



## **I Could Just Eat You Up!**

**By  
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## Chapter One

“You’re going to bake you a gingerbread man with a huge what?”

Rayne kept her face as serious as she possibly could—which was pretty hard considering the topic of discussion. “You heard me.”

Her best friend, Shelly, sent her a questioning look before turning her surprise into laughter. After a couple of minutes of uncontrollable mirth, she found her voice. “A gingerbread man with a big dick.” She wiped away the tears and rolled her eyes. “Rayne Talum, you are one perverted woman.”

“Maybe so, but if I have to bake cookies for the office holiday party, I may as well bake something I’ll enjoy. Like a gingerbread man with a big, *edible* dick.”

Shelly followed Rayne into the kitchen, scooping up the wine bottle and refilling her glass. “Oh, sure. Why not? I can just see Mr. Grissom’s face when you hand him a cookie. ‘Here Mr. Grissom, sir, enjoy. Then maybe we can talk about that raise you’ve been promising me. Providing the old fart of a boss swings that way.’”

Rayne flipped open the cupboard and pulled out her baking tray—which she rarely used—waxed paper, all the ingredients, and a large pot. She filled the pot with water and turned on the heat to set the liquid to boil. “No, you twit. I have just enough ingredients to make two batches. One for the office party and a few extra cookies, including one nice, large man for me.”

“Good. It’s nice to know you haven’t totally lost it. I thought for a minute that all the wine we drank tonight had screwed up your head.”

Rayne combined the sugar and butter, and beat an egg into the mixture. “Do you think I’m professionally suicidal? Although I doubt I’d be the first attorney who ever got disbarred for acts of an immoral nature.”

She and Shelly shared a chuckle over the joke. Making jokes at their profession was fine when it was between them, but let any outsider try it and they’d jump all over the person.

“Why not just buy something at the bakery like you did last year?” Shelly, like Rayne, didn’t like to cook, much less bake.

“Because I heard Old Man Grissom telling someone that he knew the cupcakes I brought

last year were store-bought. And that he prefers homemade.” As she added the molasses and orange juice, Rayne flipped her hair out her way. “Damn, I need to get in to see Roberto soon. This hair is driving me crazy.”

“We should all be driven crazy by our long, shiny, black hair.” Shelly twirled a finger around her short, mousy-brown curls. “Stop bitching, bitch.”

Rayne knew she should be thankful for her looks. With raven hair flowing to the middle of her back and a fit—okay, sexy as hell—body, she knew she often drew attention away from her less attractive friend. Still, as an attorney trying to be taken seriously in the courtroom, her appearance was sometimes a detriment to her career goals. “Yeah, yeah. I know. Sorry.”

She continued to work by mixing the dry ingredients into the dough. Once finished, she shoved the mixture into the refrigerator. “Okay, we’ve got about an hour until the dough’s stiff enough to handle.”

“Stiff enough to handle?”

Both women chuckled as Shelly slapped her knee in slapstick style at her own joke. “Get it? Stiff? Handle?”

Rayne grinned at her best friend. “Too funny. I set up you up, didn’t I?”

“You sure did. And I just couldn’t resist.”

Washing her hands, Rayne had to admit. Shelly’s wit was quick and funny.

“Time to open another bottle.” Shelly didn’t wait for Rayne to answer—not that she’d have objected—and uncorked another bottle. Filling both their glasses, she raised hers in the air and toasted, “Here’s to victories in the courtroom.”

“Here, here.” Rayne lifted her glass to the toast and then started to take a sip. “As long as my winning streak continues, I’m a happy woman.”

“And victories in the bedroom. God knows you need something to happen in there. Are you a happy woman in the sack?” Shelly backed up as Rayne sputtered, sending a spray of red wine over her blouse.

“Hey! Watch it.” As she finished wiping the splatters off her white now-turned-polka-dot-red blouse, she flipped the towel at her friend. “It takes long, lonely hours of research and preparation to win cases. I can’t help it if my work keeps me too busy to socialize.”

“Socialize?” Knowing Rayne would follow her, Shelly whirled and headed for the living room again where a three-foot-tall Christmas tree rested on a fold-out card table. “Lady, I don’t

care if you find Mr. Right any time soon. But, judging from the fact that you're going to bake a gingerbread man with a major johnson tells me you need to get some and get some soon."

