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LOVE BITE



Carol McKenzie

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By

Carol McKenzie



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Chapter One

The party neared an end. Sitting in an open-air thatched hut, Rayna Craig glanced at the clock, while she towel-dried her long raven hair. Flaming oil torches flickered along the perimeter of the pool area thirty feet away. Piped in music played popular tunes and chlorine scented the soggy air.

After lying on a floatie in the water for hours chatting, Rayna had acquired the taste for tomato juice. “A Virgin Mary,” she told the white guy behind the bar as she draped the towel on the barstool and took a seat.

Rayna gazed out over the Zirelli’s sprawling, shimmering pool, while a dozen or so shrieking friends swam and engaged in horseplay.

The bartender handed her a stalk of celery and scooped ice into plastic stemware.

Wearing a beige conservative one-piece suit, Rayna daubed mosquito repellent on a medium-dark skin leg. The party had wound down. Most of the attendees were classmates of Glassboro City High School, and their spouses excused themselves, and then departed for their cars.

“Let’s play tag!” called a cracking male voice from the pool area.

“How about volley ball?” asked one of the white women.

“All right. Choose up teams,” said Carla Zirelli.

“You want to play, Rayna?” asked one of the tall men. Was he flirting? He seemed nice, but no...she wasn’t interested. Tired of the games, she said, “You go ahead. I’m going to sit this one out.”

“What’re you going to do? Lure all the fellas up there, Rayna?” asked one of her girlfriends in jest.

Her voice playful and friendly, Rayna said, as she drew her wet hair away from her heart-shaped face. “You can see where they all are.”

“Where’s that?”

“Down there, with you.” Rayna drew the drink close and toyed with the straw with her glistening, manicured nails.

“I’ll come up there baby, just say the word.” One of the men said, seemingly meant as a joke, but he seemed very serious.

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“It’s all right—really.” For the party, she’d prepared food and completed a variety of other tasks all afternoon, so she was tired. “I think I’ll call it a night.”

The Zirelli’s hired bartender set the drink before her. “Your Virgin Mary, ma’am.”

She crossed her legs and turned toward the back of the bar. “Thank you.” *A perfect drink for a virgin*, she thought wryly. Her pinky finger raised, she swished the stalk of celery in the red liquid and brought it to her lips, tasting the spicy tomato goodness. She turned to say goodbye to departing guests. Other people began leaving.

Rayna considered herself no better or worse looking than the average twenty year-old black woman. She stood five feet six inches tall; her features were delicate and her lips were full and pouty. When her raven hair was dry, it tumbled softly down her shoulders. She stood straight and her arms and legs were well-proportioned and her breasts were ample. Throughout life friends and acquaintances had complemented her doe brown eyes. Even when she wasn’t swimming, Rayna wore very little make-up, except when she added a morning’s quick few daubs of near natural lip-gloss and light eye make-up. A light smattering of freckles gave her medium skin a warm glow across her high cheekbones. She wore a thin gold chain from which a rhinestone heart dangled at her throat. And she kept her pubic mound trimmed so that she could wear thong underwear and skimpy swim suits if she so chose.

A person’s façade didn’t overly impress her. The charm and prettiness of the contents of a person’s heart accounted for the most important type of attractiveness...inner beauty.

Poolside, as her hair dried it hung wispily to her shoulders. Her heavy breasts rode high on her chest. Their broody, dark-rose nipples slanted upward, needing a man’s attention. When she wore shorts or low cut tops, men eyed her. Rayna paid little attention to their lusty interest; she was only interested in one man’s attention.

Men had asked her out on dates; they flirted and sweet-talked her, but most of the time Rayna turned down their invitations. A neighbor, Ben Grant, if given the chance, would have her on her back and in his bed, her legs spread wide. His brazenness didn’t bode well and he seemed overly aggressive. Rayna didn’t enjoy his tactics; the chemistry was wrong. Something else didn’t sit well with her, but she couldn’t figure out why he seemed so different from other men.

A silhouetted female figure climbed from the pool and reached for a towel. At first, because of the lighting, she couldn’t see the woman’s features well. Ten feet away and closing the distance, Rayna recognized her.

Carla Zirelli resembled a drowned poodle as she pitter-patted across the wet

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concrete toward Rayna, then sat on a stool. Rayna smiled at her best friend. Olive-skinned, Carla had a slender figure on her five foot five build, but she didn't have that starved look and wore her two-piece red suit well. Her hair was bottle-colored russet. Her eyes were dark and expressive, and her lips were full. Rayna had known Carla all her life. They attended grade and high school together. They were best buds and shared most of their secrets, whether they were good, bad, optimistic or pessimistic. However, Rayna effectively kept one secret from her best friend and neighbor; a secret about how she felt about Carla's father.

Carla peered at the tall, white guy behind the bar while lounging casually against the bar and said, "Give me one of those, please. Thank you."

Her dark, wet hair gleamed in the dim torch lit area. Loose tendrils softened her features. While the Zirelli's hired bartender scurried into the house for another can of tomato juice, Carla said, "How do you like being twenty?" Her dark brows slanted into a frown. "It sucks, doesn't it?"

"I know," said Rayna. "We still can't legally drink alcohol." Rayna peered down and nervously twisted the pinky ring that her parents had given her for her birthday the previous January.

Carla frowned. "Too bad daddy wouldn't let us serve booze. But you know him on that subject." Carla looked down, dejectedly. "Twenty-one is the magic age I can do things."

"That's fine. It's smart that he feels that way. He's thinking of you. You should be glad that he cares. That means, according to him, that I shouldn't drink for eight more months." Rayna sighed and looked over at Carla.

Carla nodded, leaned and picked an imaginary speck off Rayna's shoulder. Her eyes rose to meet Rayna's gaze. "I'm worried about you, girlfriend. Why aren't you down there? That one guy is interested in you, I noticed."

Rayna pecked her long red nails on the bar and she refused to look at the pool. Instead, she watched the flame dance in one of the torches nearby. "No way." Feeling an itch, she slapped at a mosquito on the slope of her neck.

"You don't seem interested in him or any other man. I really am concerned, Ray."

With curiosity and unconcern, Rayna blinked her long dark lashes. "Why's that?" Rayna twirled her drink with a straw.

A high-pitched screech pierced the air.

"Well, I don't know. There's something going on in that pretty little head," said Carla, looking over a bite on her arm. She shook her head lightly, daubed her ears and

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swabbed her delicate facial features, dragging out the suspense for Rayna who patiently waited.

“Say it.” Rayna bit off the end of the celery.

Carla scrunched her thin nose and gave her head a toss. “Nah.”

“Say it,” she said and crunched the celery. “It’s no time for secrets after all we’ve been through.”

A short silence followed, during which wind chimes tinkled lightly and laughter rose and fell. “You’re of age,” said Carla.

“Yes.” Bewildered at her partial statement, Rayna drew the straw from her drink, put it to her lips and sipped its end. “So?” Shrugging dismissively, Rayna wondered what in the world was the point she was trying to make?

“You need...” Carla smacked a mosquito on her shapely leg. “...this is so embarrassing...it is probably none of my business...”

“I need what?” Rayna sniffed and shoved the can of repellant toward her best friend. “Good grief, Carla. Speak. Spit it out.”

Carla wore very little make-up too. Rayna remembered their relationship in high school...so happy, carefree and spoiled rotten. Perhaps they were, by their loving parents. Inseparable, they attended sporting events, clubs and studied together, staying all night at each other’s house. In high school, Carla had five or six boys chasing her simultaneously, who on occasion made undying declarations of love with the hopes of having a shot at bedding Carla down, in Rayna’s opinion.

They would giggle as they discussed the boys’ silliness and phony lines and high-pitched voices. Little did the boys know, Carla was picky. Actually, so was Rayna. They saw eye-to-eye regarding teachers, cars and boys and still talked about their unique ideas, knowing their secrets would not be revealed to other people. But, why would Carla now have trouble in spitting out what she wanted to say? It had to be heavy, whatever it was.

Carla raised an index finger and nodded. “Okay, okay.” Carla cast Rayna a troubled glance then shook the orange and blue spray can. “You need a man giving you a little TLC.”

Rayna took in a sharp breath. “I what?”

“You do. Really, Ray. Do I ever steer you wrong?”

Leaning, Rayna smacked another mosquito on her leg. Overly loud screeching and splashing caught their attention so they peered out toward the pool.

“It shows that much...that you’d say it?” asked Rayna, bringing her hand to her temple.

“Yeah, it does. It’s natural, you know, for a woman’s body to want it.”

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“It?”

Carla cupped Rayna’s ear and whispered, “Nookie.” She giggled. “It’s what a woman’s body needs from time to time. It’s nature’s requirement.”

Rayna’s mouth dropped open.

“Just kidding.” Carla smiled and looked down.

Rayna’s brow rumpled and she tensed. “I don’t know.”

“Loosen up, Ray.” Carla smiled broadly and tapped a finger to Rayna’s bare shoulder.

They laughed. “Nature’s requirement, huh?” she asked. If the truth were known, Rayna didn’t disagree. Perhaps “nookie” would be sort of a heal-all, voodoo female cure.

Whenever anyone mentioned sex, Rayna’s mind brought forth an image of Michael Zirelli, Carla’s gorgeous, forty year-old, olive-skinned Italian-American-father. Rayna considered her thoughts regarding Mr. Zirelli, very, *very* wicked. Tall and strong, he possessed a buff build like no other man she’d ever met. He wore delicious dark new style suits often, perhaps due to his occupation. Rayna’s mother and father would disown her and her best friend would never speak to her again if they knew her pent up notions.

Rayna loved her parents. Marlene and Greg Craig raised her properly. Her mother gave piano lessons and her father ran a concrete ready-mix company. Never did Rayna want for anything.

Mr. Zirelli earned a living owning and running nightclubs throughout the area. Rayna and her family felt they knew him well. He attended neighborhood and school functions with her parents occasionally. Every once in a while, the two families cooked out and went on picnics together. Mr. Zirelli had divorced Carla’s mother, a beautiful black woman, two years earlier, because she went back to her high school sweetheart—a sad story. Rayna didn’t mention it, because Carla broke out in tears when it was referred to.

Over the last year, Rayna surreptitiously daydreamed about how good it would feel if Mr. Zirelli caressed her bare curves. The mere thought of it made her breath catch and her pussy dampen. Hungering a man who was old enough to be her father, and her best friend’s father at that, struck her as a tad immoral, but at the same time, it made her want to lie back and let him have his way with her. Often, Rayna had caught his hooded dark eyes lazing over her clothed breasts. To cover his heightened interest, he’d make up a false reason as to why he ogled them. “Is that a new blouse, Ray?” Or, in his low and sensual voice he’d say, “That blue number was made for you.” Her nipples positively peaked to attention when his dark eyes grazed them.

Fearing reprisal and the ruination of their friendship, Rayna remained tight-lipped

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around Carla, holding her thoughts at bay regarding Mr. Zirelli. She had to be safe and hold everyone's love dear. But, the spicy question also came up about what would it be like to explore his loins, the head of his shaft, raking his scrotum with her teeth, taking his balls into her mouth? Would he enjoy it if she sucked hard its head? She'd seen it done in X-rated movies that her father had hid from her mother. Rayna could do that for Mr. Zirelli, take his scrotum into her mouth; she wanted to do it, in fact.

