember her?

"I need you to hold this camera while we try to position it and tape it down," Geoff said.

"Sure." Macy moved towards Geoff and grabbed the camera. He moved away into the other room and left her standing with Mitch. The air sizzled between them, her cheeks heated, and she had to look away.

"You know, I think we were in a class together last year."

She coughed and sputtered, trying not to drop the camera. No way would he ever be interested in her now. Not only had she almost dropped their camera, she'd looked like a fool too.

"Are you okay?"

“Yes, I just swallowed wrong.”

“It was history.”

“What?”

“The class.”

“I remember.” Macy couldn’t believe she just admitted that she remembered him.

Now he’d think she was a crazy groupie.

“You do?” Mitch tilted his head to the side and his eyebrows shot up.

Her heart hammered and her palms grew sweaty. The look in his eyes made her want to reach up and kiss him. Instead, she looked away. “Yeah, umm, it wasn’t that long ago. You know, just a semester or so. But yeah, I remember a lot of people from that class.” *Oh God, stop talking.* Macy couldn’t believe the words spewing out of her mouth. She looked up and saw disappointment in Mitch’s eyes. “I’m sorry, I’m rambling.”

“Hey guys, looks like a storm is going to hit in a few minutes.” Geoff entered the room with a gust of wind and the door slammed behind him. “Whoa, that was weird.”

“It does that when the winds whipping around outside. I don’t count that as one of the strange things that happen here,” Macy said.

“So, why don’t you tell Mitch some of the stuff that’s been going on?”

“Sure, upstairs in my bedroom there’s been some weird activity.”

“Hey Mitch, could you go upstairs with Macy and make sure you know exactly where to set up the camera to focus on the strange stuff.”

Macy saw the panicked look on Mitch’s face. Oh God, she had been acting stalkerish. Now what would she do. She’d have to play it cool and make sure she didn’t do anything stupid while she showed him around her bedroom. Dang, he was going into

her bedroom.

With the camera set up, Macy led Mitch upstairs. She could hear the first drops of rain slash against the windows and the rumble of thunder shook the floors of the old church. “It’s just up here,” she smiled over her shoulder and caught the frown on Mitch’s face. “Is something wrong?”

“No,” he barked. “I’m sorry, that was harsh. Nothing is wrong, it’s just hard to get a clear EVP when the rain is falling like this.”

“Oh, I didn’t know.” Macy opened the door to her bedroom and led Mitch to the far corner. “This is where I’ve seen the lady with the white dress on. She’s also brushed against my bed a time or two.”

“Really. Was this the old part of the church’s upstairs?”

“Yes, well a part of the room is. The old upstairs bride’s room went along this wall and continued past the new wall that I put in. The other part of the old upstairs is in my studio.”

“Really, what type of studio?”

“Painting.”

“Cool.”

The rain picked up, pounding the side of the building. Lightning lit up the room then everything went dark. Thunder crashed and a loud bang made Macy jump towards Mitch and into his arms.

“Are you alright?” He asked.

“Yeah, just a little scared.” Macy tried to pull away but Mitch wasn’t letting go. His hands were plastered on her back and his arms felt warm and inviting as he pushed her

closer to his chest. She inched forward, pressing her body into his.

The room had been thrown into total darkness. She could find her way over to the door, but honestly Mitch felt too good to leave behind.

“Do you have a flashlight?”

“I forgot it.” His voice rumbled next to her ear.

Swallowing over the lump in her throat, her breathing grew rapid. His chest pressed into her breasts and warmth spread throughout her body. The muscles of his back flexed under her hands. Gooseflesh covered her arms when she felt the nuzzle of his nose against her ear.

“Hey, guys. Macy. Mitch.”

Mitch stepped away and grabbed her hand. “Can you guide us to the door?”

“Sure.” Macy walked a path that she knew would leave both of them without aching shins or jammed toes.

“Mitch, where are you.”

“We’re in here.” Mitch yelled out.

Macy saw a light swing under her bedroom door. Geoff had the worst timing. “Here we are.” Macy placed her hand on the door handle and tried to twist it. “Something’s wrong.”

“What do you mean?” Mitch asked.

“I can’t open the door.”

Mitch stepped forward and she felt his hand replace hers on the handle.

“I’m trying to turn it but it won’t budge. Hey Geoff, you aren’t trying to turn the door knob?”

“No, I’m just standing here.”

“Okay, could you try the door handle, see if you can open it from that side?”

Macy heard the handle jiggle but the door didn’t budge. “That’s strange.”

Mitch grabbed her hand again and pulled her close. She felt good and protected in his arms.

“I’m going to try the door from in here again,” Mitch called out. She felt him moving beside her, his muscles bunched with the strain of trying to open the door but it stayed shut. “Is there any locking mechanism that could have caught on this door?”

“No, there is no lock. What is causing this?”

“I don’t know. Has anything like this ever happened before?”

“No, nothing.” Macy shivered and Mitch pulled her closer.

“Hey Geoff, let’s both try at the same time,” Mitch called out.