"I'm just having some fun." Rayne wiggled the cord for the lights on the tree to get all of them blinking again. "Isn't that what you wanted me to do?"

"Yeah, but with a real, flesh and blood man. Not one you can eat."

The women stopped and caught the expression on each other's face. Breaking into laughter again, Rayne waited for the remark she knew Shelly wouldn't let pass.

"Okay, one you can eat. But he needs to actually be breathing, too."

Together, they flopped on Rayne's comfy couch and stared at the muted television screen. Rayne punched the remote, took another long sip of her wine, and pretended to watch the holiday scene of an old movie while she thought about Shelly's words.

\* \* \* \*

An hour and a half later, the ladies returned to the kitchen and started working with the dough on waxed paper. Shelly, although a whiz of an attorney, was useless in the kitchen so Rayne designated her as "creative advisor" just to keep her involved, but not involved enough to ruin the process. At last, the dozen cookies she'd made for the office party rested cooling on the counter.

"Okay, now for the fun part. Emphasis on "part." Rayne rolled out a large piece of dough between two pieces of waxed paper. Taking the largest gingerbread man cutter she owned, she cut out five cookie men. She laughed as she pulled the top sheet of waxed paper off her creations and made eyes, mouths and noses with raisins. "I'm making a male harem for me."

"Hey, what about me?" Shelly dipped her fingers into her wine and sprinkled a few drops on the man nearest to her. "How about a drinkie-poo, sweet man?" Giggling wildly, she almost dropped her glass. "Get it? Sweet man? Can't get much sweeter than you, huh, baby?" Leaning over, she planted a quick kiss on the wine-stained cookie.

"Shell, you are now officially polluted. Thank God you live right across from me."

Shelly frowned, but saluted her in agreement anyway. "Shoot. I'm merely getting to know my genitalia-deprived boyfriend." She patted the cookie and added, "He reminds of my last boyfriend." She paused as if considering her words and shook her head. "Nope. That's not right.

He did have a dick. He just didn't have a backbone. I knew he lacked some sort of body part."

"Speaking of which." Pulling a long strip from the leftover dough, Rayne placed it on a spare sheet of paper and bent over in concentration. "I'm working on a masterpiece."

"Ooh, let me see. Let me see." Shelly leaned closer and tried to snag a peek past Rayne's shoulder.

"Back off, woman. You've already claimed your man."

"But only one. Give my little man a big one, okay? I don't want him to have penis envy when he sees what your man gets."

Rayne continued to fashion penis after penis, placing one on each cookie. However, each cookie's "endowment" was bigger than the last until, finally, the cookie on the end had a very long, very thick penis attached to it.

"Voilà!" Rayne stepped back and waved her hands with a flourish. "I have created the perfect male specimen."

"Oh. My. God." Shelly slopped a bit of wine on the floor as she studied the five cookies. "I think my guy got cheated."

"Sorry, but I kind of let my imagination—and their dicks—grow as I went along." Rayne crossed her arms and admired her creations. "Now, let's get them hot."

"If only we could get them hot *and* bothered." Shelly placed her glass on the counter and bent to wipe up the spill on the floor. "Forget that. If only we could get real men hot as easily. Or get hot men as easily."

Rayne placed the cookie sheet with her five cookie-men into the oven. "I don't know if my additions to their anatomy will hold up in the oven, but I guess we'll find out."

"Uh, Raynie?" Shelly shuffled into the living room as Rayne closed the oven door, checked the temperature, and set the timer.

"You okay, Shelly?" Following her friend into the holiday-decorated living room, she held back a laugh as she watched her friend sway across the room. "I think it's time to put you to bed."

"You are so s'right." Shelly wobbled to the door, scooping up her keys, dropping them and scooping them up again. "Nightie-might." She paused, considered her words, shook her head, and tried again. "Mighty-night." With a thumb's up signal, she opened the apartment door.

"Can you make it by yourself?" Rayne winced as Shelly bumped into the doorjamb,

bounced off it, and stumbled to the apartment directly across from hallway. Running to help her friend, Rayne took the key from her hand and opened her door. She let Shelly lean on her as she directed her to her bedroom and helped her crawl under the covers.

“Do you want me to help you get undressed?”

Shelly batted away Rayne’s hands like a cat swatting at pesky flies. “Naw, I’m super-pooper. No praw-blame-o.” With a tug of the covers, Shelly slid under the comforter and fell fast asleep.