Besides, Mr. Zirelli raised Carla, her best friend; Rayna had always been in the distant background watching, she guessed, staying the night running around the house half-dressed in her short-short pajamas, flashing her tiny bikini under-panties that barely covered the lips of her pussy, allowing him to covertly glimpse her large bouncing breasts through the thin fabric of her pink lacy top, pretending she didn't realize that she lured him. Not once had Mr. Zirelli touched Rayna, he had scruples. Besides, she was not of legal age for him to touch her.

What was wrong with her? She hated herself for thinking of him that way, but the lust that hid inside her, always there tempting her, when she saw him. In all truthfulness, call it women's intuition, but she believed that he possessed unspoken explicit ideas about how he'd fuck her someday.

Left alone, at first, they chatted about generic topics, effectively avoiding discussion of their mutual attraction, if indeed she was not imagining his affection. It was all so confusing, her feelings about him. Often, when he neared, his swooping gaze devoured her clothed body. Other times, Mr. Zirelli delivered covert once-overs, from across a room or street, causing blood to course through her veins when she saw him do it.

Desperately Rayna needed to see to it that the raging desire be quelled, even though she fervently repelled, and sometimes denied the temptation. Finicky perhaps, she decided her man couldn't be any fella who just happened along; he had to be special—like Carla's father, but *not* Carla's father.

Rayna caught movement out the corner of her eye. She drew strands of her drying raven hair behind her ear, glanced toward the pool and sipped her Virgin Mary. Her slender fingers continued to toy with the straw as she watched the activity.

One of the boys, Carla's date, padded from the pool, dripping as he held his arms straight out at his sides. To Rayna, he seemed friendly enough and nice, but also emotionally young, because of his boyish flirtatiousness.

"I'm coming to take you away, he-he-ha-ha-ho-ho," Carla's boyfriend said, as he approached her and slipped an arm around her bare shoulders.

He put her in mind of the boy who accompanied Rayna earlier. Mysteriously, he

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had disappeared after receiving a cell call. Unfortunately, her date hadn't returned. Ahh! Boys. With frustration, sitting on the barstool she drew up and hugged her legs to her.

One man attracted her. In fact, she had to push all thought of him from her mind. Such a hook-up would cause a rumor to run amuck among her friends and could possibly break up the two families. The scandal would disgrace her. Also, she should not lose sight of the fact that Mr. Zirelli was, after all, forty years old! Ouch! She wasn't even twenty-one yet and wouldn't be for eight months!

While Rayna sipped, Carla and her boyfriend indulged in quiet talk and a long, silly kiss, making Rayna feel like a fifth wheel. Minutes passed and the rest of the party-goers filtered out the door saying their goodbyes.

Carla told Rayna as she gathered her purse, "I'm going to drive him home. Want to talk tomorrow?"

"Sure," said Rayna. Restlessly she stroked the length of a glass.

"I *am* worried about you, Rayna."

Chapter Two

The help left, leaving her sitting at the bar with a fresh, spiced glass of juice. Sipping her drink, Rayna stared out at the lit pool at the quiet Zirelli Estate. The water stilled. She heard the chirp of locusts. It was, it seemed, a beautiful summer night.

"You here with all your friends?" asked a deep male voice.

With surprise, she jerked and gazed at Mr. Zirelli.

Capturing her eyes with his, he went behind the bar, unlocked a small refrigerator, and reached in for a beer. He popped the lid and guzzled. His approving, measuring eyes dropped onto her suit top. The can lowered from his lips. "Where's Carla?"

Rayna had no idea Carla's father would come home that evening. "She said goodbye and left."

"With her new love, I suppose?" he asked.

Rayna noted the suspicion in his tone and said, "Yes." She raised the glass to her lips. It was so bizarre sitting alone with him.

"So where's your date?" he asked, looking around. He rounded the bar and took a stool. His body brushed her arm and thigh and the sensation didn't dissipate; it lingered, tickling her skin. He sat so close he could reach over and kiss her. Instead, Rayna lifted a hand to the side of her face and wedged her elbow on the bar, self-conscious at his nearness. "My date left. He got a call and poof! He vanished. The story of my life."

He tsk-tsked. "Too bad."

"I know."

"You look good sipping that." Easily, he smiled.

She raised the glass. "Cheers." A mosquito bit her lower back in a spot she couldn't reach to scratch. "Mm-mm. Darn it."

His smile glistened in the darkness; perhaps his incisors were a tad pronounced, but nothing else seemed out of the ordinary.

He reached for the repellant can and said, "Here. Turn around."

The bites itched like crazy, causing her to squirm. Her voice rose in surprise. "Eee."

"My goodness," he said in the gravelly voice.

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Rayna felt the cooling spray coating her back as his flat, rough hands rubbed the surface of her skin. Because his first aid felt so good, her voice hummed in her throat, her eyes closed and her head dropped back—a purely sensual experience.

A minute or two passed and he still rubbed her back. “So, you’re going away to school?”

For a second she opened her eyes and answered. “I’m staying here and going.”

“That’s good.”

His interest flattered her. “I’ll save money if I live with good old Mom and Dad. Hopefully I can find a job to help out.”

“I don’t blame you. That’s good you feel that way. Many kids don’t care about helping. I’m impressed.”

The pressing and plying that he so skillfully ministered made her feel wonky, like a broadcloth doll. Seconds ticked by. The massage continued; she made no move to make him stop. He turned her so she faced him and he applied it to her throat and a quarter-inch under her swim top. Gently he stoked a growing fire.

He whispered in her ear, “Want to come inside?”

Surely to God he wouldn’t make a pass. She wouldn’t know how to handle one, especially from him. In fact, she didn’t know if she would want to turn him down. She’d lie down and let him have his way. Ill at ease she said, “That’s all right, Mr. Zirelli.”

“You’ll go home and won’t be able to reach these itchy spots. You’ll be miserable all night.”

Rayna didn’t want him to know, but the touch of his hands aroused her. She fought the nagging, curling ache that he summoned. How long had she had a crush on him? Since she was sixteen? As he rubbed her back, her nerves endings jangled with excitement.

* * *

She stood before him in the kitchen under the light while he examined her skin on her back, legs, and throat. “You’ve got five bites. Uh, let’s see. On your back, legs and front—here, on your collarbone,” he said, touching each of the affected areas.

“They itch badly.” She scratched her neck.

His tone suggestive, Mike pulled her fingers away and said softly, “Please. Let me.”

Mike returned with a tube of anti-itch cream, caught a suit strap in his fingers, and dragged it down her upper arm.

The suit top slipped down abruptly, revealing the tips of her grapefruit-sized breasts. Her hands pulled the garment and her eyes dove to the floor hiding her

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embarrassment. Her heart jolted as his gaze fell to her chocolate bosoms. The firm, knowledgeable touch of his hands upon them tingled and she had no desire to step away.

As though he could read her mind, he asked, "You okay?" He whispered, his breath hot in her ear.

"I'm fine." Breathlessly, she lied, and rocked back onto her feet, careful to keep her composure firmly in tact, though it was difficult.

"Good." It would be so easy for her to become accustomed to his delightful hands.

"My poor baby." He'd called her baby since she was a kid.

"I think I have other bug bites, too."

The itchiness subsided. Enthralled, Rayna felt the cold medicine being worked into each bite on her throat, neck, back and legs. Slowly, he turned her to him. "We have to do these. All right?"

"Okay."

Leaning, his hands firmly rubbed lotion onto her ample breasts, sending ribbons of ecstasy spiraling through her body. His mouth hovered mere inches above their bobbing, cherry-sized orbs that topped her upward-tilting mounds, enticing him, inviting his lips. Perhaps it was instinctive, but she knew she affected him greatly, testing his ability to "not touch."

"Feel good?" he asked, holding a breast in each hand. Why did he ask? Surely he knew she contemplated lying down for him. All the way down to her core, she quivered with radiating sensation under his rough touch.

Answering without words, involuntarily, Rayna's head dropped back and she moaned aloud with pure erotic pleasure.

"Like it?"

He couldn't tell?

Between his fingers, he lightly pinched and massaged each reddish-mocha brown nipple with the wonderfully scented lotion. "I like doing this to you, Rayna. Too much so. A woman like you could please me immensely. You make me feel alive inside." His hands pushed down her suit and he rubbed the miracle lotion over her flat, taut tummy, nearing her trimmed curly mound. He ripped to shreds earlier vows she'd made to herself regarding him intimately touching her. At this point, she wanted his fingers to find her crevice.

He knelt behind her and began putting the cream on her upper legs, plying and kneading. His hands rotated the skin less than two inches from her moist center. Her breath caught.

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Not about to take advantage, when he rose in front of her, Michael grimly pulled a strap up and onto each shoulder, re-covering her heaving breasts. Her body yearned for what he could give her, as scandalous as it was.

He tore his eyes off her and looked away as though he wanted her too. In a voice low and compelling he said, "You've filled out nicely over the last year, I see."

Rayna looked down and pressed two manicured fingernails to the dip between her breasts, as a guilty heat spread through her expression. Right or wrong, her tummy churning, she wished he'd lean and take them full into his mouth. It was all she could do to not pull her straps down, bare and offer them to him in an unspoken way. Fighting nature's calling, she kept her breasts concealed and didn't try to escalate the mounting tense situation which had built between them.

Evidently, he also sensed the need to thwart the nearing crisis. "Come in here," he said taking her hand. "Talk to me. Let's go in here."

"Talk? About what?"

"School. You." He led her through the house. "Come on."

They stepped into the large recreation room filled with warm colored, overstuffed furniture. A six-foot long lit aquarium, full of colorful salt-water fish gurgled soothingly from the corner of a dark room.

"I don't want to get sticky stuff all over your furniture," she said walking forward, her bare feet sinking into the deep wool fibers of the light Wedgwood-blue carpeting.

"It's all right. You won't. That cream was odorless and non-greasy. Here," he said. "This is leather. Sit here."

Rayna sat in the large chair and he sat on the ottoman facing her. He took her hands into his and pressed a kiss to the back of her hand.

He stared at her a short moment, then thoughtfully asked, "So do you have other men friends?"

Rayna's eyes widened. Was he trying to fish out her feelings regarding him, Michael Zirelli? She closed her mouth and felt her cheeks heating. Lifting her chin, she took a steadying breath.

"As friends, yes." She shrugged. She made a dismissing gesture with her hand, and added, "But not, well you know, intimate." Nervously, she toyed with the leathery covering on the chair's arm, avoiding eye contact.

He sighed long. "Like I said, you need to give a good man, not a boy, some of that brown sugar between your legs." Nodding, he sniffed and looked down. Her soul trembled when his grazing brown-eyed gaze returned to hers. "Give it to a big boy who knows what the hell he's doing."

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Words stuck in her throat. She must have given him the same jolt of sexual excitement that she experienced. Not answering, Rayna eyed him suspiciously, sure that he had a man in mind to do the job. As he watched intently, her eyes dropped to the lowest point of the “V” of his shirt to the sprigs of masculine dark hair before her eyes rose again to meet his eyes.

He laughed, as though she played with him. “I wish you were twenty-one. If you were, I would’ve taken you on tonight.”

In protest, she thrust her lower lip out, and pouted. “I’m of age. And—oh never mind. I hope you don’t think—”

“I don’t.” His voice rasped, “You’re very much a classy black woman. But you’re not twenty-one. And still you’re causing my dick to harden.” He then changed the direction of the conversation, giving her relief from his intense scrutiny, avoiding an icy clash. His voice lightened, “I’ve got an idea. You said you need a job, right?”