“Sure. Okay. I’m grasping the handle and I’m going to try turning towards the ceiling.”

“Okay, I’m ready on three. One, two, three.”

Macy heard Mitch grunt but still no results.

“Hey, Geoff.”

“Yes, Macy.”

“The breaker box is downstairs on the left side of the building. If you take the hall back through what was once the sanctuary then you’ll find the laundry room and that will lead into a small utility closet. The breakers are on the right side in the closet. Could you go down and see if they need to be thrown.”

“Sure, but I hate leaving you two trapped in there.”

“Maybe turning the lights on will help us get out,” Mitch yelled through the door. He pulled her close, keeping his hand on the small of her back. “God, I hate this.”

“What, being stuck in the room with me?” Macy asked.

“No, having something weird happening like this without any cameras going.”

“Oh, yeah. That would have been great to have something with your right now.”

His hand trailed down her back to her rump. “I don’t want to get separated. If something paranormal has us locked in here, its purpose might be to frighten us.”

“You think?”

Macy felt Mitch’s breath on her face and sighed. On the off chance that he might feel the same way she did, Macy lifted her chin and leaned in closer. Mitch’s lips brushed against her cheek. Her toes curled and her back arched, forcing her closer to his chest. The deep growl that erupted from his throat left goose bumps covering her shoulders. His lips made their way closer to hers, trailing kisses along her jaw line.

The lights popped on and Mitch jumped back. His eyes were huge and his face was a sweet shade of pink. She wanted to reach over and turn the lights off but before she could make her move Geoff’s footsteps could be heard on the stairs.

“Mitch, Macy, can you open the door now.”

Mitch reached down and turned the knob. The door swung open without any problems. “That was strange.”

“Do you think it was mechanical?” Geoff huffed out.

“I don’t know. Geoff, you go in there and see if you can get it to stick.”

Macy moved out of the way and let Geoff past. Being locked in the room with Mitch had been interesting, but she didn’t want a repeat performance. She moved to stand with

Mitch. Geoff grabbed the handle and swung the door shut. It popped open only seconds later.

“Well, it’s not sticking,” Geoff said.

“That was strange. We need to finish getting set up. I think one of our cameras needs to go in here.” Mitch glanced down at Macy and smiled.

Her heart felt lighter and she wondered what would have happened if they would have been stuck in her bedroom for the night. A shiver worked its way up her spine.

“Did you just feel a chill?” Geoff asked.

“No, no chill.”

“But you shivered,” Geoff pushed.

“I just had a thought.” Macy felt her cheeks heat and she looked down at the floor. Beside her Mitch stiffened. She glanced up and caught his gaze. Something passed between the two of them. She wanted to move closer to him and throw her arms around his neck but they had a job to do tonight and she would just get in the way if she followed Mitch around like a puppy dog.

“Okay, Mitch, you ready to roll.”

“Sure. Let’s get this camera set up and get to it.”

*Chapter 4*

“Wow, the hairs on my arms are already standing on end and we don’t have the lights out yet. This is going to be great.” Geoff was practically vibrating out of his seat as he did one last equipment check.

“Hey there little buddy, lets take a calming breath. There might not be anything here.”

“Yeah, right, and that door upstairs was just stuck.”

“It could have been anything,” Mitch said.

“Too bad we didn’t have the cameras with us.”

“You live and you learn.”

“I can’t wait to go lights out.”

“Yeah, I’m ready too.” Mitch shoved the temperature sensor, the EMF detector and two battery packs into a utility belt he’d bought just for this purpose. “We’re set, let’s go lights out.”

“Hey Mitch,” Geoff called.

“What’s up?”

“You forgot your flashlight. You might need that once we go lights out.”

“Thanks, I can’t believe I forgot that. Come on down with me and we’ll shut the lights out together. That way we can start investigating in Macy’s bedroom.” Mitch paused and shook his head.

“What’s up?”

“Isn’t Macy’s bedroom where he said she sees a woman crying in a wedding dress?”

“No, that’s in the guest bedroom downstairs. In her room she sees the image of a woman getting dressed and hears laughing.”

“Interesting, I thought it was the other way around.”

“You might have been paying more attention to the shape of Macy’s mouth than listening to what she had to say?”

“What?” Mitch felt like a kid caught sneaking candy. He paused before he flipped the switch for another light, studying Geoff’s reaction to his indignant denial of inappropriate behavior.

“Please, you think I didn’t see all those doe eyed looks passing between the two of you. And were you really that upset about being locked in her bedroom?”

“I didn’t do anything.”

“Hey, I would have. She’s great.”

“Geoff, isn’t Macy still in the house?”

“No, she went down the street for coffee. She’ll be back later. This is so cool. We’re locked in a house with only ghosts and spirits to keep us company.”

“Stop with your scary voice.” Mitch wanted to pull out his best impression of a ghost voice but he knew they were wasting time. Tonight meant the world to the future of their

investigative team. If they didn't get this right then it would effect them on future assignments. He also wanted to look good for Macy. A warm feeling spread through his chest when he thought of her. At some point before he left he would ask her out on a date. "Let's get this operation underway."

