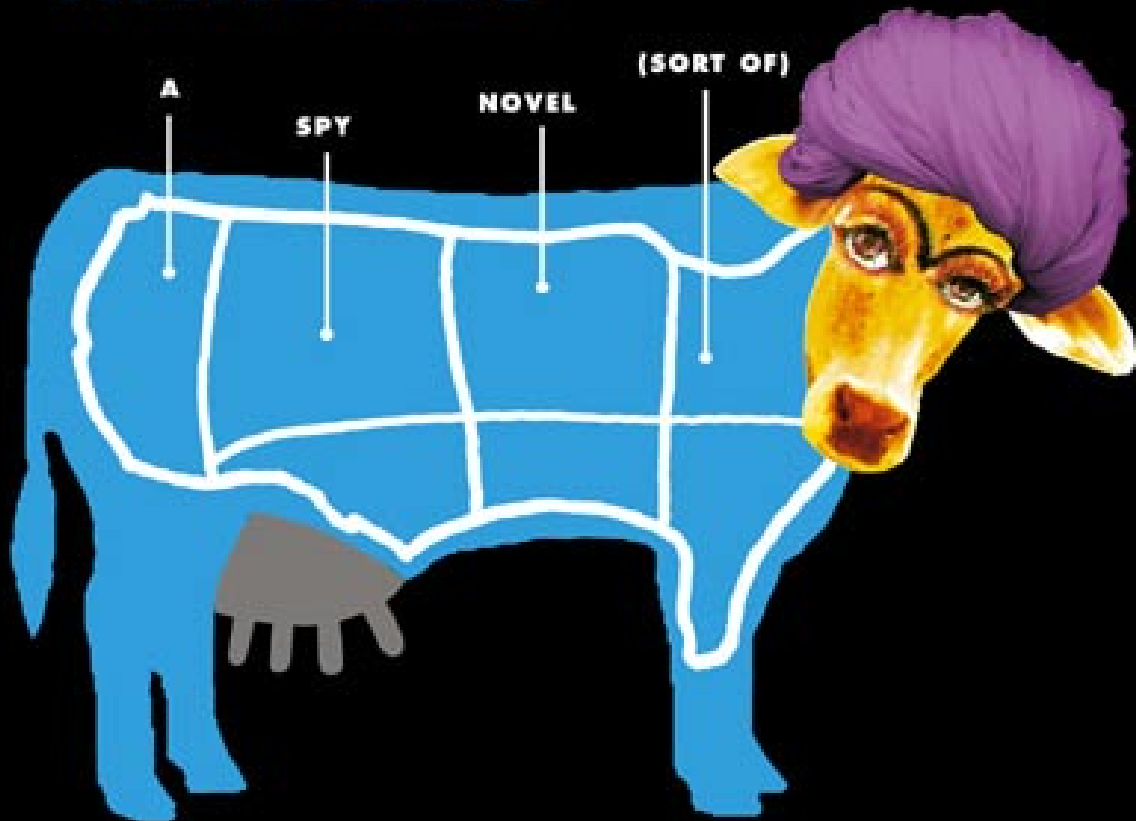


LORD VISHNU'S LOVE HANDLES

FREE
CHAPTER
TEST DRIVE &
PASS ON TO
YOUR FRIENDS



Will Clarke

CHAPTER ONE

Dreams More Bitter Than Sweet

Shelby is a slut. She is also my wife. And that presents certain problems. Actually it presents major problems; I just don't like to think about them. Mainly because I have no real way of knowing that Shelby is a slut. I just have these dreams. And I can't exactly say to her over breakfast, "Honey, I had this dream last night that Reed Bindler was knocking your bottom out. And I think this needs to stop."

That would be crazy talk. And I've spent my life pushing crazy talk like that to the back of my mind so that I could lead a normal existence. So that I could have a happy life here in Dallas. With Shelby and our two-year-old son, Noah. We live in a big Mission-style house on Lakewood Boulevard. I've got a green Range Rover and a hyper Border Collie named Max. It's a good life. And I don't think I should mess it up just because I have bad dreams about Shelby. That would be stupid.

However, to be perfectly honest, I do have this habit of just knowing things. And that scares me. What's wild is my knowledge has no logical basis. I didn't read it in a book or pick it up in conversation. Sometimes I just know. And I'm not talking about getting a weird feeling about lottery numbers or shit like that. I'm talking about full blown, I-know-this-for-a-fact, Jack. Like right now, I know that the phone is about to ring and it's going to be Shelby's mom. And I know

that Noah is about to get a sore throat. I can taste it coming on. And sure enough, he gets one. And sure enough, the phone rings and it's my mother-in-law.

This knowing things was what got me into the Internet back before anyone knew it would go colossal. This knowing things has put a very nice roof over our heads. But it is also part of my problem. A therapist once told me I might be crazy. Well, he didn't say that exactly, but I knew what he meant. That's when I stopped talking about what I "know." And I stopped seeing that asshole. Now, I keep what goes on inside my head in my head. I just go to work building Web sites and I play golf at the club. I keep my mouth shut. I make money, which makes Shelby happy. And this, in turn, makes me happy.