“Yes.”

“Work in my restaurant as a hostess if you want...you know, to make ends meet. I’m not there all the time. I just own it.”

For fifteen seconds or so, she thought over his offer. It sounded like a good idea. “Why thank you, Mr. Zirelli,” she said. “Maybe sometime I’ll apply.”

“It’s no problem.” He nodded and smiled seductively. “Hold on. I’ll give you something.” He retrieved a business card from a drawer across the room and handed it to her. “Here you go, sweets. My cell phone’s on this. Anytime you want to talk, call. About anything. Night or day.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes, Ray.”

Mr. Zirelli owned a fancy restaurant, the Purple Bear. Because of his gracious offer, she was dumbstruck. “Thank you.”

The more she thought about it, the more she liked the idea of having a job working for someone she knew. “I can only work nights and...um well, just part time.”

“I’ll make sure you work only the hours you want.”

“The one on Greentree Road, right?”

“Yes.”

“Which college are you going to?”

“Rowan.”

“I see.” He leaned toward her. Gently, he smoothed her hair. “That’s good. You’re a smart woman.”

“I’m proud of your daughter,” said Rayna.

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“Why’s that?” he asked.

“She’ll be leaving for Yale.”

“I am proud. Very much so.” He nodded.

Rayna held out her hand for a shake. “Thank you. I’m indebted to you, Mr. Zirelli.”

“Come by one day next week. Oh, say nine-thirty Tuesday evening. I’ll make sure I’m there, so they’ll hire you.”

She nodded, but didn’t answer verbally. She didn’t want to accept the job if he forced his help to hire her. Nonetheless, she stayed silent on the subject.

“So you’ll come?” he asked.

“Sure,” she said pertly, but not so sure in the back of her mind. “I will.”

“So what are you majoring in at school?”

She blinked at him. “Oh, I want to teach art someday”

He nodded and rubbed his nose with the side of his finger. “That’s good. So, do you paint and draw?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Good at it?”

She raised her arms in a shrug. “My instructors seem to think yes. I don’t know if the average person would like my work.”

“I would,” he said.

After she gathered her purse, towel and bag of clothing, he walked her to the front door. “I can walk you.”

“No, no.” She turned to face him. “I can go that far...two hundred feet.”

She’d known the man just about all her life, and that evening, she learned a lot more about him. He was still an enigma, though. And, sex was still a big mystery. It had been all she could do to keep a distance, and her hands off him.

Her skin tingled under his hand on her back and she felt a sharp sexual tug curling low in her tummy. He bewildered her. It seemed he had more that he wanted to say, but stopped short of saying it. Words stuck in her throat, but she managed to leave, hurrying across the yard and crossing to her parent’s house. Bone-tired minutes later, she climbed into bed and slept as if her strength had been sapped from her body. Something, she couldn’t put her finger on it, was different about Mike Zirelli, but what was it?

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Chapter Three

Twelve minutes after midnight, Rayna emerged from an employees' restroom of the Purple Bear in downtown Glassboro. Muffled, distant, fast music and a musty smell greeted her. Any second she expected to see a ghost. The room resembled an eerie cave. She'd trespassed into an off limits section of the building. She'd only been to the front part of the club, but it was the first time she wandered so far from the main rooms.

The sign had read—ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE. Inside, the air seemed foggy. Ragged lengths of fabric hung unconventionally from the ceiling. Light forced its way through the cracks of boarded-up windows. The reason she stepped into the unworldly area vexed her. Had her curiosity drawn her here?

Click...click.

Sharply she drew in a breath. Had the noise been made by a resident specter? Ghosts didn't hurt people, she'd read. They were merely spooky. Icy fear persisted. Standing there, in the clinging mist, Mr. Zirelli appeared as if from nowhere, surprising her, looking sharp as usual, wearing an immaculate black suit. A foot and a half of space separated them; they stood face-to-face but she hadn't noticed him stride forward. His strong hands grasped her upper arms and his fingers bit into her flesh. Lightly, he shook her, as if she angered him. He wasn't happy, she could see it in his eyes.

"Rayna," he demanded, "What the hell are you doing? No one's allowed here, not even employees."

With surprise, her heart thumped at the sight and delicious scent of him. "I was just about to ask you the same thing." It was an over-reaction it seemed on his part, because he had caught her back there.

"It's not safe. You don't know who roams these halls."

It was his business and he didn't know who roamed the halls? *Weird.*

He muttered in an under-the-breath, intense tone, "Come this way." He took her hand and led her forward through the darkness. "Quickly. We need to talk."

She hesitated. "I don't know—"

"Come on."

Confused, Rayna felt his guiding hands on her waist. He led her through murky

Love Bite

halls and soon she wondered where they were in the Bear. Where was the ominous gray light coming from?

He motioned with his head over his shoulder. "The restroom that you went to is off limits. Don't come back here again."

Perhaps he didn't understand her situation. "There was a line at the other restroom, so I went looking for another." She wouldn't dare tell him the complete truth that she had also poked and pried into his business.

He belted out a lone humorless laugh, as if he could read her mind. "This way," he said sternly, as they went another direction down the maze-like halls.

With a disturbing jerk, he took her into a small gray and ebony office that boasted a scarlet accent. The scarlet lava lamp undulated curiously on top of a bookcase. When he closed the door, the noise from the bar, restaurant and kitchen abruptly quieted. It was a private room she'd never been inside; in fact, she didn't know it was there. Rayna was in what she thought was a modern, windowless room or office that contained a desk and an overstuffed piece of furniture, the type of which she didn't recognize. It resembled a rectangular box. Modern art of a nude and another of a staring set of eyes decorated the wall near the only door. What type of person would have such artwork on their walls? A lot of questions stewed in her mind that evening.

He closed the door. His demeanor was dark, intense, and his tone was unfriendly. "I said, 'Don't ever go back there.' Got that?"

"All right," she said. "Damn. You've made your point." His over-reaction made her more curious than ever.

Apparently, he noticed her puzzlement; she could see it in his eyes. "Have a seat," he said in a harsh tone, motioning toward a chair that seemed it would be comfortable, but also looked capable of swallowing a person.

She liked him better when he was hot after her. "Is this office yours?"

He answered in short quips. "I sleep here, sometimes. It's an office. Sit."

"I see." She took a seat and frowned broadly.

Had she stepped into a different world? Gazing around, she wondered where he kept the bed. After all, he said he slept there.

"That makes into a bed," he said, pointing toward a vaunting, soot-black, box-style bed.

Did he open it, climb inside, and close the lid at bedtime? Thinking he read her mind, she thought that she should go, without hesitating.

"I'm with someone out there...a date," she stammered. "I'll see you later."

"Hold on. Stay seated."

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Mr. Zirelli pressed a switch and the shiny black flashing, vibrating nightclub that she visited earlier, appeared on three of the walls in the office. Mesmerized for one or two minutes, she watched, open-mouthed. She could see them, but they could not see her. Men and women dressed in party fashions undulated to the latest tunes. Men lifted glasses to their mouths at the bar. A woman who wore pale make-up and black lip and eye color, bit a man on the neck while sitting at a table. She looked something like a vampire.

It was an up-close study in human mating behavior as far as she was concerned. As for the managers who worked there, forgetting her own curiosity, she considered them perhaps a bit too nosey for their own good if they watched people through the one-way glass. Stunned, Rayna watched her date. Of course, he could not see Rayna. He looked around, apparently for her. Empty-handed, he left through the front door, not seeming too happy that she abandoned him.

“There he goes,” said Mr. Zirelli.

He rounded the desk, pressed an out-of-view button, and said, “Sorry that he left.” The view of the dance floor and bar area vanished with a *whoosh*. He pressed another button and the shiny drapes closed. The room silenced.

“I can’t believe it,” she murmured.

“That he left?” he asked, seemingly amused.

“Yes, that too.”

He peered at her expression of shock and smiled. “Security uses it for crowd control. Managers are told who to kick out because the customer has had too much to drink.” He retrieved a glass from a silver, portable bar and poured himself a drink. Soon, he plopped down beside her, took a sip, and placed it on a table.

Leaning forward, he put a hand on his knee. “I’ll take you home.”

“I came in a taxi. I can leave in one, too.”

He nodded. “Forget about taxis.”

Rayna wasn’t sure of what to ask. She should be polite and forget that she had trespassed. “So do you run this?”

“It’s one of the places I own. I don’t exactly ‘run’ it. I hire business managers for that.”

“Very nice. Except I don’t understand why you haven’t done anything with the back part.”

“It’d scare you.”

Perplexed, her eyes snapped to his. “I believe that.”

She had more questions, but she would mind her own business for now. Someday

Love Bite

she'd like to tour the back room. The rumors of hauntings captured her imagination for some unknown reason.

"Don't even think of it," he said, as if he read her mind. He rose and offered her a hand. "Ready?"

* * *

On the trip home, he gazed at her across the front seat, while they sat at a street corner for a traffic light to change. "Why didn't you show up Tuesday evening for the job interview?"

Looking away, she bit her lip. Patiently, he waited. She felt that he deserved to hear the truth. "To be quite honest, Mr. Zirelli," she stammered, and stirred restlessly in the front seat of his black Lexus, groping for the right words. "I—I didn't think it'd be right. Here we are...neighbors. You're friends with my parents. I—Carla, well, she's my best friend. It'd be awkward, oh—" She felt like a kite twisting in the wind. "Never mind the rest. It's just that me and you, it's an impossibility." She was making a big fool of herself. He probably didn't even think of her as a potential girlfriend. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

"I understand." He nodded and grinned, sitting there devilishly handsome. A cold mist coated the windshield, so he turned on the wipers. Between the *slap, slap* of the wipers, he said, "It'd feel...strange if you and I were to..."

Acutely aware of him, she nodded, mesmerized by the passing lights of storefronts. "Our families have known each other for years. It'd shock my mom and dad. I don't know. It just may not be cool." She peered over at his brooding, confident profile.

"Maybe you're right." After the light turned green, he stepped on the gas, a long silence falling between them.

"So how's school?" he asked finally, his anger melting.

"I'll start next fall at Rowans."

A long silence fell between them. When they arrived at her house, she opened the door and got out, thanking him profusely for his kind act.

"I'll see you later," she said, but he didn't say a word, merely driving away.

* * *

The next time she saw him was four weeks before her twenty-first birthday at a festive Christmas party. Loud music played and people whooped it up. The temperature outside was negative three, snow falling, and she was glad to go inside. The man of the house took her coat and she thanked him warmly before going downstairs to the shadowy rec-room. It was as wide and long as the house and decorated with colorful lights and a

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tall tree that stood at one end of the room. Three portable bars stood along the walls on each side, and people had already become looped. Three to four people stood in line waiting for their plastic drink cups to be refilled. Rayna ordered a glass of non-alcoholic sangria and made herself a plate of finger food, unaware of who watched. Almost everyone had come with a date or their husband and had dressed in finery. After talking with a few acquaintances, Rayna stood along the outskirts and nibbled.

Warm breath tickled her ear. She turned and saw him, Mr. Zirelli. She felt her cheeks heating.