"Sure thing. Only one more light then I think we're ready to rock and roll." Geoff shot one last look at Mitch before turning off the lights. He raised his eyebrows and smiled. "This is it."

"It only took us one hour to get everything in place even with the door debacle. That's good timing. Now we have eight hours to figure out what's up here."

"Yeah, I sure hope something happens."

"I have a feeling it will."

"Mitch Reyas, I can't believe that you just said you felt it."

"I didn't say I felt a spirit, I just have a feeling this investigation is going to be good."

"Okay, I just had to clarify it. Now, this is the last light switch. Are you ready?"

"As ready as I'll ever be."

Geoff flipped the switch, throwing the room into total darkness. Mitch swung the thermal imager around the room, pausing when they saw a red flash on the screen.

"Nope, just a reflection," Geoff said.

"There's more here, I just know it."



Three hours later Geoff wondered if the spirits hanging out at this old church were in hiding. They'd seen nothing, had no personal experiences other than the door in Macy's

bedroom which they couldn't get to repeat, and they were striking out with their equipment. Part of the upstairs art studio had once been the area where the bride would dress for her wedding. Macy had expanded the upstairs over what used to be the sanctuary. Now as they paced around the room, looking at the paintings and sculptures, he wondered if part of the freaky feel of the room was the art in here.

"Hey Geoff, sounds like the rain has stopped. Let's sit on the floor for a while and do some EVP work."

"Sounds good to me. I'm turning on the digital voice recorder now. This is Geoff McNial and Mitch Reyas in the art studio of the old church downtown. This is our first EVP recording tonight."

"We don't mean you any harm. We just want to hear what you have to say," Mitch said quietly.

"Is there anything we can help you with?" Geoff asked.

They both stilled for a moment, waiting for any answer that the spirit might want to give.

"Were you going to get married?" Mitch asked.

"Can you imagine the excitement she was feeling when she was up here?"

"Who?"

"The bride who ended up killing herself."

"You mean before her father stepped in and messed everything up."

A loud bang sounded at the end of the room and both Mitch and Geoff stopped talking. They stared at each other. Geoff knew his eyes were wide with fright. It's one thing to investigate spirits and ghosts, but quite another when they start moving stuff

around. The loud noise sounded again and both were on their feet, flashlights sweeping the area looking for the cause.

“Where do you think it came from?” Geoff asked.

“Over here.” Mitch pointed to the far right corner. They searched for anything that moved or looked like it had fallen over. The noise sounded again and Geoff was able to pinpoint where it was coming from. A closet. He swallowed over the lump in his throat and inched forward. “I hate ghosts in the closet.”

With his shaking hand outstretched he grasped the door knob and turned it. The closet door swung open revealing a small space with a tiny window. The window had been left open. Geoff stepped into the closet and the noise sounded once more, this time louder than ever before. He jumped back and trampled on Mitch’s feet.

“Watch it there. Calm down. Let’s look and see what’s out the window.”

Geoff stepped forward again. His muscles tensed and every sense was heightened. His nose picked up the scent of dirty rags and paint thinner. He leaned closer to the window and looked outside. The noise sounded one more time and this time he was able to zero in on the source. An old homeless man picked up a trash can lid and slammed it down over the neighbor’s trash. He breathed a sigh of relief. The banging hadn’t been a ghost. Then disappointment flooded him, and he felt like the floor he was standing on dropped a few feet.

“It’s just an old homeless guy banging around.”

“Damn, do you think we could close the window? Wait, that smell,” Mitch said.

“It’s paint thinner. I bet she leaves this window open to let the fumes out.”

“I wonder if enough fumes are making their way outside. You know fumes can mess

you up. Make you think you saw something.”

“I’ll go down and ask her about ventilation.”

“Hold on there, I think I should be the one to ask her about that,” Mitch said.

“Really? So you’re not going to go hit on her? You really just want to ask if she gets enough air while she’s painting with no offer of a little mouth to mouth.”

“Oh, that’s low. I’m insulted. I bet I could offer her mouth to mouth without bringing up the air issue.”

“I bet you would too. How about I go? Just to keep it on a more professional level.”

“It would probably be better for now, but I get to do the wrap up with her because I’m asking her out on a date.”

“I’ll remember that,” Geoff said.

“I bet you will.”

“Yeah, and if you don’t ask her out, I’ll ask her out for you.”

“You wouldn’t,” Mitch said. His eyes rounded with worry and his face went serious.

“Come on, how long have we known each other for? Have you ever known me to ask a girl out for you?”

“No, and for the sake of record since we’re still recording for EVP’s, when was the last time you asked someone out on a date for yourself?”

“Don’t go there.”

“It’s been a few years.”

“These things take time and I haven’t met anyone I’m interest in.”

“Geoff, I’m worried about you. She wasn’t worth it.”

Heat traveled up Geoff’s neck and over his face. He didn’t want to think about her

right now, the pain still raked raw even after all these years. “I know, I just thought she was the one.”