“Okay, I get the hint. But I’ll bet you’ll be sorry you didn’t take my help in the morning.” With one last check on the Sleeping-Not-So-Beauty, Rayne pivoted on her heel and headed back to her apartment.

Walking into her slightly disarrayed living room, Rayne caught the smell of something cooking—and cooking too much. “Oh, shit, my cookies!” She dashed into the kitchen, grabbed a pot holder, and threw open the oven door.

## Chapter Two

“Damn-it-damn-it-damn-it-damn-it!”

Rayne glowered at the burnt mess on the cookie sheet and wished she could turn back time. While she’d been helping Shelly to bed, four of the five men had gotten scorched. Smoke still drifted up from their blackened forms to tickle her nose and turn her stomach.

“Shit. What a waste.” But her anger dissipated as she noticed the fifth cookie; the one with the largest, most endowed appendage. Miraculously, the sole “survivor” was a perfect golden-brown. “Wow, talk about getting lucky.” Pulling a spatula out of the drawer, she scooped up the lone cookie and placed him on a paper napkin to cool. “My oven must be heating irregularly. Why else would the others burn and not you?”

Letting the last residue of irritation leave her, she glanced at her half-empty wine glass sitting on the counter. “Okay, Rayne, you’ve had your quota of booze, too. Not only are you talking to yourself, you’re talking to a cookie, too.” She laughed and scraped the burned cookies into the garbage disposal. “Thank goodness I have tomorrow morning off. I think I’m going to need it for the massive hangover headed my way.”

Rayne turned back to the one remaining cookie and studied him—*it!* Puffing out pent-up sexual frustration, she let her imagination run wild. “Look at you. You are absolutely perfect. Wonderful dark eyes, a smile with lips just starting to turn up on the end, and a nice nose. If only I could find a man with even half your bod. Preferably the lower half.” Lovingly, she ran a finger from the top of the gingerbread man’s head to the slender waist she’d fashioned for him. “And what a fantastic job I did on making your Willie, even if I do say so myself.” She traced the long strip of solid cookie until she came to the tip of the penis. “Damn, but I do good work.”

*Wait a sec.* She’d cut him out with an ordinary cookie cutter, but somehow his body seemed more... *More what? Ripped?* Studying him closer she had to admit his form was pretty damned extraordinary. “Hmm, you even have the broad shoulders I like. And when did I make ears for your head?”

She reached for the cookie cutter sitting in the sink and picked it up. Holding it over the cookie man, she could see that the shape of the cutter was different from the outline of the cookie. “Did Shelly do something to make your body better when I wasn’t looking?” Yet, she



knew she'd never left Shelly alone with the cookies. Plus, Shelly couldn't have molded the ridges in his stomach, making his body more lifelike. She didn't possess the artistic ability or the baking ability. "Rayne, girl, you are not having another drink for a long, long time."

Even as she bit her lip and tried to convince herself that her imagination—coupled with too much wine—was at work, she couldn't help but wonder at the change in the cookie's appearance. "Still, my addition to his form beats the hell outta Shelly's redesign of his body. Mr. Cookie Man, I could just eat you up." She licked her lips and slid her finger along his dick. "Girl, you definitely need to find a man. And soon."

After cleaning up the remains of her baking session, as well as dumping the rest of the wine down the drain, Rayne flipped off the lights to her kitchen and headed toward her bedroom. The four-poster bed with its mound of soft pillows beckoned to her and she quickly shed her clothes, tossed on a favorite old t-shirt over her bikini panties, and slipped under the covers. She closed her eyes and snuggled into the cushiony mattress.

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Rayne tugged on the covers, bringing them from the end of her bed back up to her chin. Determined to sleep as late as she could, she ignored the impression on her eyelids from the dim light filtering through the slats of the blinds. "No way. I don't have to work this morning and I'm not getting up. Go away, World."

"But I just got here."

Rayne froze, her breathing held in check as the sound of the low baritone voice buffeted around her sleepy mind. Had she really heard someone? Or had she dreamed the sexy voice? *Ignore it, Rayne. You're horny and you're dreaming.*

"So do I stay or go?"

This time she couldn't ignore the voice. Throwing off the comforter, she sprung out of bed and grabbed the baseball bat she kept by the bed for just such an emergency. She whirled around, ready to face a masked man. But the man standing before her hadn't bothered to wear a mask. In fact, he hadn't bothered to wear anything at all.