Rayna wore a sparkly, close-fitting, green sweater dress that displayed a semi-deep plunging neckline, which exposed a bit of her mocha-brown cleavage. She wore matching high heels and designer earrings. She had brought her raven hair up and clipped it with festive rhinestone clips into swirls. With him, she stood near the blinking tree, trying to ignore several sets of male eyes that turned her way on occasion. The host and hostess stopped by, bidding her hello as did several other acquaintances from town.

Evidently, he'd forgotten his anger regarding the time she had broken into the Bear's back room. "Hello, Rayna." He whispered with huskiness into her ear. "Want to go for a midnight swim?"

She bit her lip, turned and took in his cool exterior and suave confidence and said words that she regretted the minute they left her lips. "You might freeze something off." Of course, she jested.

He raised a finger to his nose and spoke out the side of his mouth, "I wouldn't want that."

She smiled, sipped the grape juice and fruit-laden sangria, and continued watching people order drinks and dance.

"So how's school?" His fingers slid across her bare back.

"Real good. I'm between semesters. I like it."

"Next month you're twenty-one," he said.

He remembered?

Slow dance music played and she felt her knees turning to jelly, aggravatingly enough, because she was standing so close to him.

"Care to dance?"

Realizing he should decline, she blinked and looked about the room, not wanting to be a snob. It made her uncomfortable that he would ask. He repeated his offer.

Knowing better, but reacting stupidly, she said, "Okay." Admittedly, she wanted to dance with him because she would enjoy the feel of his strong arms surrounding her. She felt like a fish swimming toward a sharp hook.

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He took her plate and drink. "I'll put these here," he said, his eyes glistening. "I'll bring you back in one piece," he said, flashing a seductive smile.

"Uh, Mr. Zir—"

He took four of her fingers. "Don't call me that any more. Call me Mike," he whispered. "I insist. You make me feel old as hell."

In his arms, she felt warm, protected, and comfortable, and she was powerless to resist. He seemed far older emotionally and mentally than his forty years of age. His chin pressed to her forehead, she closed her eyes. Their bodies melted together as they danced to three sultry songs. Did he feel her heart beating against his hard chest?

He whispered in her ear, "Have you found a boyfriend yet, Rayna?"

Her name on his lips sounded ominous and his question remained unanswered through the dance. The words wouldn't come even if she wanted them to. His hands dropped from her waist to her hips and he pressed her to his loins. When her eyes met his, she knew he wanted her. Quickly she looked away, for she also knew he could read her thoughts.

After the third slow song, their host livened up the party by playing a fast song, and many couples left the dance area.

"Excuse me for a minute, I'll be right back." He said to her. Mike asked the host, "Where's your rest room?" And he left her side.

A drunken Ben Grant, tried to take Mike's place, but he was sorely mistaken to think she'd actually allow it to happen. He'd have to be the last man who walked God's green earth before she'd have anything to do with him. For one thing, she didn't like his heavy-handed, female-getting techniques. He'd been eyeing her for days and obviously was making his move. Suddenly, in the depths of the shadows, his harsh hands pawed her breasts and she squirmed to get out from under him. No one saw it happening because darkness enveloped the area where she sat. The majority of party people danced twenty feet away, oblivious to them.

"No!" she told him, but he continued his maniacal quest.

"I see who you're messing with, babe. He's a vamp, isn't he?"

"What? A vampire? Mike?"

An evil laugh left his lips. "You look surprised." His hand cupped her hip, disgusting her and she pulled at his arm in vain. His mouth found and nipped her neck. "You like vamps? Huh? What if I told you that I was one?"

She pushed him away, but he was relentless in his pursuit.

"What *are* you doing?"

He chuckled nastily and was just too much to handle. Using brute strength, Ben

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groped her up and under the skirt of her sweater dress, enraging her.

"I said stop it!" Rayna screamed at him.

Thrice, she had told him no, but he hadn't listened, so she gave him an open-handed, hard slap across the face. Ben's hand rose to his cheek and he staggered backward.

"I'll pay you back you little two bit—"

Panic constricted her throat and once free, she hurried up the stairs, located her coat and bolted toward the door, sure he strode after her. She didn't look back to see how close he was coming.

"Leave me alone!" she shouted as she spotted her car that was parked along the street four doors down.

With a struggle, she escaped him and fled outside into the icy air, relieved she was rid of him. Freezing drizzle kissed shiny puddles. As she ran to her car, her breaths rose in vaporous puffs.

Once inside the car, she spotted the silhouette of a man. He raised an arm. Scared, she hit the door locks, started the engine, and sped away.

"Wait a minute!"

The shadowy man was not Ben, but Mike. Nevertheless, she sped past him. She had no business dancing with him anyway for he was the family's long time friend and old enough to be her father. And now, Ben had claimed that Mike was a vampire. She sped home, leaving the car unlocked in the driveway, and let herself inside. She climbed the steps, entered her bedroom, and closed the door. Feeling badly for leaving so abruptly, Rayna flung onto the bed and wept. Mike probably didn't know why she ran out of the house leaving her drink and him behind. *Damn it! She shouldn't care what he'd think.*

"Is that you, Rayna?" asked her mother from the next bedroom.

She reached for a tissue and daubed her eyes. "It's me."

"Is everything all right?"

"It's fine."

* * *

Two days passed and she couldn't shake her feelings of eeriness regarding Mike. More than likely Ben was correct. Plainly, both men were vampires, she decided, after giving it much thought. Her emotions flowed through her like a river regarding Mike.

Online, a few minutes before eleven, she researched vampires, since Ben's comment had her asking questions.

She noted that different types of vampires existed. Many read minds, lived

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without sucking blood, though they all craved it, preferred to go out at night, but some could go out in the daytime. Others saw their reflections in mirrors as opposed to the myths relayed in horror movies. Most experienced super-intense orgasms and effectively corralled their sex drives when they had to do it. Their partners also experienced strong climaxes and their vampire partner drained them emotionally and physically.

As she read, she remembered how drained she felt one evening after she was with Mike. She recalled his coffin-like bed. Each vampire, she read, was different, possessing different powers. Their appearance showed they were a certain age, but most vampires are much, much older. Those vampires who cannot take sunlight slept in the daytime. Occasionally, they would sleep in a casket or covered bed that contained dirt from their homeland. Caution signs passed in Rayna's mind, a shiver undulating through her body. Surely, she was wrong. What would happen if she were to fuck one Mike and let him suck her blood?

The house had emptied; her parents went to an anniversary party downstate. She sat in her room at the computer, mumbling as she read. The light green room glowed golden from the two bedside lamps. Her head dropped to her hands and her eyelids lowered, as she grew very tired. So she stretched, yawned and went to bed and covered herself haphazardly.

* * *

Someone or something called. Did she hear and feel wind from flapping wings? Her eyes opened slightly and she raised her head off the pillow. Peering into the room, she saw something. At bat? Was it Mike? He sent subliminal messages.

Come with me.

In her mind, she heard his voice clearly.

"Mike...it's not...I can't," she refused softly.

Yes, you can. You want to. I know you do. You're just scared.

Rayna slipped on terry cloth slippers, wore a nightgown that came to her upper thighs and a white thong underneath. She should get dressed, but she couldn't and didn't know why.

Come like you are, my darling.

A sense of urgency to go to him came over her. Where was she? Mike drew her down a hall and into a foggy, shadowy realm. And through no effort of her own, she rose two feet off the floor, levitating and turned before him. An unearthly breeze ruffled the hem of her nightgown.

You're lovely.

"Where are we?"

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In another realm.

"I'm afraid I don't und—"

"You figured it out, about me. Don't be afraid."

"You mean I figured...that you're—" Her limbs were tired and her eyelids heavy.

He spread a hand before her eyes and said, "Sleep." Instantly, a coal-colored cloud consumed them. In streaming bits of consciousness, Rayna realized that he carried her in flight.

"Where are we going?" she asked through the haze, knowing she was unable to protest.

When you turn twenty-one, I'm taking your virginity, and making you mine.

Feeling utterly spent, she eventually awoke in a tub of hot water to find young women tending her. A pale blue woman knelt before her, lathering and washing her legs and feet.

"Wait!" But they didn't listen.

Another woman sponged Rayna's arms. Her breasts bobbed in the water. Another woman brushed her hair back from her face.

"What are you doing?" she asked. "Stop it." Then she heard Mike's voice inside her head.

They don't understand you, my love.

"Where are we?" She looked around the colorfully lighted room of a different era. "Why are they doing this to me?"

They're preparing you.

"Please! Let me go home!"

But she was so tired, and nodded off amid their cleansing.

Later, Rayna awoke at two a.m. to the sound of her parents coming up the steps. They went into the bedroom, and their door closed with a *clunk*.

Back in bed, she peered up at the screensaver on her computer, remembering Mike's words. The dream seemed...real. Mike Zirelli? A vampire? How silly of her! What was she to do if it were true? If she told anyone her ideas, they'd think she'd lost her mind. Rayna vowed to stay away from him, wondering if she had the determination to make the promise stand.

Love Bite

Chapter Four

On the last day of January when she saw Mike again, the first question that popped into her mind was—is Carla, your daughter, a vampire like you are? But he didn't answer her question right away. She knew he read her mind.

Plainly, Mike sought Rayna out, not visa-versa. Mike looked good—strong, tall and virile. How many females' heads had he turned in his adult life? Hollywood's idea of how a vampire should look and act seemed unreal.

She probably looked a fright. Wearing jeans, dark leather-tie boots and a flecked purple cowl-collared sweater, Rayna studied in the campus library. She had brushed her raven hair haphazardly to the crown of her head and secured it with purple clips. With ambition, she searched for a book that an English professor posted for required reading. Rayna parked her reading glasses onto the end of her nose and eyed the luscious vampire, surprised by his sudden appearance in the Rowan Library.

He was floating a foot above the indoor-outdoor orange carpeting, his thumbs hooked around the loops of his faded jeans, one shoulder leaning against the books in the Art History section. He seemed amused and enjoying his view of her. Mike looked like he had life made. His ability to levitate fascinated her.

Desperately, she wanted to ignore him, but her eyes strayed off the page. There was so much she didn't know about him.

Why won't you talk to me, Rayna?

She looked around to see if anyone else saw him. They certainly couldn't hear him.

“Why're you here?”

I was thinking about you, and lo and behold, I got a hard on. When you turn twenty-one... He stopped.

“When I turn twenty-one...what, Mike?”

It's me and you...

Blankly she stared down at the page. Why twenty-one?

I have scruples.

“Are you really a vampire, Mike?”

Carol McKenzie

He chuckled heartily. *Someday I'll explain it all to you.*

The disclosure shocked her, perhaps it even turned her on a bit, but she pretended that it didn't affect her. He closed the gap between them still floating less than a foot away. He grasped her hand and drew it toward his crotch, guiding her hand down the front of his jeans, causing her to rub his large cock. It felt so...taut and big. And, damn it, his action aroused her. It felt so...good and she wanted to keep rubbing it.

See how you're torturing me?

Coming to her senses, Rayna yanked her hand away and shoved him away. It was not the time or the place to...she didn't want to think about it.

Finally, he whispered aloud. "My daughter," he started his tone heartfelt. "In case you're wondering...she's..." As if it hurt to discuss it, Mike turned away and looked out the window toward the B Parking Lot, brooding, causing her to feel sad for him. An orange bus passed on the main road and students rushed by the window toting umbrellas. He seemed lost in thought.