Mitch backed out of the closet and Geoff followed. The memory of his last girlfriend still made him cringe. He’d been a fool to think she’s been interested in him. Little miss cheerleader and most popular girl in school had dumped him on graduation night. She’d only dated him so she could pass history and science. Hadn’t cared one whip about him and all her friends, even her real boyfriend, had known she’d been using him. He’d asked a couple of girls out in college but his heart hadn’t been in it.

“I know you were hurt but it’s time to get over it.”

“Your right. I just can’t find anyone who makes me feel...heck, anything.”

“Dating doesn’t mean settling down. It’s just going out for some fun and seeing if you enjoy each others company. No commitment or anything. Just two people seeing if they want to get horizontal together.”

Geoff huffed out a breath and grabbed Mitch’s shoulder. “You are not talking to Macy. I’m handling that end of the case.”

“I’m joking,” Geoff said.

Mitch ducked his head and had the good sense to look ashamed.

“Okay, I’m not joking. Yes, that’s a big part of it for me but it’s not like I’m going to take advantage of Macy, I just want to see if we are somewhat compatible. I’d like to take her out for dinner and talk to her. Nothing more. Okay, grandma?”

“Yeah, I’m not leaving her alone with you until we wrap this one up. Now, I need to go ask about the ventilation thing. Don’t misbehave while I’m gone.”

“Wait, maybe I should go down with you.”

“Not a chance. Stay here.”

“No, I’m not talking about hitting on Macy. I mean what if something happens while you’re gone?”

“Here’s the digital voice recorder. Record what you see with the thermal imager and what you hear with the voice recorder. Then if it shows up, ask for advice about women.”

“What?”

“The ghost might know something about Macy, what with it living with her and all.”

“Go now, before I deck you for that one.”

Geoff ambled down the stairs, thinking about being locked in a room with Macy. He’d lied to Mitch. He wouldn’t have done anything. God, he couldn’t believe that Alice still affected him so much. Moving on was way overdue.

He rounded the corner from the hall and found Macy resting on the couch. “Macy, it’s me Geoff.”

“Hi, you guys almost done up there?”

“No, we’re basically in the middle. I wanted to ask you about ventilation up in your studio. Sometimes toxic fumes can build up and make us think we’re hallucinating. What type of ventilation you use when you’re painting?”

“I have an air purifier going while I’m working. I also open two windows for cross ventilation. Then I have a ventilation fan that I turn on when I use the more fume-y stuff. I know it’s not perfect but I do try to make sure I’m not getting high when I paint.”

“Okay, just wondering. Also, that homeless man outside, does he always make so much noise?”

“Not every night, he’s actually running a bit late. He’s usually outside at nine forty-five.”

“Okay, that answers all the questions we have so far.”

“Hey Geoff,” Macy whispered. “Just so you know, this place isn’t very sound proof.”

“What do you mean?”

“The closet you two were in, it’s not sound proof.”

“Oh no, Mitch would freak if he knew you’d heard.”

“Don’t tell him. I don’t want him to be too embarrassed to ask me out. I really like him.”

“Okay, but I’m not going to let him keep talking and make a fool of himself.”

“I think he’s already pulled that one off, but don’t worry, I won’t hold it against him.”

“Macy, thanks for telling me.”

“Sure, Mitch seems like a nice guy.”

“That’s cool.”

“I’ll pretend I didn’t hear a thing, even that comment you made.”

Geoff knew his face had to be going pink because the heat he felt coming off of his cheeks was a chart topper. He knew he shouldn’t have said anything. Now he looked like a fool, just like Mitch.

“Don’t worry. I won’t bring it up again. But I wanted to say thanks for the compliment.”

“You’re welcome, but don’t you think Mitch can hear us?”

“No, he’s not in the closet anymore. I heard the door shut.”

“This is great, just great. Thanks for telling me.”

Geoff made it halfway up the stairs before turning around and racing back to Macy.

“So the walls are thin, don’t you think that some of the stuff you hear might just be coming from outside?”

“It could be, but it’s not the sounds that get to me, it’s the stuff I see.”

“Oh, yeah. Thanks.” Geoff made his way back to the room where Mitch continued to investigate. This wasn’t working out exactly as they had planned. Sure, Mitch and Macy getting locked in the bedroom had been exciting, but nothing else had happened. This wasn’t how he wanted their first real investigation to turn out.

*Chapter 5*

The night was wearing on and they hadn't seen anything. Mitch squeezed his hands into fists then relaxed. The door in Macy's bedroom hadn't been a fluke, or maybe it was. The desire to find something, anything to show Macy made him desperate and he hated that feeling.

"Geoff, do you think the ghosts are afraid of us?"

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe we should ask Macy to come up here."

"Mitch, we're in the middle of an investigation, not a date."

"No, like maybe the ghosts like her and would show up because she's here."

"I don't know," Geoff said. "Maybe you're right. Maybe it's more than they like Macy. What if the attraction you feel towards Macy sets the ghosts off?"

"That's an interesting theory, but I've never been here before tonight."

