



Just One Bite (Dead End Dating, Book 4)

By Kimberly Raye

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THE STAKES HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER.

Lil Marchette, vampire extraordinaire and owner of Manhattan’s hottest hook-up service, is an expert at matching up the lonely and desperate (and sometimes dead). And thanks to the popular local reality dating show Manhattan’s Most Wanted, Lil has plenty of fresh blood to add to the mix—including the biggest, baddest vampire in the Big Apple. Vinnie Balducci, Brooklyn representative for the Snipers of Otherworldly Beings, is making Lil an offer she can’t refuse: find him the perfect woman or she’s going to be swimming with the fishes.

But Lil may not be the only one taking the plunge. The three hunky demon Prince brothers are poking around Lil’s office—hot on the trail of a rogue spirit trying to escape the land down under (not Australia) by possessing some poor, clueless human soul. Then Lil makes a startling discovery: The oblivious human vessel is none other than her loyal assistant, Evie. Between saving Evie from eternal damnation and saving herself from Vinnie’s lethal ultimatum, Lil is sure to be in for the most hellish ride of her afterlife.

“Lil is a likable mix of Bridget Jones, Carrie Bradshaw and Dracula—charming, sweet, stylish, with just a hint of fang.”

—Parkersburg News and Sentinel

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Kimberly Raye is the bestselling author of more than thirty novels, including *Dead End Dating*, *Dead and Dateless*, and *Your Coffin or Mine?* She's been nominated for several Romantic Times Reviewers' Choice Awards, as well as two RITA Awards. Her books have been featured in several major magazines, including *Better Homes & Gardens* and *Glamour*, and her novel *Sometimes Naughty, Sometimes Nice* was a *Cosmopolitan* magazine book club pick. She lives deep in the heart of Texas Hill Country with her husband and their young children.

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One

Being a five-hundred-year-old (and holding) born vampire, I've pretty much seen the worst of the worst.

War.

Famine.

Natural disasters.

Stock market crashes.

Powdered wigs (my father is so not living that one down).

Bottom line, there isn't much that can shock me, the Countess Lilliana Arrabella Guinevere du Marchette (Lil for short), Manhattan's numero uno when it comes to matchmakers.

Except walking into the tastefully decorated office of my hook-up service—*Dead End Dating*—to find an Anthony Soprano clone holding a very lethal-looking stake.

I came to an abrupt stop in the doorway, my Constanca Basto sandals refusing to carry me the rest of the way inside.

Twisted, right? I had the whole super-vamp package working for me. HD vision, enhanced hearing, mind-reading ability. Throw in the glamour trick—the power to mesmerize and persuade the opposite sex with my deep, entrancing stare—and I really had little to fear despite the nuclear toothpick in his meaty hands.

Then again, he was wearing a pair of pitch-black Ray-Bans, which sort of put a crimp on the mind reading and the glam thing. He sat behind my desk, his feet propped on the glass and chrome. He had thinning brown hair and a recessed hairline that said he was in his late thirties, maybe early forties. A black Gucci jacket hugged his potbelly. Black slacks, argyle socks, and gleaming black loafers completed the outfit. He shuffled the stake from one hand to the other. Back and forth. And eyed me.

My heart shifted into overdrive and I drank in a deep, calming breath (NOT a necessity for my kind, but after

years of blending with humans, it's become something of a habit). The scent of garlic and sausage spiraled through my nostrils.

I tamped down the urge to bolt (hey, my feet were frozen) and decided to go for Plan A—faking my way out of a very difficult (and somewhat smelly) situation.

I gave up the breathing and pasted on my most mesmerizing smile. “Can I help you with something?”

“Lil Marchette?” he asked, a Bolívar cigar hanging from the corner of his mouth. He had a thick Jersey accent and the cold, emotionless tone of a man who'd rather see me with concrete blocks strapped to my ankles than prancing around in my latest La Perla thong.

“Um, no,” I blurted. “I'm Evie. Lil's assistant. She's on vacation right now. A really long vacation.”

“Evie, huh?” The Ray-Bans swept over me once, twice. “Funny, but I met an Evie about an hour ago.” He took a puff and waved the cigar at me. “You don't look anything like her.” A stream of smoke spiraled in the air between us. “Granted, you're both blondes, but your hair is longer. And you're taller. And you're a vampire.”

So much for Plan A.

Enter Plan B—charming my way out.

“Nice jacket,” I told the guy.

“You like? My mother bought it for me.”

“She has excellent taste.”