For a moment, she froze, while staring at his chiseled profile, not wanting to cause him pain. Her brow rumped. He quit talking, obviously stalled in thought and finding the words difficult to say, perhaps because he loved Carla. Mike's attention returned to Rayna.

Her hand rose to the collar of her sweater as his eyes blatantly studied the places where her tender swells puffed the weave. Possibly, he whiffed her cologne, *Obsession*. Eyes half-closed, Mike smiled seductively, the whole while.

"She's what, Mike?"

Rayna enjoyed being the recipient of his attention. Her eyes rose and met his heavy-lidded gaze. She could tell that he wanted to put his hands on her curves and draw her body to his. He was a good man, or rather vampire, who possessed scruples.

"Yes? Aren't you going to finish your statement about your daughter?" she urged. "You started to say something about Carla."

"She's adopted," he barely said above a whisper.

"Carla is?" The revelation surprised her. "I didn't know that."

"So she's not a vamp—?"

"No."

"I see."

Mike, once again, had read her mind, but at least he had also opened up a little. He possessed more hidden special powers, most assuredly. He said, *I should tell you, I can't make human babies. I can't turn a woman into a vampire. Some of us can, but I can't.*

Love Bite

Possibly, it was best that she didn't have anything to do with him, because he was from another world and time. Feigning that she ignored him, tearing her eyes off his insidious visage, Rayna pulled a book off the shelf and strode back to the study table, feeling his eyes searing into her backside. She felt like such a heel.

He teased. *You look good in glasses.*

Rayna felt her cheeks heat as she sat down. A quick glance to her right confirmed that Mike had abruptly vanished in a vaporous cloud. With a turn of the head, left and to the right, she noted with relief that no one had noticed his brief appearance and disappearance. The familiar gnawing sensation crept into the pit of her tummy. When would he pop into her life again? To her mortification, she found the prospect positively enchanting.

* * *

Rayna's eyes burned. How many pages had she read? She located two aspirin in a side pocket of her purse and swallowed them at a fountain near the main desk. She walked back to the study table and took another gander down the aisle that she'd last seen Mike. Of course, he hadn't returned.

There was a time for study and a time to rest. She looked up at the clock and decided that the time for rest and recuperate had arrived. After taking off her glasses, she rubbed the bridge of her nose then yawned. Where had the afternoon gone? Feeling strained and weary, Rayna realized that she'd been hard at it for the better part of the day, which was good because she finished all assigned homework.

Thank goodness, Mike had not returned. The afternoon would have been lost because that man, or vampire or whatever he was, churned things inside her in a way that no other male had ever done. She'd never be able to study; that was why she had to stay away from him. What would her family and Carla say if they knew Mike had the hots for her? To say the least, their relationship would create a scandal the likes of which her neighborhood had never seen.

Rayna put her pencil, pen, papers, laptop, and notebooks into a case, slipped on her brown suede waist jacket and sock hat. She told the librarian goodnight and headed out into the icy air, carrying her bag and purse. The early evening brought sleet, coating the sidewalks. She located her gloves and slipped them on.

To prevent a fall, she walked on the grass en route to the B parking lot, but even the grass was slick as she made her way to her car. Once she stood beside her car, Rayna pressed a button and the doors opened with a *chunk*. She started the car to let it warm up, located a scraper on the front seat and soon had all the ice scraped off the windows. She climbed into the shadowed front seat, wondering why the parking lot light had gone out.

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It gave her the heebie-jeebies. Did she hear wing flapping or was that the sound of a distant snowplow?

Police warned women continually to have someone walk them to their cars in dark parking lots. *The light bulb must have blown out overnight*, she thought. In the past, Rayna had made it a habit to park near streetlights. She re-locked the door and backed from the space, driving very carefully.

Once she drove on Greentree Road, much to her chagrin, Rayna discovered that she was not alone! Ben Grant's face grinned at her in the rearview mirror. A fleeting vision of the instance he tried to draw blood from her neck at the neighborhood Christmas party zipped through her mind. In horror, she turned and looked back. Blood dripped from the corner of his mouth. He appeared pale and inhuman; dark rings circled his eyes. With fear, her heart raced. Rayna pressed the brakes hard, locking the car into a skid. She screamed and slid into a stop sign. Lightly, her head hit the driver's side window.

Someone rapped on the window and shouted, "I've called the police."

Rayna looked back, but Ben had disappeared. Would he return or was he merely toying with her? Surely, he wouldn't...she didn't want to think about it.

A woman traffic cop appeared outside Rayna's window. "Excuse me, please."

Rayna pressed the window down button. "Hold on." Soon she got out and walked around the car with the officer checking out the damage done. The woman took Rayna's license. The sign still stood minus dents.

The officer asked, "Would you like me to call an ambulance?"

She refused, shaking her head with a frown. Rayna said, "I'll probably just have a knot on my head." She felt the sore bump inside her hairline. "But I swear, I'm fine."

When the officer asked, "What all happened to cause this?"

"Well—" As she handed Rayna back the license, she realized she couldn't say, "Oh, it was one of those darned vampires. He somehow got into the back seat and scared the life out of me." The officer would think Rayna had gone bonkers. Instead, she said cautiously, "I lost control and slid toward the sign. The ambulances are probably busy on a night like tonight, anyway." She just wanted to go home, eat a bite, and crawl between the warm, safe covers.

"If you're sure you're okay then, I won't call," the officer said, "You have to be very careful when the weather's like this. The roads are slick."

"Yes, ma'am. I'll drive very slowly the rest of the way home. And no hard stops," Rayna said and pressed the window up button. Fortunately, her car only received a slight scratch from the minor fender bender. It had been a narrow escape.

Love Bite

As she started on her way home, she wondered why Ben suddenly appeared in her back seat. Or, had she been imagining it because she was tired? The second reason was probably true. She'd been studying for hours with little sleep and had been hallucinating. Strange occurrences happened when people were overtired. In the sighting, Ben hadn't seemed nearly the friendly vampire that Mike was. And the blood that ran down his cheek...eww...looked scary...much scarier than any Halloween mask she could ever buy.

* * *

Carla held Rayna's twenty-first birthday party at the Zirelli Estate. The weather was too cold for it to be held outside, so Carla and a few friends decorated the living room, recreation room and entry hall with streamers and a sign that read HAPPY 21ST RAYNA!!!

Vaguely, in the back of her mind, Rayna remembered Mike saying he'd take her virginity after she turned twenty-one. But would he try? Did he even know it was her birthday?

At eight o'clock Carla had called Rayna over for a bogus reason. When she opened the door, the smiling crowd cried, "Happy birthday!"

The underage partiers, who were not accompanied by a parent, had been told ahead of time that they'd have to leave when the group started drinking. By midnight, the liquor flowed freely. Rayna drank a few whiskey sours and began feeling giddy. Once, while away from the crowd, Carla said out the side of her mouth to Rayna, "This party is rocking." However, by two in the morning, everyone had left.

"Since I have liquor on my breath..." asked Rayna, "...do you mind if I sleep in your spare bedroom? I told Mom that I may stay over."

"That's fine, Ray."

After a short chitchat and a sisterly hug, they went into separate bedrooms. Carla brought her a short nightshirt, yawned, and said, "I can clean up tomorrow."

"I'll help."

"No, no. The party was for you. You're not going to clean up."

"I insist."

"I'm too tired to fight with you now. I may have to leave before morning to go pick up my boyfriend at the airport, then I have to take him by an aunt's house. So if I'm not here—"

"No problem. I'll just clean up then leave."

"I said no." Carla wriggled her fingers, mouthed the word "goodnight" and pulled the door closed.

* * *

Carol McKenzie

Quiet visited the Zirelli house. Wind rustled the nearby treetops outside. The furnace fan circulated warm air through the room, lightly moving the white ruffled curtains. Rayna undressed, leaving the dim bedside lamp on. Wearing a pink thong, she slipped on the white nightshirt and crawled on top of the covers face down in the pillows. Rayna turned over and stared at the ceiling, then rolled onto her side, realizing she was in one of Mike's beds. Too tired to go home, she drew her legs up into a fetal position and fell asleep.

She felt Mike's presence long before he stood before her. She remembered his promise in the dream to take her virginity.

When an iridescent digital readout read two-thirty a.m., she awoke. Rayna peered up at him in the dim light. He had the body of a sleek athlete.

He took a moment to apologize for the intrusion. Then, "I'm going to fuck you. You're a very desirable black woman," Mike said. "You want it, and I'm here to give it to you. I'm going to make you mine tonight, Ray."

Was she dreaming? Two thoughts came to mind. "I can get pregnant. Or, what about disease—"

"I will say this again." He whispered his reply in a matter of fact tone saying, "My cum's safe. You'll not get pregnant or a disease. I promise."

Suddenly, she was fully awake and nervous. "Carla...she'll hear us."

His gaze fixed on her mouth. "The rooms are fairly soundproof. Just don't do any loud yelling." He chuckled.

Rayna looked at him with her soft lips parted. She wanted him. Apparently, he had undressed before she awoke. Rayna heard that a man who had large penis was "hung." By what she could tell in the dim light, Mike, beyond a doubt, was *well* "hung". His appendage rose high to just under his belly button, like a thick bone with taut skin that stretched around it. She wondered if it would hurt if he pushed it into her tiny hole; it would go high inside her belly.

He lay down beside her, put his thigh between her legs and reached for her. His mouth avidly found hers, the kisses were deep and thorough, and laced with unabashed lust. His lips were hard and unrelenting. His hands cupped her bottom and yanked her even closer as their breaths mingled.

"You've been drinking, I see," he whispered.

"Mm-hm."

He stared at her for a long moment and pulled some stray strands out of her face. "Bad girl," Mike said, in a deep velvety voice, lowering his mouth to hers again. "Your blood could inebriate me." He laughed and said determinedly, "You *are* getting fucked

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now.”

“Are you thirsty for bl—”

“Let’s get this first time over with.”

His nonchalant attitude was so disarming, sending shivers of electricity coursing through her nerve endings. Whimpering, she buried her face in his shoulder.

“Tell me no if you don’t want to,” he said, as he continued with the soul-stirring exploration under her nightshirt.

Flushed and languid, Rayna drew a sharp breath when a hand slid under the band of her thong.

At least, with him she had a choice. While he fondled her breasts, she ran a hand down his flat abdomen gaining courage, but hesitating at plunging her hand into his throbbing male nest and grasping his standing cock.

“Touch it,” he said, his timbre husky.

The internal war that had been in turmoil for months was about to come to a head. Finally, she brushed her fingers over his rigid arousal. Her heart beat ferociously. His muscles flexed under her touch. “Totally amazing,” she said.

He sucked oxygen deep into his lungs when she re-situated her grasp and tightly ran her hand up and down its length.

“My need right now is pretty unbearable,” he said, his voice raspy in her ear. He kissed the lobe of her right ear and circled her lips with his finger. She continued toying.

She took in his bracingly male comportment. “So fuck me then, Mike,” she breathed, as her heated blood surged through her veins. She loved him and yes, she was surrendering. “Do it how you want.” Her hand left his member. “Be rough, gentle, whatever.”

Without delay, Mike gave her no answering smile or more words. Rayna didn’t resist when he pulled her shirt over her head or when he suckled her heavily heaving breasts, as if he tried to drink in her very being—a deliciously sensual act. How she loved his boldness and the slide of his skin against her delicate skin.