"Well, maybe it's just Macy, but you and I haven't had any issues with Macy's bedroom door. When you and Macy were in there together all heck broke loose. I think we need to put you two together alone and let the investigation roll."

"I don't know. When you put it that way it kind of makes me not want to put her in the line of fire."

“Nothing bad has happened so far. I don’t think the ghosts are out to hurt you or her. Plus, I’ll be watching from the monitor downstairs. If something happens I’ll come up.”

“Okay, let’s go ask her to join us.” Knowing that MaisyMacy was in the next house with them had been driving Mitch crazy all night. Not that she was the most beautiful girl in the worldShe was beautiful and , but she did something to his brain that made him feel fuzzy inside when he looked at her. That kind of energy couldn’t help but make the spirits more active.

He followed Geoff to en and stayed b his friend, hoping that she wouldn’t think that this was a p

“Macy? Listen, we were wondering if you would come up and sit in your bedroom?” Geoff asked.

“Why?” Macy’s voice sounded sleepy, like she’d just woken from a nap.

“We think that your energy might draw the entities out and make them show up,” Mitch said, doing his best to sound intelligent and not like a guy hopped up on hormones.

“You don’t want me to sit up there alone, do you?” She asked.

“No, Mitch will be in there with you.”

There was an uncomfortable pause while Macy’s eyes shifted from Geoff to Mitch and then back to Geoff. Maybe they’d asked her for too much. Sure, he was attracted to her, who wouldn’t be, but what if she really didn’t want to have any type of relationship with him. Oh man, they’d made a huge mistake and now their reputation as professional ghost hunters would be ruined.

Macy hopped up and smiled. “Okay, I’ll go with you.”

The seconds it took for her to walk from the couch to him seemed like hours and

then she slipped her hand into his and it felt like the entire house tilted. Geoff moved towards the stairs and Mitch followed, unsure he could manage climbing up to the second floor while touching Macy. Her hand felt so small in his and a strong urge to protect her welled up inside of him. He ached to pull her close. Imagined his lips brushing against hers. Thinking this way about Macy wouldn't help them further the investigation. Sure, they were using her basically as bait, but he didn't need to start putting moves on her, yet.

The stairs were narrow and only one of them could go up at a time. He felt a loss of warmth as her hand slid from his. The sway of her hips distracted him and he forgot about her hand. Instead, he followed close behind her, mesmerized by her rounded curves. At the top of the stairs, Macy slipped her hand back into his. Warmth flowed up his arm to his shoulder and then it raced all over his body, making him wonder how long he could sit alone with her and not try to kiss.

“Hey Macy, thanks for coming with us,” Geoff said.

“Gladly.” Macy squeezed Mitch's hand and he thought he had died and gone to heaven. No question about it, they were going on a date within the week.

“Okay, I'm going downstairs. I'll be watching the computer and will be right up if something funny happens. Macy, you okay with this?”

“Yeah, I'm good.”

Mitch smiled down at Macy, oblivious to Geoff leaving the room.

“What should we do?”

“We're going to start off with some EVP work.”

“How are the camera's going to pick up anything? I can barely even see my own hands?”

“They’re infrared cameras. They work great in the dark. Don’t worry, everything will be recorded. Okay, let’s find a comfortable place to sit and start the recording.”

“This is Mitch Reyas, and Macy Cole doing EVP work in the upstairs studio. Macy, would you ask the spirit the first question.”

“What kind of question?” Macy asked.

Mitch squeezed her hand, hoping to give her encouragement. “Anything you want to know, just give the spirit a few seconds to answer.”

“Okay, here goes. Do you know what true love is?” Macy waited about twenty seconds before she spoke up again. “Can we help you find your love?”

“Those are some deep questions.”

“Sorry.”

“No Macy, don’t be sorry. You’ll probably provoke the spirit with them and that’s good.”

Mitch had to drop Macy’s hand as he picked up the thermal imager and started working with it.

“What are you doing now?”

“It’s a thermal imager. If there’s anything out there producing any heat, this will find it.”

“Are ghosts hot?”

Mitch bit his tongue, squelching the bad line he really wanted to say. He swallowed hard, pushing away the thought of stretching Macy out on the floor and kissing her until the sun came up. “They aren’t as warm as humans, but they do have some heat.”

“Oh, I didn’t know.” Macy’s hand rested next to his thigh. The heat in the room

kicked up a notch and Mitch wondered if they were helping the investigation or hurting it.

A few minutes passed in total silence with nothing happening. Frustration with the lack of activity grew inside Mitch. He wanted something to happen, anything that would help Macy out. With her sitting right beside him the pressure to behave during the investigation was slowly slipping out the window. Geoff couldn't reel him back in from downstairs and Mitch had had almost enough of being a good little boy. His body heated more and he felt Macy move restlessly beside him.

"Do you have a name?" Mitch tried to concentrate on the investigation.

"Did you feel that?" Macy asked as she slid her body up against Mitch's.

"What? What happened?" He asked, putting a protective arm around her shoulders.

"Something blew past me, like a cold wind."

"It could just be a draft from the window."

"It could, but it came from my right and the window is over on the other side of the room."

