

Though first introduced in ***Marrying Mr. Wright***, Avery and Carrie were the main characters in ***The Preacher's Wife***, book 4 of the Mysterious Ways series. This short story is a peek into their married life.

***Hodges Farm
Mystery, Wyoming
June 13, 2011***

Dark clouds blocked out the sun as Carrie hurried across the yard to the big barn behind the house. It had rained off and on throughout the day, so it had stayed chilly, never even reaching sixty degrees. Her husband had said he'd be working on one of the pieces of machinery that was being cranky. When she stepped into the barn, though, the old tractor they used to till Avery's mom's garden sat alone. No Avery.

Before she could open her mouth to call out to him, he stepped into the aisle from behind a stack of hay bales and put a finger to his lips. Then he motioned her closer.

Puzzled, she crossed the straw and hay strewn floor to join him. "What is it?" she whispered, though she wasn't sure why she was supposed to be quiet.

"Look," he whispered back, pointing to the open stall nearby with a grin.

Moving as quietly as she could, she went to the stall and peered inside. A smile instantly curved her lips.

One of her mother-in-law's young brown Chinese geese was nestled in a bed of straw in one corner with the gray tabby kitten she'd gotten the week before. The gosling was from a clutch Rosie had handled since hatching. He, or she, they weren't sure which, had feathers missing on its head.

The gosling rested its head backwards on its wing, and the kitten was curled up against its side. Faint purring filled the quiet of the space.

"Is that the baby the Dawsons' dog got hold of a few days ago?"

Rosie had come within an inch of beating that Jack Russell Terrier to death with a broom to save the gosling. Nobody had been more surprised than her that the dog had dropped it and it had still been alive. Avery's dad, Russ, had given the Dawsons an earful about keeping control of their dogs when he'd taken the bruised and battered canine home. He'd also told them the next time one of their dogs strayed onto his property and threatened his animals, he'd shoot it.

"Yeah." Avery leaned a shoulder against one of the support posts and motioned vaguely in the direction of the two young animals. "I guess they've bonded over a mutual hatred of dogs."

"Could be." Carrie chuckled. "That's too cute. I wish I had a camera on me. Your mom would love this."

"Gotcha covered." Avery whipped a cellphone out of his pocket. Though there was

no service out there, he liked to have it on hand in case he wanted to make notes for a sermon or a task needing done.

He eased into the stall to get closer to the pair, appearing to snap pictures as he went. He'd gotten about four feet away when the gosling lifted its head to look at him.

It climbed to its feet, hollering loudly, and lunged toward him, its neck snaking forward.

The kitten shot to her feet, the hair on her back and tail puffed out.

Avery pivoted and hurried back to Carrie, his eyes wide and mouth twisted.

"Oops. I suspect I made him mad."

"You think?" Carrie laughed.

After staring at Avery to make sure he wasn't going to return, the gosling returned to its bed of straw and settled back down.

The kitten eyed Avery and Carrie for a moment longer then snuggled back up with the bird.

In moments, both returned to sleep.

"Silly critters." Carrie grinned at her husband. "Want to try for more photos?"

"Uh... I think I'll make a strategic retreat instead."

She laughed.