“Carla must never know,” whispered Rayna.

He tipped her chin with one finger. “You’ll be the only one who tells her. I wouldn’t embarrass or hurt you for the world.”

He pressed her back into the pillows of the soft bed and pulled her thong down her shapely dark legs, kissing needy areas as they descended. He yanked them from around her ankles and tossed them away.

Unexpectedly his hands separated the lips and his mouth closed on her bud. A long exhalation blew from her lungs. Never had she experienced such an exhilarating

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feeling! His tongue delved deeply into the moist folds, as she laid spread for his maddening quest. As his tongue mischievously flicked her button, she buried her face into a pillow muffling a cry, fearing she'd awaken Carla. Dear Heavenly Father God, she wanted him in her and she'd not squirm or make noise for fear that he'd stop. All her ability to hold back bailed as he continued his torturous tasting. Rayna lifted her head and looked down at the top of Mike's sable hair. He seemed equally out of his head, aroused by the dark and forbidding act.

"Mm." God, it was wonderful. People didn't openly speak of it because it felt so good. It had to be sinful. His grazing lips were hot and sweet—such a heavenly tongue...made of pure magic. If he should stop, she'd want to die.

"Ray, oh Ray," he murmured, when he rose from her bush for air, looking at her face.

Rayna loved the sound of her name uttered on his lips. His hands skimmed her thighs, causing her senses to become painfully acute. Rayna forgot the real world because the act that he so skillfully committed would stay in her mind, taunting her for many sleepless nights.

Sweat slicked her body as she crooked her knees and pulled them up to her chest, so he could have better access. His tongue, a lethal weapon, nipped and tugged, and his lovely lips brought her sheer ecstasy. His ministering made her feel better than any drug could make her feel. Her need expanded to tumultuous proportions. No one would recognize her now, for she acted like a bitch dog in heat. Rayna dropped her feet to the bed, elevated her hips, all the while maintaining quiet, astonishment at his fervor and the all-consuming passionate state he'd brought her to. Tears streamed down her face.

He rose over her and said very softly with a chuckle in his voice, "Very nice."

A lone laugh of breathless desperation left her lips. "What are you going to do now?" she asked, as if she didn't know.

In a tone piercingly sweet, he murmured, "I'm going to pop your cherry."

By her spread legs, he pulled her bottom toward his erection. He slipped a finger into her vagina, preparing her for entry.

"You're wet, Rayna."

Instantly, she knew when the tip of his cock replaced the fingers. It went in a half inch, an inch, two inches and she felt pressure.

"Hold on," he said softly. He pushed and a pain followed. God! It went in deep! In fact, it smarted. He moved in and out slowly at first. Soon his cock slipped in and out with ease. A shudder shook loose from within her soul when he pounded her pussy with the rhythmic *slap, slap, slap*. The bed rocked. Simultaneously, they reached a climax—a

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burst of joy left his lips as he rode the plateau. Tiny screams in her throat erupted, so she reached for a pillow to squelch the noise.

Chuckling, he fell beside her, commenting with words of love. “You are beyond a doubt, the most beautiful, sexy, absolutely gorgeous woman I’ve ever had the occasion to meet. I’m beginning to care a lot about you.”

He made her feel so...womanly and so wanted. They lay there for several minutes staring at the shadowy ceiling, as the world normalized. For the first time in many minutes, she heard the furnace fan come on and saw movement in the curtains.

The stark green numbers read four-fourteen a.m.

For an unknown reason, Ben Grant entered her mind and cursed her for her unfaithfulness, calling her names. Wordlessly, she fretted about telling Mike about her run-ins with Ben.

Mike said, as he pulled her closer, “I don’t want to destroy the moment, my love. We’ll talk tomorrow about him.”

Her mind rested, for Mike knew of her problem. “Good.” Together, they fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter Five

Mike squirted fresh-scented shampoo onto her crown and began lathering her raven hair. Rayna closed her eyes and enjoyed it.

After the rinse, he said, "Carla left. We're the only ones in the house," as he aimed the strong jet spray onto her back, letting the strong streams of medium-hot water pummel her skin.

Rayna thought for a moment, then a slow smile arched her lips.

"Such a luscious woman you are. Mm."

Together, for many lavish, steamy minutes they washed all traces of the previous night's sex off each other's bodies and let it wash down the drain. Many new encounters awaited her.

"And it'll get better and better," he said.

"I can't see how it could," said Rayna.

It felt good to get slick with soap then slip and slide against his male build while getting squeaky clean. As his hands fondled her slippery, bubbly, and wobbly breasts, his cock thickened and turned burgundy in obvious anticipation of a new fuck.

"There's one place that needs special washing," said Mike.

"Where?"

"You'll see."

Mike turned up the water speed, adjusted the handheld showerhead so that it shot one, round and forceful perforating stream.

"What are you—"

Using it, he slid it between her legs and power-sprayed her clit, until she writhed in sheer torment.

"You're a such a bombshell, black beauty," he murmured.

"Mmm," she said. Rayna's head dropped back. In almost five seconds, he enkindled her needs to a feverish pitch, until she couldn't focus and felt dizzy. Dropping the showerhead, he lifted her up and placed her back against the white tiled wall. His hips spread her dark mocha thighs as her body opened and the tip of his engorged penis pushed its way into her tight slit.

Love Bite

Her breath caught and her heart raced.

"Hold on to me, baby." He growled at her response, and thrust hard up into her body.

She clung to his shoulders as he stretched her passage. His movements were hard and deep. Rayna moaned, digging her fingers into his back as he hammered hard into her. Waves of pleasure washed over her heated body, "Mike. Oh, dear God, Mike." she screamed.

"Come for me, baby. Now."

Oh, she did. Her body tumbled into climax as Mike drove himself into her, time and time again, as if possessed by a demon. Pleasure exploded in her womb. Mike joined her, spilling his seed deep inside of her. "Mm, my God." Holding her close, he kissed her closed eyes.

"Oh yes, Mike."

* * *

With their shower finished and the water turned off, he reached for two soft white towels. They stepped out onto a soft rug. Her skin tingled from the showerhead.

"You said Carla left?" she asked.

He nodded. "Mm-hm. I guess her latest man is in town. We're alone."

Rayna smiled. "Mm-hm's right." She wiped the fog off the mirror, noticing from the corner of her eye that his erection was non-existent.

"I'm not done with you." He dried her breasts and knelt to do her legs. "You like being babied, don't you?"

"Maybe."

"I'm just the man for that." Lovingly, he smacked her ass. "Turn around."

Soon he brought her a large white shirt that came down to her mid-thighs. "Thank you," she said, as she slipped her arms into the sleeves then allowed Mike to button it up. All the while, she was highly aware that she wore no panties. He combed the tangles out of her hair, before the mirror, gently and quietly.

"I'll cook," he announced, as he wrapped his mid-section with a towel. They went into the kitchen where he pulled out a chair and said, "Please. Have a seat. I'll serve you, madam." And, he bowed.

"That'd be nice." She laughed. "I've never had a man cook breakfast for me."

For a second or two, Mike pressed his lips to her forehead. Smiling all the while he whispered, "You don't know what you've missed, Ray."

He left her side then located the silverware and plates. "I'm a good cook. It's a hobby of mine."

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Oh, but his chest...a sparse amount of dark sprigs grew from his rock-solid pecs. His sexy ass drew her eyes, too. Rayna tore her eyes off him, turned on the television, and got a drink of water, while he piddled around the kitchen. They watched the local news.

At the breakfast nook, she picked up a black book of matches that displayed bright purple lettering. It read—PURPLE BEAR NIGHTCLUB & LOUNGE, Closed Sunday and Monday. She put it down and watched her gorgeous hunk get ready to prepare her breakfast.

Sun sliced through the white, small-printed curtains from the east, and illuminated the wooden breakfast nook in the kitchen. He brought in the newspaper and dropped it on the table.

“There you go.”

“Thank you.”

So what if he was a tad older than her? It happened all the time. Older men dated and married younger women. It was no big deal.

Monitoring Mike, she turned to the Jobs Section. She needed to get a part-time job so she could help her parents financially with the burden of sending her to college and have a little extra for miscellaneous needs.

The wood floor shined and the room smelled of bacon, eggs, coffee, and cinnamon. Whistling a lively tune, Mike retrieved the bacon and eggs from the refrigerator, stopped, then kissed her in passing.

“Here,” he said, and popped an orange wedge into her mouth.

She began sucking the juice from the fruit’s meat. “Mm.”

He retrieved a non-stick skillet and kissed her again. “If I keep this up I’ll never get your breakfast cooked.” She patted him on the ass much like he patted hers, causing him to turn and smile before continuing to cook.

As he whisked by her with a spatula, Rayna remembered the first glorious climax and bit her lip. She’d remember the first fuck forever, it seemed. Rayna whiffed his expensive cologne. It had been nearly impossible to stay quiet. The memory heated her blood.

A thought came over her, regarding blood. Would he ever try to—oh, she didn’t want to think about it.

“Not for awhile,” he said, after breaking into her mind. “A love bite, you’re talking about. If and when it should ever happen, it would make you tired for a day or so. And no. You won’t turn out like me. Now if Ben ever got any of your brown sugar, you might turn out like him. But I don’t think that’ll happen.”

Love Bite

"I think not," she said, frowning broadly at the thought.

He laughed then continued cooking. "They wear me out...sometimes the damned things make me high. I, like others, crave blood, but I'm strong and can live without it. Who knows? You may not like them. Sometimes, if I get pale, I'm needing it. I'm anemic during those times. But I'm not the type to force myself on anyone—" He shook his head. "Nope. I'd never do that."

"Can you just swallow something or take a lot of vitamins?"

"We prefer blood. Someday..."

"Someday what?"

"I'll tell you some other time."

"Oh," Rayna said, with an upturned frown a little baffled. "How old are you?"

"You'd leave if I told you the truth."

Considering his answer, Rayna sipped black coffee and eyed the swelling bulge under the towel that hid his cock. Would his loins give rise to arousal number three? Surely not! Vaguely, she remembered shamelessly sucking his nipples, licking his navel, and squeezed her eyes shut for a second, totally embarrassed.

"It was nice," he murmured from the sink, after reading her mind.

Quickly Rayna mentally jerked herself back into the here and now.

He laughed.

"Do they hurt?" she asked. "The bites, I mean."

"No, they don't."

"Oh, and about Ben..." she started, as she watched Mike pad barefooted cross the cool kitchen tiles. The biggest question for her at that moment was, would the towel stay at his waist with his cock standing up as it was? She wouldn't mind another go of it if he indeed obtained erection number three.

"Yes?" he asked. "Go ahead. Ask then."

"Tell me about Ben Grant. He's the guy who lives here in the neighborhood—a vampire, right?"

Mike set a plate of toast on the table and buttered two slices for her.

"Ben is the type who has of an entirely different integrity and make-up than my own. He's irresponsible—a different breed, I guess you can say. Orange juice?" he asked, and pressed a peck to her forehead.

"Sure," she said.

He went for the pitcher and located two glasses.

"So how *is* he different?" asked Rayna, as she spread a napkin on her lap.

"He wrongly considers you a member of his personal female cache, for one. Use

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caution from now on, he's dangerous to you. Wear a cross pendant."

Rayna gasped. "Won't those keep you away?"