She screamed, wished she'd done more of a karate-type yell than a girly scream, and held her weapon up, ready to whack the intruder. Ready to do her best to lay the gorgeous, drop-dead

handsome, built-like-a-human-tank intruder out on his butt. Her mouth fell open as she started to shout again and suddenly found her mouth as dry as a mud hole on a Texas summer's day.

*Will you take a look at that?* Although she tried to avert her gaze, she couldn't. Not *wouldn't*. Physically *couldn't*. And, if she were truthful with herself, she didn't want to. *How in the world?* She gawked at the man's penis which extended a solid—*solid!*—twelve inches.

"From the expression on her face, I think you want me to stay."

At last her gaze found its way to the man's face again. Chiseled wasn't the right word for such a manly, angular face. In fact, from the tips of his bare feet—*Oh, crap, don't stop there, Rayne. Keep the eyes moving!*—to the sleekness of his bald head, Rayne thought no words, not even the best superlatives, could ever adequately describe the man standing at the foot of her bed.

"W-what are you doing here? Who are you? How'd you get in my home?"

Curved eyebrows sunk to hover over sparkling, black eyes as if he struggled to understand her question. "I don't understand. You brought me here. Why wouldn't you know these things?"

As she caught a glimpse of her image in the full-length mirror next to her dresser, Rayne switched the bat to one hand and tried to tug her skimpy t-shirt down over her panties. "What the hell are you talking about? I didn't bring anyone here."

He stepped closer and she forgot about her night clothes—or lack thereof—and gripped the bat firmly with both hands. "Stay back. I'm warning you. I used to bat five hundred on my softball league."

"Bat five hundred what?" Again, he moved closer and Rayne scooted backwards to bump into her nightstand.

"If you come any closer, I'm going to hit you. I swear I will."

He held up his hands, palms out, and then sat down on her bed. Smiling at her, he ran his hands over the sheets and motioned for her to sit down next to him. "Don't you remember? You said you could just eat me up."

The shock of what he said stunned Rayne so hard and fast that she lowered the bat along with her jaw. *Run! This guy is crazy!* Yet her feet wouldn't budge. Something about him seemed familiar. Had she met him before? She lowered her gaze from his face to his dick and shook her head. No, if she'd met this man before, she'd remember it—*him!*

"Why are you shaking your head? Do you mean you won't come to me? Or that you don't

remember making me?”

Her jaw dropped even lower and her eyes opened wide. “Making you?” Could he mean what she thought he meant?

His smile broadened and she would’ve sworn his dick jumped as it grew wider, thicker than she thought humanly possible. “You do remember. I know you do. I can see it in your eyes. In the way you’re holding your body. In the way you’re running your tongue over your lips.”

Rayne stopped herself, catching her tongue at the corner of her mouth. *Crap! What am I doing?* She cleared her throat and tensed up her body. *Get a grip, girl. You’re dreaming. That’s it. I’m dreaming after drinking way too much.* “Uh, so you’re trying to tell me that you’re the ginger man cookie I made? The one that didn’t get burned to a crisp? The one I made with the fantastically big, uh, you-know-what?”

He leaned back on her bed, showing off his well-toned abdomen. Rayne struggled to keep from reaching out and running her hands along his stomach. “Now you’ve got it. You made me and I’m all yours to enjoy.”

*He’s all mine. To enjoy. Oh, hell yes!* Rayne lowered the bat as his words struck home and she made the final leap into her dream world. *If this is a dream—and it has to be—then why shouldn’t I enjoy this? What bad could come from having a fling with a cookie-come-to-life in an alcohol-induced dream?* She frowned at the last statement, unhappy with the implications of the sentence. *Okay, Rayne, focus on the good aspects of this. It’s a dream, not a nightmare.* With the decision made, she dropped the bat to the floor.

“Good.” He sat up and extended a hand for her to take. “Come to bed.” His voice was harsh and raspy, with a hard edge, yet gentle enough to coax her to obey him. And obey him she did. She complied and slid onto the bed and into his arms.

His hands caressed her arms, skimming along them with the barest of touches. “Relax. We have all night.”

“How? How did this happen?” Her mouth spoke the words, but her eyes devoured his body, and leaned into him.