"Hmmm. Ask the spirit a question."

"Can we help you find someone?"

"Whoa, there's something on the thermal," Mitch said.

"What is it?" Macy asked. Mitch stared at the screen as a red blotch grew and stretched. Then it became fuzzier before solidifying into the shape of a woman in a dress. Excitement zinged through Mitch. This was unbelievable. The image on the thermal looked almost solid. Mitch took his eyes off the thermal's screen but couldn't see the apparition. "Wow, that's cool. Macy, keep talking to her."

“Your lover, he’s downstairs. I bet if you go down you’ll find him.”

“It’s heading for the stairs,” Mitch said. “Geoff, if you can hear me don’t move or you’ll block it.”

“Let’s go down.” Mitch pulled Macy along with him. He stayed back, hoping not to disturb the spirit.

“This is creepy,” Macy said.

“You’ll be okay. I don’t think it means to harm anyone.” Macy stopped on the stairs, leaning in close and whispered in Mitch’s ear. “It’s kind of cool too. Like lovers reuniting.”

A shiver raced down his spine as he reveled in the warmth of her breath on his neck. Oh God, just a quick kiss and he’d be satisfied for a moment. But he couldn’t, not while the most incredible ghost he’d ever seen raced down the stairs to meet up with her lover. “Yeah, let’s move so we can keep her in our sights.”

They raced ahead, keeping their steps light to not disturb the spirit. Her form still showed on the screen of the thermal imaging camera. This was the most significant piece of paranormal research he’d ever seen. The spirit’s whole body could be seen, and now an ethereal form on the regular camera’s screen was visible. No one would believe their luck.

“What’s that?” Geoff asked as he came around the corner and moved close to Mitch and Macy.

“What? Where?” Mitch’s whisper carried further than he’d wanted. He prayed he hadn’t disturbed the spirits.

“There. Look at the thermal’s screen. Another form.” Geoff pointed to the image.

His eyes were round saucers, focusing on the screen and nothing else. Mitch tapped him on the shoulder and pointed to the two wispy forms in the room with them. Their heads were close together, almost kissing. Beside him, Macy squeezed his hand and he felt hope spring inside. Ann-Marie had found Charles. Could they have been separated from each other all this time and all they needed was a little help to reunite?

“Macy, has this ever happened before?” Mitch asked her.

“No, this is a first. I’ve never seen her leave the upstairs.”

“This is amazing. Seventy-five years they’ve been separated. Is this really happening?” Geoff asked.

“I think so. I think we’re witnessing the reuniting of lovers after death,” Mitch said.

“Amazing, can you imagine what people will say when they see the tapes.” Geoff tapped the screen of the thermal imager. His smile lit up the area even though darkness shrouded the room.

Mitch could make out the two shapes next to each other, their forms touching almost as though they were embracing. The hair on the back of his neck rose as they grew brighter. Their light grew with each passing second. Soon Mitch’s eyes were burning, their forms brighter than any bulb he’d ever seen. The furniture in the room started to shake and Macy wrapped her arms around him, burying her face in his chest. The noise of the rattling furniture was punctuated by a piercing shriek. Mitch almost dropped the camera. The noise threatened to overwhelm him.

Geoff dropped to his knees beside him and Macy let go of his waist and covered her ears with her hands. Pain filled his head and his ears stopped hearing the noise.

Their equipment popped off and everything went black. Even their battery lights

were dead. “Geoff,” Mitch said. He waited, no response. Then he felt a hand on his shoulder. Suddenly, a flashlight illuminated the room and he could see Geoff talking but he could hear nothing. Oh, God he couldn’t hear a thing. Macy’s lips moved, but again nothing.

Mitch held up his hand, motioning for them to stop. Pain throbbed through his head. His limbs shook and he dropped to the floor. Macy knelt before him and placed her hands on his forehead. Her lips moved but Mitch could hear nothing. Panic bubbled in his chest, but Macy’s calming touch kept him from losing it. What was he going to do?

*Chapter 6*

Geoff pulled the last of the electric cords from Macy's house. He hadn't heard anything from Mitch or Macy. They'd left for the hospital after he'd seen blood leaking from Mitch's ear. The scream had been loud. None of their equipment had broken, but he wondered about the condition of their evidence. All of the cameras had been acting strange but with Mitch's health in danger he hadn't wanted to take the time to check it out.

As he slammed the back hatch on his Toyota his phone rang. He answered, not even waiting to check the caller ID. "It's Geoff."

"Are you almost done?" Macy asked.

"Yeah, what's up?"

"Mitch has been asking for you."

"Can he hear?"

"Not really. The doctor thinks his hearing will be back to normal in a few weeks, but he's going to have to take it easy, no headphones, no music, and buffering of some sort on his ears."

"I'm on my way. I'll be there in about ten minutes. His parents are driving up in the

morning. This is so strange.”

“You’re telling me. I think we’re all going to have damage for a while, but that was amazing.”

“Yeah, it was.” He snapped his phone shut, not having the heart to say anything about the strange way the equipment had been acting before he shut it all down.