He actually smiled. “Damn straight she does. She's a saint, that woman.” The Ray-Bans zeroed in on my face. “Goes to Mass every Saturday and Sunday. And she don't like liars. She can spot a liar at fifty paces. She's got intuition. Every time she meets a liar, she gets a cramp.”

“Maybe it's just gas.”

“Have you ever met a saint with gas?”

I'd actually never met a saint, period, which was saying a lot considering that I've been around forever. But saints and vampires don't exactly connect, if you know what I mean, and so I've made it my business to avoid any and all visits to the Vatican, pilgrimages to holy places, and eBay auctions featuring religious artifacts (although I did sneak a peek at the Jesus grilled cheese).

Not that vamps are these anti-spiritual creatures who cringe in the face of a crucifix or double over when someone recites a scripture. It's just somewhat annoying. Really, who wants to get doused with holy water at every turn? Talk about a quick way to ruin a silk blouse.

“I'm not really Evie,” I admitted, just in case he'd inherited the whole cramp thing. After all, he was sitting in my favorite chair. “I just thought you were another fan from MMW and I wanted to avoid a confrontation.”

Manhattan's Most Wanted was a local reality dating show fashioned after *The Bachelor* that paired Manhattan's hottest guys with a bevy of beautiful, buxom women. While I hadn't made the final cut for the actual show, I had made it into the outtakes that had aired a few short weeks ago.

"I saw you riding that carriage through Central Park." He grinned. "You're a real celebrity."

"That's me." Unfortunately.

"I bet they've been climbing out of the woodwork since then. TV always brings out the crazies."

"There was this one guy who wanted to lick my toes and another who asked me to spit on him. But most are just desperate. And lonely. They just want a date." I eyed the stake and swallowed against the sudden lump in my throat. "There's no chance that you're here for that, is there?"

He shrugged. "Maybe. I mean, I am here to kill you, but I might consider a date instead."

"Seriously?" When he nodded, hope blossomed in the pit of my stomach. Along with a bud of not-in-this-afterlife. I mean, really. He wasn't exactly my dream guy. But a vamp had to do what a vamp had to do. I squared my shoulders, fought my gag reflex, and smiled. "Just name the time and place, and I'm there."

"Slow down, vamp." He made a face. "You're not exactly my type."

True, so why did the comment make me feel so crappy? Oh, yeah. Because I was a hot, megalicious vampire usually wanted by any and all males, and so this was a stab at my already fragile ego.

We're talking paper-thin, ultradelicate, this close to snapping in two—thanks to one hot, hunky bounty hunter/made vampire. About a month ago, we'd had fabulous sex several times and then he'd walked.

Uh, yeah. You both agreed that there was no chance of a future, remember?

I was a born vampire (I'd come into the world via eighteen hours of labor, done the toddler and adolescent thing, and had stopped aging like all my born-vamp brethren when I'd lost my virginity at twenty-two) and he was made (a human who'd been bitten and turned); the two DO NOT go together.

BVs lived to make money and procreate. I was planning on doing both someday, just as soon as I paid down a monumental Visa bill and found my eternity mate (also known as a born vamp with great taste in clothes and a high fertility rating—a little digit that reflected the likelihood that a male vamp could hit a bull's-eye when it came to procreation). Made Vampires, on the other hand, lived to drink blood and have gratuitous sex. No bull's-eye needed.

While Ty Bonner didn't come across as the typical MV (he seemed more interested in hunting dangerous criminals than sucking and humping any and everything with a vagina), he still wasn't the guy for me.

My head knew that, but my undead heart . . .

Let's just say I'd had more than one sob fest since we'd called it quits.

"What's your name?" I asked the man with the stake.

“Vinnie Balducci.”

The name echoed in my head and stirred a big aha! My thoughts started racing and suddenly everything made sense. Thanks to my MMW notoriety, I'd obviously attracted the attention of the local representative of the SOBs, short for Snipers of Otherworldly Beings. They were a worldwide organization committed to the extermination of any and all paranormal creatures. I'd heard my father mention Vinnie on occasion, along with the juicy tidbit that the man could be bought off if the price was right.

For my father, that meant a monthly delivery of free file folders and Liquid Paper courtesy of Moe's (think copy machines and office supplies and printing services and major boredom).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Corey Mullen:

In this 21st millennium, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive at this point, people have to do something to make these individuals survive, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that oftentimes many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. Sure, by reading a publication your ability to survive boost then having chance to endure than other is high. For you who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you that Just One Bite (Dead End Dating, Book 4) book as basic and daily reading book. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

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Earl Casey:

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