"Fortunately, crosses and garlic doesn't bother my stock," he said turning the eggs. "They bother him, though."

"Okay."

"Carry cloves of garlic. Then if he appears, use it to run him off."

Her brow rumped and she muttered, "Garlic stinks and I don't wear jewelry because I'm allergic to metal."

He waved a spoon at her then pointed toward the bedroom. "We can go back in the bedroom and discuss it."

She rolled her eyes and laughed.

"Trust me. You should listen to me, Ray. At least for now you should. His type hates garlic. And especially crosses. Ben's very picky about whose vein he bites into."

She rolled her eyes. "I'm flattered, but—"

"Seriously, Ray. Someday he may try. Anyway, I have a large score to settle with him because he's bothered you."

* * *

When Rayna stood at the sink after five minutes of pleading that she should at least share in the clean up, she dipped her hands into the hot sudsy water and washed eggs off a plate. For a while, Mike dried the dishes as they chit-chatted about the local gossip.

"Oh." She remembered to call her mother. "Excuse me, Mike." Rayna dried her hands and made the call.

After hanging up, Rayna returned and resumed washing dishes.

"Everything okay?" asked Mike, as he reached for a plate.

"It's fine."

Suddenly Rayna felt him nuzzling her neck. "What are you—" She knew what he was up to. "Wha—" It felt so good. "Oh Mike."

"Shhh," he said, as his hand went under the tail of her shirt and brushed her tingling pussy. "Hush and hold still." Jolts shot like armor-piercing bullets through the nerve endings of her extremities. Rayna dropped the dishrag and audibly gasped finding herself caught up in a maelstrom of lecherousness once again.

"Oh shit, Mike!" she cried, her twat moistening. The subtleness of his dully-stabbing cock onto her hip shocked her and she nearly passed out with sweeping ecstasy that his lust gave her.

"It's back to bed with you, young lady." With a guttural laugh, Mike picked her

Love Bite

up and carried her down the hall.

“But, it’s daytime. I thought you vampire boys didn’t do things in the—”

“My lineage does.”

“Good bloodlines, huh?”

“Mm,” he said into her ear. “Is your pussy sore from all the fucking?”

“A little.”

Very softly, he said, “I’ll go gentle, then.”

With a kick, the door closed them inside where he arranged her on the soft bed. “You’re so sweet, Rayna,” he murmured as he found his rightful place between her thighs. His mouth, then tongue located the sensitive area.

“Mm,” she said, as he slid his tongue into diverse places.

A gentle, soft fuck it was, the third time. The bed softly creaked and she whimpered as he wielded his potent magic.

After they had climaxed and napped, her thoughts returned to his advice. But, she’d never carry around stinky garlic to keep another vampire away—no way.

* * *

One evening after taking in a movie, Mike drove her home. It was dark and quiet. Mike had put an instrumental on the radio and turned down the volume.

“I think maybe you should let me off a block from home,” Rayna suggested as they approached her parents home. How would they react if they knew she was seeing one of their friends? She hoped for their approval.

“I’d like to let you off where a normal man lets off his woman, at her residence.”

She closed her eyes for a moment. To push away the difficult thought, she focused on the memory of when his lips clasped her nub sending twinges twirling through her loins.

“I felt your body tremble when it happened, Rayna. I like doing it as much as you like having it done to you.”

Again, he read her mind! She turned and looked at his strong profile as he drove toward their homes. She wedged her elbow on the closed window and sighed. “Has any woman ever pooh-poohed your flirtations?”

He laughed, “You talk like there’s been a hundred of them.”

“I’ll bet there has.”

“Ah. But none were as beautiful as you, my lovely black beauty.”

“Flattery will get you everything,” she said smiling, vexed by his seductive tone.

“Coming within a block of you causes my dick to get hard.”

Her inner muscles twitched and she restlessly shifted in her seat.

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His hand rose off the back of the car seat and touched the nape of her neck. Tingles shot like fireworks. "Oh. And about that other item we're discussing..."

"What other item?" she asked, raising her hand to his fingers.

Mike turned down their street. "What do you say we get it over with?"

"Talking to my parents?"

"Yeah, I don't want to sneak around. When I want you in my bed, I want you. Understand?" He ran a finger down her cheek.

An arrow of dread pierced her soft exterior. She knew he was correct. They had been good parents and deserved to know. Besides, she agreed with Mike regarding sneaking around. So what if he was a lot older? It was the twenty-first century, for godsakes. "You're right. We should get it over with."

And so, they went into the house hand in hand, smelling the familiar scent of potpourri and lemon oil. Gently Mike and Rayna explained their relationship to an astonished Marlene and Greg Craig. Mrs. Craig gave each of them a look of incredulity.

Rayna drew an unsteady breath as bafflement played out over her parent's faces. Very carefully, her father raised the remote control, turning the volume down on the television, and her parents peered their way. Marlene put aside her needlework and looked up at them.

"I love Rayna," Mike said, firmly as he clasped and raised her hand.

"Rayna? Is that true?" her mother asked as she came up off her chair.

"Yes, mom. It is."

Her mom raised a hand to her bosom and her mouth dropped open. She looked at her husband, then back at her daughter. "Don't you think you need to think this through?" asked Mrs. Craig.

Rayna's dad directed the question to Mike. "How long has this been going on?" He pulled a pipe from his mouth giving Rayna a puzzled look.

"Several days," said Mike. "I want you to know...I've known for awhile this would happen, but I didn't step forward for her until she turned twenty-one."

Her dad didn't hold back his qualms. "Don't you think she's too young?"

"Daddy," Rayna pleaded. "Age doesn't mean that much to us. We know we care about each other."

A muscle twitched in her daddy's cheek as he looked at his wife's face. "What do you think, Marlene?"

"I just don't know." She sighed. "I guess it was good they told us."

They partially accepted the relationship, and in her heart, Rayna knew her parents would understand soon.

Love Bite

Then the next week, Rayna ran in to Carla in the grocery store. In fact, Carla brought the subject up first, laughed and shook her head, seemingly pleased. “Congratulations. I want you both to know that I love you.” She leaned over her cart and gave Rayna a hug. She shrieked with laughter, causing several heads to turn their way. “You’d be my step mother if...”

* * *

Rayna began working as a hostess at the Purple Bear. She continued college and fell more deeply in love with Mike with each passing day. Winter gave way to spring, then spring to summer. Their relationship gained a bond of appreciation and caring warmth for each other, and each other’s ways and wishes.

However, because of her curiosity, their relationship suffered a setback one night when Rayna didn’t heed Mike’s admonishments. She knew better than to go into the forbidden area at the Bear. Blindsided by the well-lighted and furnished part of the building, she didn’t see any harm in searching for a missing pot. It seemed like an innocent venture at the time. Perhaps the cooking pot really had been carried to the back.

Rayna gathered the nerve to go on the adventure during a break one night. When no one looked her way, she unlocked the double bolted door with a key that she found hidden under Mike’s desk and entered, ignoring the red flags of warning that dropped in her mind. Quietly she closed the door behind her and stepped forward. Evidently, Mike had put locks on the door after he had caught her going inside.

Mike had not told her what or who dwelt there. In fact, he’d seemed quite secretive about it. Call it women’s intuition, but Rayna felt the back area hosted a hotbed of ghostly phenomenon. The light faded and the air grew darker with each shaky step. Airy, ragged draperies hung from nothingness it looked like. The only light seeped through nineteenth century style, tall, narrow partially boarded windows.

Something fell in the distance. *Clunk!*

Rayna jumped a little, but tiptoed forward. What was her reasoning again for touring the back room? Whatever possessed her, she wondered. She remembered Mike’s words. Perhaps her daredevilry evolved from a need for adventure. Shoot, Columbus or Leif Erickson crossed the ocean thinking they’d fall off the edge of the map any second because they sought adventure. Perhaps she was that way, too. However, it was time to go. She’d seen enough.

She thought she saw a white apparition. She blinked. Upon further study, Rayna determined the ghost was a female and she resembled a flapper of the Roaring Twenties. She wore a cloche hat that bore a long curling feather. She cried for her lost child. The scene saddened Rayna. “I’m sorry,” she called to the wraith.

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Still unconvinced that she should return, Rayna passed what looked like caskets that had been stacked end to end. They were long narrow pine boxes, to be exact, lining one wall. Were bodies in those boxes? Her apprehension flared at the thought.

Two or three minutes passed without incident. Then abruptly she shrieked when she stubbed her toe. She had forgotten to carry garlic or a cross.

“Rayna,” said an invisible entity from the wispy depths. “I’ve come to suck your blood.”

She gasped and strained to see who or what spoke, but didn’t see anyone or anything. “Oh no! Eee!”

Thinking she’d leave immediately, she turned her head left to right, up and down, straining to see who had just spoken but saw no one. She certainly didn’t want to run into it, she thought, wishing the nightmare would end.

Rayna began walking. “Who’s there?” she asked, as a shiver shot through her. Why hadn’t she listened to Mike? He’d warned her repeatedly. The building wouldn’t sell because potential buyers’ heard that it was haunted. So, as an alternative, Mike forbid employees and everyone else to stay out. Rayna mentally replayed Mike’s admonitions as she turned to leave. She’d goofed.

“Who’s back here?” Rayna asked in a shaky voice. The inclination to run loomed. *Whack!* She jerked. The exit door had slammed shut, trapping her.

What sounded like the flapping of a bat’s wings flew nearby. At least, that was what she thought it sounded like.

“Who are you?” she asked, as she wondered how she could get back to the light and normalcy.

Whoosh! Wind rustled her skirt. She turned and looked, but nothing moved, except all that was blown, which struck her as strange. How did wind circulate in the back room? The room seemed high-ceilinged. Baffled, she blinked, refocusing at a being that materialized fifteen feet away. She raised her hand to her temple, distraught. Oh, how she wished she’d heeded Mike’s warning, but it was too late.

A purplish-green mist surrounded the man, Ben Grant; he looked surreal. A sparkly mist crept toward her as though it lived. Ben wore a black shirt, dark gray slacks, and a hooded cape over his head. His face glowed white and his fangs shined.

“Go away!”

He raised a spread hand as though he planned to cast a spell.

Screaming, Rayna ran to the locked door, rattled the knob, and threw her body against the non-movable slab of wood. She beat on it with a pole she picked up off the floor, to no avail. Remarkable, mesmerizing colors danced in the blackness fifteen feet

Love Bite

away as they moved her way. He couldn't remember being so scared.

"What are you doing?" she asked, sobbing. Would this be the night that she died? Could she talk him out of his plans?

When the mini-tornado of hues surrounded and subdued her, she rose and her feet dangled two feet off the floor.

"Mike! Help me!"

"I doubt he'll come, my darling."

Captured, it transported her to within a foot of Ben. Just as Ben had bent over her, readying to bite her neck, Mike appeared.

Inflamed, with a swift slug, Mike knocked Ben ten feet into the darkness. Ben stumbled, raising his hand as if to cast a spell, but Mike blocked the incoming strand of power with one hand and cast a spell of his own with the other hand, knocking Ben twenty feet further. Mike pointed at Ben, and as he did, Ben rose horizontally and stayed pinned in place. Did Mike consider slaying Ben?

"Mike, no!" shouted Rayna.

"Listen man," said Ben, pleading for mercy, his tone troubled. "I—I didn't mean anything. I won't try anything again."