Geoff rolled into the hospital parking lot before ten minutes had passed. After double checking the locks on his car he ran to the ER door, searching for any sign of Macy. He didn’t see her. At the desk and asked about Mitch. The nurse directed him to room five. Through the closed door he could hear Mitch yelling. Without hesitation he burst through the door and saw surprise on Mitch’s face then it broke into a huge smile.

“Hey, you made it,” Mitch yelled at the top of his lungs.

“Why is he yelling?” Geoff asked.

“He has no clue. He can’t hear anything,” Macy said.

“Great. Can he leave?”

The nurse popped into the room behind him, “Please take him home. He’s making the other patients uncomfortable.”

“Really? So he’s healthy enough to leave?”

“Yes, just make sure he follows these instructions.” The nurse handed Geoff a list of do’s and don’ts. She pushed some paperwork at Mitch who happily read them out loud.

Geoff went to the bed and took the sheet from Mitch who proceeded to yell.

“Anyone got a pen and paper.”

“Here you go,” the nurse yelled over Mitch’s complaints.

“Thanks.” Geoff wrote *Don’t Yell* on the paper then decided he needed to make the

point more emphatically and he placed an exclamation mark on the page.

“What?” Mitch said in a much quieter voice.

Geoff scribbled the news of his release onto the paper and Mitch moved to get up but hesitated once the hospital gown separated at the back. His gaze swung to Macy and he blushed. Macy’s cheeks turned pink before she left the room.

Geoff helped Mitch put his shoes on since he wasn’t supposed to put undue pressure on his ears by bending over too often. They walked out of the ER and Mitch asked about the evidence, his volume still too loud.

Geoff held his finger to his mouth. Mitch cursed but didn’t talk again.

This would be hard for both of them but Geoff wouldn’t abandon his friend. Macy had left a voicemail on his phone stating that she’d been exhausted and needed to go home and rest. She’d call later in the day.

The sun was peeking over the horizon as he pulled into the parking lot for Mitch’s apartment. His buddy’s head rested against the window and drool ran down his cheek. Great, there was no way Geoff could help carry him upstairs. Instead he started with the equipment, unloading it all into the front room.

The sun was up full by the time he’d unpacked the car. He opened the door next to Mitch and reached across him, unbuckling the seatbelt. “Mitch, you need to wake up.” Heck, what was he doing, Mitch couldn’t hear a thing.

Geoff touched Mitch’s face, tapping his cheek. Mitch jumped as he opened his eyes. Geoff pulled him out of the car and helped him upstairs. He pushed Mitch towards his bed room, making sure he had water before shutting the door and letting him sleep off the pain and fatigue. The evidence of the haunting and dramatic conclusion was on the tapes

and Geoff wanted to fire up the equipment and check it out, but exhaustion raked at his nerves. Eventually they'd review the material.



Mitch's ears still ached but he could hear most voices as long as the person was facing him. Still, his phone was useless to him. His mother had come for a few days, babying him and fixing him soups and other favorites from his childhood. It'd been nice for a day, but now his interest in Macy had resurfaced and he wanted to find out if the things he'd felt on Halloween night were a product of that evening or something more.

He and Geoff were set to go through the evidence in about twenty minutes, Geoff doing the audio and him the video. This would be the case of the century, if they'd captured the evidence.

The light on his phone indicated he was receiving a call but he still couldn't hear voices over the phone so he let it ring over to voicemail. He'd let Geoff listen to the message and call the person back.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and his heart stopped before thundering in his chest. He spun around, ready to takedown whoever had broken in.

"It's me," Geoff said as he ducked the punch that Mitch had thrown.

"Oh crap, don't scare me like that."

"I'm sorry, but I knocked before I let myself in."

"Geesh, I guess I didn't hear it because my phone was ringing."

"You want me to listen to it?"

"Sure," he tossed the phone to Geoff and cued up the video from Macy's place.

Everything looked great. The camera had been place in a primo spot to pick up the action

they'd witnessed.

"Press pause," Geoff said.

Mitch paused the video and turned to hear what Geoff wanted.

"It's Macy. She was wondering how you're doing. You want me to call her back?"

"Not yet. I want to review some of this and see if we can tell her about how wonderful everything looks."

"You're going to ask her out, right?"

"Yeah, but I want to wait until this is all done."

"Good, that way if anyone asks we can say that we didn't compromise the investigation."

"Yeah, now let's get down to work." Mitch returned to watching the video. They were at it for over three hours when the broke for pizza. They hadn't caught anything of significance but he knew something would come up soon on the screen.

After the break he hit play on the video and within minutes the picture started to jump and flake out. "Geoff, look at this. It looks wonky."

"Wonky? What do you mean?"

"Just watch," Mitch said.

They both stared at the screen and disappointment sucked the joy out of the process when the video went all white, blocking out any image.

"What just happened?" Geoff asked.

"Damn, I have no clue. Maybe it'll clear up." He fast forwarded the tape, searching for anything that wasn't a blank screen.