Or at least, close to happy.

Okay, truth be told, I'm not all that happy. It's the dreams and all this knowing-things-that-I-shouldn't. It stalks me and beats me in the head. Like every time I think Shelby cheats on me. And I think she does this quite often. She fucks the pool guy. She screws her tennis pro. And she nails my best friend and business partner, Reed Bindler, every Wednesday night when she says she's at Bunco. I dream about all of this; and I am afraid that this is true. I know that Shelby loves me. But I keep having these dreams and they are burning me alive.

Now, hold on to your seat because this is where things get really wacko. I think I know why Shelby cheats. I saw it one night after I rolled off her sweaty body and into a dream where her genes, her actual DNA, spoke to me. I know this sounds absolutely crazy, but they told me of their plan. They told me that they were promiscuous genes, programmed by nature to fuck around. Nothing against me, they said. Shelby just has slutty DNA. And from a survival-of-the-fittest perspective, this is a very good thing. Something about a wide range of spawnings adding variety to her own genes and thus ensuring their replication.

This is how her genes told me it works: Shelby marries me, a cerebral provider. They actually called me that. A "cerebral provider"?

I mean, is that a compliment or is that a put-down? Anyhow, Shelby gets all her food and shelter needs met by me in spades. And our coupling will produce children who share my genes and her genes. This is good for me because my genes tend to be the faithful sort. Matched up with Shelby's slut genes, my seed will spread all over the place. According to Shelby's DNA, our son, Noah, is likely to grow up to be a wealthy philanderer who will father tons of kids out of wedlock—who will in turn grow up and do the same. This will be very good for my genetic proliferation. Morally, though, it kind of sucks. But Shelby's DNA reminded me that evolution is amoral and so is Shelby's sex drive.

It's her way of hedging her evolutionary bets. If there's a war or something and we go back to a primitive society, her hearty offspring from those athletic fucks will survive, whereas my offspring might die because they're too brainy. Plus her genes get the best of both worlds. She can have genetically diverse offspring and still be married to the "cerebral provider" who will use his high IQ and income to raise her bastard kids.

Shelby would tell you this is all horseshit. She will tell you she's never once thought about genetics or evolutionary strategies. And she would be telling you the truth. But her genes have told me the real story. And it's really fucking me up.

So far, we've only had one kid. Noah. And he's mine. I can see it in his eyes; I can read it in his soul. Besides, Noah looks just like I did in baby pictures—all blue eyes, blond hair, and slobber. You see, my DNA has a little trick of its own. My sperm are a fierce sort and my body knows what Shelby's up to. So I fuck her every chance I get. At least once a day. That way my little guys attack and kill all the foreign sperm. So far this has kept her extramarital affairs from fertilizing any eggs. Which is good, considering Shelby refuses to go on the Pill; she says it makes her fat. Plus, her infidelity always peaks when she's ovulating. Or at least that's when my dreams about her infidelity always peak. So far I've been winning. But I'm not sure how much

longer me and my little guys can keep up the fight.

Anyway, it really doesn't matter if I'm right about Shelby or not. Either way I'm fucked. Either my wife is cheating on me or I'm a nutcase who thinks DNA chitchats with him. So take your pick. That's why I'm not going to worry about it. I learned a long time ago if you go around digging for answers, you'll only find problems. It's best just to live your life: go to the grocery store, bicker with your wife over your checking account balance, watch TV, and read your kid to sleep. That's where reality is and that's where I try to keep my thoughts these days.

Let me back up here. There's a lot of stuff you need to know other than all this mental crap anyway. First of all, my name is Travis Anderson. I graduated from SMU. Right out of school I started my own Web development company with my fraternity brother, Reed Bindler.

I'm not a bad guy. I'll admit I've paid for a handjob or two at a titty bar. I've cheated a little bit on my taxes. And I lie constantly about my golf game. But then again, who doesn't? The hardest drug I've ever done is pot. And I go to church at Highland Park United Methodist almost every Sunday. I feel confident in saying that I'm the good guy in this story. I would never fuck around on Shelby. (You've got to be kidding if you count the handjobs. I could do that myself. And anything you can do yourself doesn't count.) I'm just your average guy who has had slightly above average luck with his finances.

But unlike Shelby, I didn't come from money. I grew up in a suburb that was planted smack-dab in the middle of a north Louisiana cotton field. We're talking tract houses with carports and station wagons. We weren't poor but we weren't rich, either. We were just white. My childhood was a blur of dirt clod wars, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and Jiffy Pop. I just happened to test really well. So after high school, I went to SMU on scholarship. It's like my dad always said, "You lie down with dogs and you'll wake up with fleas." And

sure enough, after four years of being around all that money, I was itching for cash.

That's when I had this dream about the Internet. I wish I could say that this big revelation was visited upon me from an angel on high. But that wasn't how it happened. I just dreamed about laptop computers; they were everywhere and everyone was using them. It was kind of like a Microsoft commercial. I mean, the Internet was already out there. It was pretty obvious what I should do. So I bought some books about HTML and I taught myself how to build Web sites. Now if I had thought big like maybe Jeff Bezos or Mark Cuban, I would have built my own e-commerce site. However, I didn't. I just built crappy little Web sites for crappy little companies. Now, instead of being a billionaire without any real worries, I'm a millionaire with about a million problems.