Mike didn't waver. He was about to deliver a deathblow, but at the last minute Mike withdrew his hand. Spared, Ben dropped onto the floor. "I'm sending you to Siberia."

"Man, I'm so out of here," said Ben. "I won't do it again." Before he disappeared, Ben profusely apologized then departed in a cloud of vapor to Rayna's relief.

His jaw tense, his eyes flaming like bonfires, Mike roared like a lion who'd just had his tail stepped on. "Why in hell did you come back here? I told you not to."

For a minute, she glared at him. "If you didn't want people back there, you should have locked it up better. Or, maybe you should've torn it down."

He shook his head in mock disgust. "Out of here, now!"

At the bite in his voice, she flinched. "I'm sorry." His notion was absurd. Why was she apologizing? "Can't you forgive me over a little thing like this?"

"Little?" Mike admonished in furious disapproval. "You almost got yourself killed. Who knows about all the supernatural weirdoes that hang around here? Damn. Get going!" He let out a grim laugh that made her blood boil.

Once he followed her to safety, Mike stormed away, mumbling and cursing. For the rest of the evening he didn't speak to her, making her angrier by the minute.

"Okay, if you really want to act like an asshole, then so be it." She decided that

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she'd break up with him that very instant. "I just don't appreciate you keeping secrets. What kind of relationship is that?"

"You just don't understand."

"Hello? I think there's a definite hang up here...a lack of communication...I just don't know, Mike." She watched him stalk off and fisted her hands on her hips, enraged at his ambivalence. "I don't know if this will work!" She shook her head, thinking about his silence. "Okay, be that way then! See if I care!" she shouted with a hand raised toward the heavens. "Walk away! Don't talk. I hate secrets! Besides, I quit!" She peered at his sullen face just before he turned his back to her.

"Fine," he said seemingly unimpressed. "Quit then. Go."

Mike hated her, it was obvious. In a way, he aggravated her to no end, too. After grabbing blindly for her purse under a stand, Rayna stomped outside crying during the band's last set as Mike glowered on from the west dining room.

"Fuck you Mike!" she yelled at the building while walking in the parking lot. "And your business too! Damn all you vampires."

Love Bite

Chapter Six

Mike didn't go after her or speak to her for a week. The seven days were sheer hell. Rayna kept telling herself she didn't care about Mike anymore. He was, after all, a vampire and she had no business dating him.

Then one night, Mike appeared on her doorstep. His demeanor seemed downcast and his tone, dejected. "I'm sorry, Rayna. I—I cannot take this being apart anymore. I was wrong. I should've warned you. You know, like you said, I should have communicated. I feared Ben would hurt you. *I will* in the future, if you'll take me back." He peered at her with a sad, knowing smile, all apologetic and he held a bouquet of roses and a box of candy just when Rayna had reached the height of lunacy about him.

Her mother peered down the hall and asked, "Who is it Rayna?"

"It's Mike. I've got it."

She looked at his gloomy expression. "Mike..." All the need to be cold toward him vanished.

Without a doubt, embarrassed and ashamed as she was, Rayna knew then that she loved him and wanted to revive their relationship. She could tell by his tone and demeanor Mike ached for her return.

Taken aback, puzzled somewhat, Rayna wished she had dressed a little nicer. She wore jeans and a white T-shirt that read: *What Part of No Don't You Understand?* Her raven hair tumbled wildly down to her shoulders. Without him, she had slept and eaten poorly.

Mike dressed in jeans, a white shirt, and loafers, looking yummy.

Rayna looked down at the love offerings he brought, remembering the last long and lonely, seven evenings.

He stepped forward and smoothed a tendril of hair back from her face and said faintly, "Ray, come back. You're so beautiful. I'll make everything good for you."

Rayna quaked at the raw need in his tone and heart wrenching caring that glittered in his eyes.

"Here. Take these." It seemed that he wanted her back badly, in body, mind and soul.

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Rayna took the presents and smiled. For a second or two, overwhelmed, she swallowed hard and said. "Thank you."

His eyes displayed hurt. She had never seen him apologetic before.

"I was so wrong—" There was a moment of silence. "I had no business going back there and—"

"There's no need for an apology. I care about you...a lot."

She studied the openness in his face. "And I care about you."

Appearing a bit pale, Mike looked at her with his eyebrow cocked. Apparently anemic, he needed blood.

He started, "I realize I'm not what I should be and—" A sad laugh followed. He held his hands out to her, his palms up. "I was afraid you hated me," he said.

"I thought you were through with me, too."

"Ben's gone. He won't bother you anymore. He left the area and went to his homeland in Russia."

"That's good."

Mike took in a deep breath and raised a finger to the end of her nose. "There's something more I must get off my chest." He turned away.

"Well, go ahead."

His eyes met hers and held. "Rayna, I should have told you—" Words stalled.

"What?" she asked.

"In the back room there's more than meets the eye. Ray, it's a portal to another, darker realm. Yes." He nodded and words tumbled off his lips. "Ghosts and vampires, some of which are much more dangerous and evil than you could ever imagine, passes through there." He sniffed and looked down. "I should have told you...and this is hard. May I ask you to not go back there ever again?" he requested in a quiet, undemanding way.

After a short thoughtful pause, Rayna then understood and suddenly developed faith and trust in his judgment. After all, he had been looking after her welfare; she went inside against his request. Moreover, she would never again step foot in the backroom of the Purple Bear. *No-sir-ee.*

"You have my word about not going that no-admittance door. I've learned. I really have."

He made a simple gesture with his hands then shrugged. "I shouldn't have ordered you. Christ, I could have asked nicely, but no. Stupidly, I didn't. Ray I know now that I can count on your word." He laughed; his expression relaxed considerably. "Come on. Let's go somewhere. I'm tired of all this. Let's go on and be a couple again."

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“Let's do,” she said. “And let's get out of here.”

* * *

Their lover's spat behind them, later that evening at his house their rendezvous would go beyond kissing. It was evident that Mike wanted to make up.

Mike dimmed the lights and played love music on the stereo. His house was empty and the doors were locked. He undressed her slowly and draped the chair with her clothes. With a spread hand inside the crotch, he pushed the tiny thong down her smooth, shapely legs last. Her bare flesh now belonged to him.

“You're sweet,” he said, rolling her nipples between his fingers making them stand tall and hard.

As though he cast a sensual spell, all her previous misgivings had vanished. Regarding the love bite, those reservations had vanished too.

It seemed he sensed her willingness. “You're sure you want this?”

“Yes,” she said, her body flushed with desire. “I do.”

In his bedroom, they hopped onto the light green bedspread and lay facing each other in the dim light—face-to-face, nose-to-nose and toe-to-toe. He slipped his knee between her legs.

“I want to please you tonight,” Mike whispered peering into her eyes, his warm breath grazing her lips. “More than anything.”

She whiffed his luscious expensive cologne and ran her hands through his chest hair. “If you need my blood, please take it.”

“Put your arms around me, Rayna,” Mike rasped.

She felt his velvety chest rubbing her bosoms. He raised a hand and stroked her tender breast swells, until she felt the tension draining from her body—a gentling touch he used, that caused her nipples to harden and stand. “Get comfortable,” he said. He massaged as she lay back in the cushions. His rough hands smoothed over her black creamy skin.

He murmured, “I want to please you. Tell me what you like. I love you so much.”

She hesitated. “I know what I want.”

“What is it, baby?”

Her movement stilled. “Can you, you know, put your mouth down there, on my pussy? I'd love you to do that. To feel you lick it.”

“Mm. It sounds delicious.” God, it was a sweet kiss, Rayna thought as his mouth covered hers and their tongues mingled, clinging to him.

“I can do that. I want to do it,” Mike murmured.

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His cock standing, he ravished her tiny diamond-shaped slit with his long fingers invading her pussy, very slowly and sweetly until her need bloomed and blood throbbed through her veins.

In and out of the tiny lubricated aperture, he pushed and pulled his fingers. "You like it, don't you, me doing this?"

Breathily she said, "Oh yes. Mm-hm." The fingers from his second hand deviled her nipples as Mike sucked her lip as if it were hard candy.

Rayna reached out and grasped the length of his cock as he ravished her mouth, his tongue eagerly searching and probing the deep recesses.

"Mm," said Mike, his voice coarse, "I can see that you're in a very sexy mood tonight. I like that." A deep laugh, then, "I'm going to take full advantage of you."

She had no idea how she verbally responded. She shared his enthusiasm.

After moving down on the bed, below her, his hands pushed her thighs toward her breasts, spreading and exposing her pussy.

Rayna anticipated the maddening touch of his sensuous, teasing lips. Nerves rippled and her sex muscle clenched, bracing for the naughty probe.

Leisurely, he eased over her. "I'll just have to do it then," he murmured gently.

His name tumbled off her lips. "Oh, God Mike."

"It's so tight. And I've been wanting it. No, craving it the last few days."

She felt two fingers separating the lips, which hid her humid hotbed. She peered down in the semi-darkness and saw his face moving up between her thighs, nearing the underside of her "Y". It nearly drove her mad, the wait for the penetration.

"I've dreamt of this," she said. Warm breath tickled her inner thighs as his lips kissed her labia. Her pussy clenched when his tongue brushed its mark.

"Mmmm." And, he set about his deed of driving her mad.

She sobbed out his name repeatedly as he punished her bud using short flicks of his tongue, until she groaned aloud with pleasure.

"Do you want more?"

It was a silly question! "Oh yes, Mike."

And so, he gave her more. A lot more.

"Mike...oh Mike."

Restlessly she turned her head.

A guttural growl left his lips as he grazed for one life-altering moment. She whimpered and flinched like a cowering animal. It was an incredible sensation, yet troubling and cruel. She only focused on one thing—completion. She had to have it.

In full concentration, her lover impaled her with his cock, taking her breath away.

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Feeling the warmth of their interlocking bodies, she felt herself responding.

Mike dragged his tongue over her breasts and onward toward her throat. Gently, he bit into the vein and fed while moving inside her. Wrapped in his arms, Mike rocked them for several moments, until she experienced one explosive wave after another. He let out a gusty breath and filled her with his seed, now replete with her blood. Triumphant they rode the crest until stillness and normalcy returned.

Mike lifted his head until it dropped back, revealing the red that dripped from his mouth. Shuddering, he collapsed to the side of her, spent and repeating, "I love you, you beautiful woman." He pulled her to him and laughed.

She squeezed her eyes shut and smiled. "What are you laughing about?"

"I'm high. That was so damned good."

She draped an arm over his chest. "Oh baby, I love you."

Somber silence returned to her mind and body. Mike drew a hand over her hair and down her damp curves.

"Let's not do that again."

"Do what?" he asked.

"Get into it."

"I thought you'd say let's don't do the love bites," murmured Mike.

"That was so good." She rubbed her hand along his rough jaw line.

"No quarreling anymore. And the bite *was* good."

"That it was." She paused thoughtfully. "I don't like spats."

Mike drew her face to him and pecked her forehead. "So let's don't."

Carol McKenzie

BIO

Carol McKenzie is a free spirited woman who enjoys quilting, sewing, and oil and watercolor painting. She attended a university and received a Bachelor of Arts degree as an adult student. She loves dogs and is raising a rambunctious puppy who walks across her keyboard when she tries to write. As you may have guessed, Carol's favorite new past time is writing. Recently she began writing romantic erotica and is loving it.

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