“Do you really care?” His black eyes sparkled at her with unhidden mirth. “Take that thing off.”

“No, I don’t care.” She reached to pull her t-shirt over her head as he tugged her panties from her. *Think, Rayne, about what you’re doing. Yet why shouldn’t I do it? It’s a dream,*

*remember?* She shook her head to give substance to her assertion and scooted with him toward the middle of the bed.

“That’s what I thought.” His thumb fingered her mouth as if exploring the fullness of her lips and the moisture clinging to them. He lowered his head and brought his lips close to hers. Close, but without touching. Inhaling sharply, he breathed in her shortened, desperate breaths.

She shivered as he touched her breast, tenderly at first and then harder, as if he’d had to explore her nipple before holding her breast in his palm. She arched upward, giving him silent permission to grip harder.

“I like the way you feel.” The expression on his face spoke of wonder, excitement, and lust all at once.

As if it had suddenly occurred to him, he replaced his hand with his tongue and began tracing a path around, over, and under her breast. Cupping that breast, he changed to the other and repeated the temptingly torturous exploration.

Rayne closed her eyes and started an exploration of her own. Gliding her hand down his stomach, she ran her fingers through the curly mass of hair and over his massive dick. Heat, boiling from his caresses, rocketed into flames as his cock twitched at her touch.

“Stroke me.” His deep voice floated into her ears, like a soft cushion of desire.

As his teeth and mouth pulled and sucked on her tit, she grasped his shaft in her hand. The weight of it surprised her, but she held on and started running her hand up and down its length. His heat, his need pulsed inside his great shaft like a dragon ready to soar into the air.

What would such a cock feel like inside of her? Could she take all of him—at least most of him—inside her? Although she could guess at the answers to her questions, she wanted to find out for sure. And if she couldn’t take him that way, she needed to satisfy the growing hunger inside her by putting her mouth over the purple-tipped end.

Taking both her breasts in his large hands, he pushed her downward, running his tongue along the hollow between her ribcage. She let go of him with a mew of protest, but the sound changed into encouraging moans when she realized his destination.

“You made me. Now let me make you—come.” His laughter matched the huskiness of his speaking voice. A laugh that made her tingle with the hot cream building inside her. “You gave me life and I want to give you what you’ve always wanted.”

She giggled, trying to make her breathing more regulated and failed. “And, uh, what have I

always wanted?” As he continued his agonizingly slow descent, she bit back the words she really wanted to say. *Eat me. Eat me all up.*

“You want a man to take you. To eat you and fuck you until you scream. You want a man to treat you like the woman he craves, the woman he wants more than air, more than food, more than life.”

*Could he be the one? The man she'd waited for who could take her the way she'd always dreamed of being taken?* Although her heart wanted to believe, her logical mind wouldn't let her jump off that particular cliff. *Rayne, smarten up. It's only a dream. You'll wake up tomorrow morning and life will go as normal with no well-hung man in bed next to you.* But the attorney in her wouldn't let it go without testing him. She lifted her head to catch his gaze as he neared her mound. “Prove it.”

## Chapter Three

He chuckled, his warm breath cascading over her, and she trembled with anticipation. “Just like a lawyer. Let me present the evidence.”

Before she could answer, he positioned his hands under her legs and pulled them to rest on his mountainous shoulders. With another chuckle, he latched onto her pussy.

Rayne jerked as much in surprise as in the feel of him sucking her clit into his mouth. His attack seemed born of desperation as he sucked, licked, nibbled, and lapped up every drop of her. Keeping her legs over his shoulders, he dived into her, using his fingers to spread her folds wider. His teeth nipped at her, claiming her nub as a hungry man would attack a feast. She clung to the bedspread, holding firm as the world around her spun out of control.

She had to see. Had to watch him. Lifting up, she looked at him and saw him gaze back at her. As if the touch of his teeth, his lips, and his tongue on her clit hadn’t already ratcheted up the exquisite turmoil within her, the glint in his gaze sent her fervor spiraling into the sky. She wanted nothing more than to have this man’s mouth on her pussy.

Darting his tongue inside her now, his fingers massaged her swollen clit. A tornado swirled inside, unleashing all the hidden restraints time and loneliness had built inside her. She bucked under his touch like a wild pony refusing to be tamed, yet wanting to be ridden.