In fact, one of my biggest problems is my business partner, Reed. His dad financed my idea back when we graduated. Reed is worthless. He's been my best friend for over ten years now and I've never once heard him say anything that gives any evidence that he's capable of higher thought. He's conceited, mean-spirited, lazy, and completely unfunny. But he drives a silver Boxster and in Dallas that goes a long way.

Oh, yeah. Reed is also bald.

Or he would be bald if he didn't have some Asian's hair sewn to his head every week. Reed zips around uptown in his Porsche with his thick black hair blowing in the wind, acting like he invented sex. The other day I found myself keying his car. Ever since I started having dreams about him and Shelby, I have grown to hate Reed Bindler.

And he knows it, too. I mean, I don't think he knows I keyed his car, but he knows I can't stand him. We never talk to each other anymore. Even at work. I go into my office and he goes into his. We occasionally send each other emails. I hate to say it, but our little company isn't doing so well in this war zone.

But you know what? I don't care. I'm not the one who came

from money and I'm not the one who needs it. I could go back to my tract house life. Maybe Shelby couldn't, but I could and I would like it. So I sit in my office and I play on the Internet. There's this site called PsychicCow.com. It's a game where you guess what color the cow's udders are going to be. I beat that cow all day long while I let Mr. Fancy Pants run our company. Let that mutherfucker run it right into the ground and then let's see if he can afford the Porsche and the fake hair. Let's see Reed Bindler with his bald head driving a Ford Taurus and selling insurance. Let's see how Shelby's DNA gets off on that.

I keep obsessing about Reed and Shelby. And I don't even know for sure if they are cheating. I told myself I really didn't want to know. But that's horseshit. I do want to know. I have to know. Reed Bindler is a fuck and if he and Shelby are screwing around behind my back, somebody's going to pay. I mean, if I'm right about Reed, then I'm probably right about the pool guy and the tennis pro. Then my dream about Shelby's DNA wouldn't be crazy at all; it would be prophetic.

Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to send Shelby a book recommendation from Amazon.com. They have this email-a-friend-about-this-book thing. Except, instead of putting that it's from me, I'll change the name and return address to Reed's. Within seconds, Shelby will have some approximation of this message in her mailbox:

To: shelbycat@halowire.com
From: reed@andersonbindler.com
SUBJECT: Check out Cheaters at Amazon.

Shelby,
Thought you'd be interested in this item at Amazon.com.
Cheaters: 180 Telltale Signs Mates are Cheating and
How to Catch Them
Enjoy!
Reed Bindler

Our Price: \$11.17 Availability: Usually ships within 24 hours

**CLICK HERE TO
ORDER YOUR COPY OF**



**LORD VISHNU'S
LOVE HANDLES**

“Will Clarke is part David Sedaris, part Dave Eggers, part Charlie Kaufman, Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Robbins, and Kurt Vonnegut . . . and a 100% original Will Clarke.”

— **SARA PRITCHARD**, author of *Crackpots*

Advance Praise for ***Lord Vishnu's Love Handles***

“*Lord Vishnu's Love Handles* is an entertaining and gritty journey into the supernatural, full of wit and surprises at every turn.”

— **TONY HAWK**, author of
Hawk: Occupation: Skateboarder

“A twisted, hilarious, amphetamine-fueled parable for our time.”

— **ROB BINDLER**, director of
Hands on a Hard Body

“*Lord Vishnu's Love Handles* is a great and unashamed page-turner, full of fabulous characters. I just wish that the remote viewers were really that exciting.”

— **JON RONSON**, author of
THEM: Adventures with Extremists
& *Men Who Stare at Goats*

Lord Vishnu's Love Handles

A Spy Novel (Sort Of)

by Will Clarke

Simon & Schuster, July 2005

Travis Anderson has a habit of knowing things. So far he's milked his premonitions only to acquire an upper-middle-class lifestyle—pretty wife, big house, and a shiny Range Rover—without having to make any real effort. But recent visions threaten his yuppie contentment. Haunted by omens of impending cancers, stillborn babies, and personal train wrecks, he is compelled to make a series of inaccurate and horrifying prophecies that humiliate him in front of his fellow country club members. The IRS pulls Travis's number, too, demanding an audit of his sloppy bookkeeping.

Drowning in mounting financial problems and apparent mental illness, Travis tries booze, pills, even golf to stay afloat, but nothing works. His wife and friends are forced to stage an intervention. Travis is in danger of losing his family, his career, and ultimately, his sanity. That is, until he meets a cult member in rehab who claims to be the final incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Suddenly, the tragically shallow Travis is saddled with the responsibility of bettering mankind and saving the world.

Combining a wildly inventive plot with witty dialogue and a strangely lovable—if possibly deranged—narrator, Will Clarke's dazzling debut will have readers eagerly following Travis on his mind-boggling and hilarious journey.