"It's all gone," Mitch said. "None of the cool stuff made it onto video. This is crap. I

can't believe that it's all gone."

"It can't be all gone," Geoff said.

"Look, it's not there."

"Maybe another tape."

Mitch hooked up the High-8 and fast forwarded to the end of the tape. "There's nothing there."

"How about the thermal?"

"Let's look."

They hooked up the thermal and weren't surprised to find it blank too. "Damn, this sucks. Call Macy for me. Let's have her come over and see this," Mitch said.

"Sure, I'll get her on the phone."

Mitch continued to stare at the white screen watching the nothingness that it displayed. He shook his head, wondering if they'd find something if they took the video apart and enhanced each frame. The intense energy from the white light must have erased the video tape somehow.

He played the thermal forward and backwards, searching for anything, but it was all gone except for the reflection on the window of him and Geoff early on in the investigation.

Geoff stood up and tapped Mitch on the shoulder. He pointed to the front door and smiled. At least he got to see Macy even if the investigation went to hell.

The door opened and he couldn't help but draw in a sharp breath. She was beautiful. The radiance of her skin made her look happy even though she was frowning. Geoff must have told her about the video going bad. She came to him and took his hands into

hers. Even the disappointment of the technical mess-up couldn't keep him from feeling happy that she was here. "Hi, I'm glad you came." Macy blushed, the corners of her mouth tilted up into a shy smile. "Can you hear me?"

"Yeah, as long as you're facing me. The doctor said that my hearing would be back to normal in a few weeks."

"Good, I can't wait."

"Really, why?" Mitch asked.

"Hey guys, just wanted to remind you both that I'm still here," Geoff said loud enough for Mitch to hear.

"Oh, yeah. Here Macy, have a seat. I want you to see this. I don't know what happened."

"Okay, so what should be there?"

"Exactly what we saw, but there's nothing," Geoff said.

Mitch sat down and Macy squeezed in next to him, her thigh brushed up against his, sending a jolt of craving through him. He wanted to kiss her long and hard but not until they were alone. They exchanged smiles before he hit play on the video and turned their attention to the damaged image.

All three of them watched in silence as the screen went from the image of Macy's stairway to the white-out that filled the last hour of tape.

"Does that mean that everything that we saw is gone?" Macy asked.

"I think so. I want to do some video manipulation, but I don't think we're going to get anything special. This is it," Mitch said.

"Wow, that's not good," Macy said.

“Are you disappointed?” Geoff asked.

“We’ll yeah, aren’t you guys?”

“Yes.” Both Mitch and Geoff said at the same time.

“I’m not upset at you two, but this isn’t what I wanted to see.”

“Well, we know that your place was haunted. I think we can say that without the evidence because we all three experienced it,” Geoff said.

“Yeah, and I think the white-out proves to us that something strange was going on that night. We weren’t imagining it. We saw two spirits. Now we just have to comb over this evidence to find out if we can get anything from the tape. I’m going to pick it apart one frame at a time,” Mitch said.

“Won’t that take a long time?” Macy asked.

“You won’t mind seeing me long term, will you?” Mitch took her hand, rubbing the palm with his thumb.

“No, that would be--wonderful.”

Mitch lowered his gaze to her lips and leaned in. He could smell the sent of peaches in her hair. He licked his lips, anticipating how sweet she’d taste.

“Hey guys, I’m still here,” Geoff said. “Do I need to leave?” Macy giggled, her face flamed pink.

“We’ll behave, that is until you leave,” Mitch growled.

“We’re not getting much done here. I’m going to take the audio with me and go home. That is, unless you want to be trained to become an investigator, Macy.”

“Me, really?”

“Wait, I’m not sure that would be a good idea,” Mitch said.

“Why not?” Macy raised her eyebrows at Mitch.

“Hold on, I didn’t mean to start anything.” Geoff gathered up the audio equipment.

“You know, Macy, maybe this is something we talk about later.”

“You’re right. I’m kind of busy with my work. I don’t really have time for another job.”

Mitch held in his sigh of relief. He liked Macy but he didn’t want to work with his girlfriend. Not that he’d let her know, yet. Geoff waved as he closed the door, leaving him and Macy alone.

“You okay?” Mitch asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” She placed her hand on his chest and he felt the heat singe his flesh.

“I’m glad Geoff left.” Mitch reached out and toyed with a strand of her hair.

“Me too.” Macy leaned in and lifted up on her toes. She pulled his head down and kissed him before he could react. Her lips pressed against his and her arms wrapped around his waist, pulling him close. Desire flamed inside and he opened his mouth to her probing tongue. His mind went blank and his body melted against hers.

She pulled away and Mitch blew out a heavy breath. “Wow, what a kiss.” Even though the investigation hadn’t gone the way he’d hoped, finding Macy made his day.

“Yeah, not bad for a ghost buster.”

“Not bad, that was better than not bad.”

“You want to try again.” Macy pulled him close, wrapping her arms around him.

“I think I found something better than a ghost this Halloween.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, I found you.” Mitch kissed Macy again, drinking in all that she offered and giving her more than he took.

*The End*