As more of his fingers joined his tongue inside her, she knew then what she’d wanted all her life. He’d been right, of course. She’d wanted a man who could take her, turn her inside out, and make her beg for more. After searching the worlds of law and business, she’d never found that man. Until now.

Almost before she knew it was there, she released orgasm after orgasm. And still he continued to lavish her.

“Now. Please. I need—” Lifting her head up again, she reached out for him. “Fuck me.”

His eyes, glazed and full of lust, stared at her.

*“Please.”*

With her second plea, he grabbed her legs as he rose up, and twisted her over to her stomach. “Like this? Say you want it like this.”

*“Yes.” Oh, damn, how I want him!*

“Say it. Say, ‘I want it like this.’” He slapped her butt cheek, positioning her onto her hands and knees.

“I want it like this. Now!” If he didn’t drench the fire burning inside her, she knew she’d die. Leaning her buttocks into him, she wiggled her ass, hoping to tease him into her.

He slammed into her and she knew she’d never take even half of him. His cock pressed against the inside of her, like a battering ram breaking down the wall of a castle. She gasped and wondered if the clog in her throat was actually his penis coming all the way through her body.

Had she ever felt this way before? Had any of her lovers ever made her feel this sexy? This intense? This alive?

“Damn, but you’re tight.”

Was that a complaint? She squirmed even as his grip held her to him and he guided his dick into her over and over again.

She cried out as he thrust against her bringing her to her elbows. Even as she felt his dick go as far inside her as he could, she wanted more of him. Deeper. Harder.

He shifted, making her fear he might stop, but instead, bent over to lean his body on top of hers. Seizing her breasts, he dug into them, squeezing her flesh as if he’d never experienced a woman’s body before.

Whispering in her ear, he ordered her to turn her head and give him her tongue. She obeyed, twisting her neck so that the tip of their tongues intertwined and played together. Another surge of release whipped through her at the touch of their tongues and she whimpered in pleasure.

He pounded into her, as though his own climax wasn’t near. Orgasm after successive orgasms, her pants came louder and harsher now, until he suddenly withdrew from her.

The break was horrible, leaving her feeling unconnected and missing a vital, life-sustaining part of her. The cold air of the bedroom cooled the sweat on her skin, but did nothing to stop the heat still raging between her legs. “No. Don’t stop.” *Please, God, don’t let him stop.*

“I don’t intend to.”

As he said the words, he wrapped his arm around her waist, lifted her, and whipped her over onto her back as if she weighed no more than a child. Fighting for the breath his surprise had knocked out of her, she watched as he took his pulsing member in one hand and pulled her left leg around him. With a wicked grin, he shoved into her, the force pushing her body toward the headboard.

She shouted with joy and clutched the rungs of the slanted headboard so she could push back. With each of his thrusts, she tightened her legs' hold on him, forcing her against him. Sweat dripped off him and onto her stomach as he held onto her legs for support.

As he ground into her, he skimmed his hands along her inner thighs, coming to rest on the flesh covering her nub. She knew what he would do as she looked into his eyes and silently begged him to start.

With a quick lift of one eyebrow, he slipped his thumb between her folds and onto her clit. She cried out against his next thrust as penis and thumb worked to drive more juices from her. Nothing, no one had ever sent her over the edge like this. Rayne squeezed her eyes shut as she reveled in all the emotions, the feelings, the pleasures raking through her.

Running her tongue over her lips, she inhaled sharply as his hands left her mound and his mouth fastened onto hers. The need, the desire, the urge to release everything scorched her as she sucked on his tongue, bringing the sweet taste of her desire into her mouth. She ran her hands over his shoulders, digging her claws into his back to hold him tightly to her.

How many times had she come? Twenty? More? She'd lost count with each new release breaking free harder and faster than the one before. Yet, just when she thought she'd experienced the biggest climax of all, the mother of them all, a gigantic, all-encompassing volcano roared into life. No mere whimper or cry, she screamed this time as the muscles in his back tensed with his own orgasm. Their voices joined in another shout at the exact moment their juices burst over them.

They lay together, their sweat mixing with the each other's, as his heartbeats beat loudly against her chest. She clung to him, enjoying the way his muscles tensed and relaxed until, finally, they moved no more. At last, he rolled off of her and to the side.

"Rayne?"

How did he know my name? She chuckled as the answer came to her. He's my dream man. Why wouldn't he know my name? "Yeah?"

"I could just eat you up, too."

"I think you just did."

"Yeah. And I could do it again."

The twinkle in his eye made her want to dive into those depths and never come up for air. "Like you said, 'We've got all night.' So feel free to eat me anytime you want. Eat me up, big



guy.”

He laughed his full-throated, make-you-come-in-an-instant laugh that had her curling into his arms. She laid her head in the crook of his arm and met his smile with one of her own.

## Chapter Four

Rayne woke with a start, her body shivering from the chill of the air conditioning. Sitting up with a jerk, she glanced around her, feeling unsure of her surroundings. Unsure and alone.

*The dream. Had he really been a dream?* With the bed empty beside her, she craned her neck to see into the tiny adjacent bathroom. Finding no gorgeous man in there, she threw back the covers, snatched up her t-shirt and panties, and darted through the rest of her apartment. Everything was as it had been the night before. Shelly's wine glass still rested on the counter as well as the two empty wine bottles.

With no sign of her dream man, a knot formed under her ribcage and solidified, making it hard for her to drag in a breath. He wasn't real. All the great and wonderful sex they'd experienced was just a part of a wild dream. Something her sex-deprived body and alcohol-uninhibited brain had dreamed up. As she wiped away a tear, she flopped onto the couch and clutched a throw pillow to her chest. She took in her small, lonely apartment and did the only thing she could do. Dropping her face into the pillow, she let her grief—for there was no better word for it—take over and cried until her throat hurt from her sobs.

"Holy crap, Raynie, what's wrong?"

A ragged-looking Shelly sat down on the couch next her and patted her arm. "Shelly?"

"Yeah, girl." Shelly leaned closer to study Rayne's face. "I heard you crying and I let myself in with the spare key you gave me. Are you all right? You sounded like your heart was shattering."

Rayne coughed out a sarcastic guffaw. "You're close."

"Is it your mom? Your dad?"

Tossing the pillow away, Rayne struggled to find the right words to tell her friend. "I'm being silly. Nothing happened. No one died. My heart's fine. Or will be."

Shelly's concerned expression didn't change, but instead, added confusion to the mix of emotions playing out on her face. "Then what? Tell me, Raynie. I'm here for you."

"Never mind. It doesn't matter now. I had a dream is all. A really spectacular dream, but still only a dream."

Shelly whistled low and clasped Rayne's hand. "You must have a whole lot better dreams

than I do. And now you're sad it's over, right?"

*If you only knew.* Rayne forced a smile on her face and pulled her body out of a slump. "Yeah. See? No big deal. I'm over it." *Yeah, right. I'll never be over it. I never want to be over it.*

"Are you sure?" Shelly tipped her head to scrutinize her. "I'm not sure I'm buying this speedy recovery."

Rayne swallowed and darted her gaze away. "Trust me. I'm fine."

"O-kaay. If you're sure. Then let's get going, girlfriend. I'd planned on coming over this morning anyway to help clean up the mess from last night so, let's get moving." Shelly tugged Rayne to her feet and pushed her ahead into the kitchen. With a few muttered curses at the disarray of the room, Shelly started washing dishes in the sink. "You and I, girlfriend, are a couple of pigs."

"Umm." Although Rayne tried to force a smile at Shelly's remark, she just couldn't find one in her.

"I see you burned the second batch of—"

But the rest of Shelly's words didn't register in Rayne's mind. She stared at the cookie sheet lying on the countertop and tried to wrap her brain around what she saw. Or rather, didn't see.

The one remaining "surviving" gingerbread man cookie was gone.

"Uh, Shelly? Do you know what happened to the cookie?"

"You mean the cookies for the office party? Sure, they're in the plastic container you put them in last night."

Rayne whirled on Shelly, gripped her arm, making her drop a dish into the soapy water. "No! The last cookie. The one I left on the cookie sheet last night."

Shelly wrenched her arm away and glared at her. "Wow, you really are messed up this morning. What cookie are you talking about?"

Hope ran neck to neck with irritation as Rayne struggled to keep from yelling. Forcing a level, softer tone, she tried again. "I'm talking about the cookie on the end of the second batch of cookies. I'm talking about the cookie with the enormous dick."

Realization flowed over Shelly's features. "Oh, *that* cookie."

"Yes, *that* cookie. Do you know where it is?"

Shelly shrugged and *pffed* air from between her lips. "Shoot. I figured you shoved it in the

garbage disposal like the other ones you burned. You mean that one came out all right?"

*Better than all right.* But Rayne managed not to voice her thought. "He, uh, it did. And I left it on the cookie sheet. So what happened to him, er, it?"

"Gee, I don't know. I wasn't here, remember?" Shelly linked her arm through Rayne's to pull her attention away from the cookie sheet. "Listen, Raynie, you had a hard night last night. I guess too much wine will do that to you. Maybe you dumped it in the disposal or the trash and forgot?"

Rayne allowed Shelly to take her back to the couch. As they sat together, she tried to accept Shelly's rational explanation. "Of course. I must have. Or he'd, uh, it would still be there, right?"

Shelly nodded and patted her on the hand. "Right. It's the only thing that makes sense."

"Don't treat me like I'm a nutcase, Shelly. I realize what you're saying is the logical explanation."

Shelly sighed and the worry etched into her forehead lessened. "Good. Then you'll make a deal with me?"

Narrowing her eyes at her friend, Rayne prepared herself for Shelly's request. "Probably. What's your proposition?"

"I want you to go back to bed and get some rest. If you do so without a fuss, I'll take care of clean up duty."

Recognizing Shelly's determined look in her eye, Rayne let out her own big sigh and gave in. "Okay. I guess I am a bit frayed at the ends." *Which happens when you have hot, wild sex all night. Even if it is only in your dreams.* "You've got a deal." With a quick hug, Rayne left Shelly and shuffled down the hallway to her bedroom.

Once inside the doorway, she paused and scanned the chaos. The bed cover and sheets lay rumpled on the bed while pillows rested all over around the room. An emptiness she'd half expected assaulted her, leaving her near tears again, and aching for a man who didn't exist.

"Damn it, Rayne, come on. It was a dream. *He* was a dream. Nothing more." Yet even as she worked to pick up the pillows and pull the sheets on straight again, Rayne fought not to envision their bodies making lustful, incredible sex. "But one helluva dream."

Tugging the sheet up to the head of the bed, she turned and started to do the same with the comforter. Turned and froze as her gaze fell on something on the other side of the bed. His side of the bed.

She bit her lip and tried to steady her hand as she reached out. *Crumbs. Gingerbread cookie crumbs.* Picking up the crumbs, she examined them, making sure her imagination hadn't taken total control of her mind.

*Did I eat a cookie in bed? No.* She refused to believe she'd eaten anything in her bed. Except him. But not food. Never food. She never ate in her bed. Hated even the idea of it. But then how did these crumbs get here? If they'd gotten stuck to her clothing, they'd have fallen on the floor when she'd shed those clothes and pulled on her sleep t-shirt. They wouldn't have fallen on to her bed.

Her hand shook as she studied the crumbs, fighting the urge to believe in the dream. She fought to make logic out of the impossible. But, at last, her heart and her belief in the unbelievable won.

"Shelly!"

A clatter of dishes drowned out Shelly's first response. "Don't worry. Nothing broke."

"Shelly, forget the dishes. We've got somewhere to go."

"Huh? Where?"

The wide grin on Rayne's face echoed the joy flowing through her as she pulled on a clean t-shirt and pair of jeans. "We're going to the grocery store. This is going to be one holiday season we're never going to forget."

"Oh, yeah? What have you got cookin' now, girlfriend?" Shelly leaned on the doorjamb and grinned at her, eager with anticipation.

"I'm thinking I could cook up some twins for the holidays. Hot, smokin' fresh-from-the-oven twins."

The End

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Want to make one (or more) of these treats for yourself? Here you go. Enjoy.

## **Spicy Gingerman**

**Yield: approx. 6 dozen**

### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1 egg
- 3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons ground cloves
- 2 teaspoons ground cardamom
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon orange zest

### **DIRECTIONS**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in the molasses and egg. Sift together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and cardamom; stir into the creamed mixture alternately with the orange juice. Then stir in the orange zest.
3. On a lightly floured surface or using 2 sheets of wax paper, roll the dough out to 1/8 inch thickness. Cut out cookies with cookie cutters, and place them on an unprepared cookie sheet or on parchment paper. Embellish with special cut-outs or free-form dough as you wish! Bake in the preheated oven for 8 to 10 minutes, edges should be slightly browned. Cool cookies on wire racks.