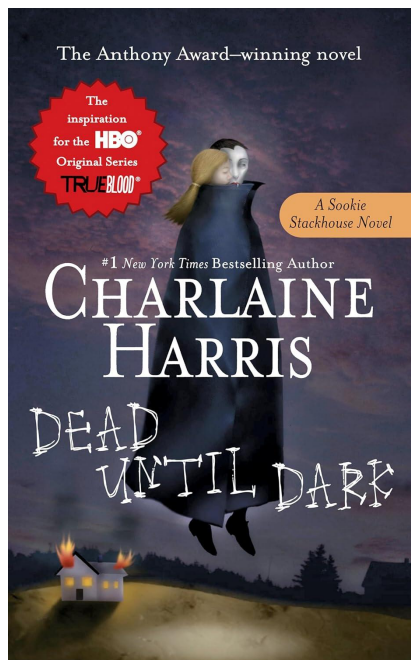


Dead Until Dark



Book Summary

This is the first book in the series; it follows a telepathic waitress that falls for the first vampire to come to her small Louisiana town after vampires publicly emerged thanks to synthetic blood.

Summary of Concerns

This book contains; alcohol, alternate gender/sexual ideologies, animal cruelty, blackmail, controversial cultural, gender and social commentary, dark content, derogatory terms, deviant content, drugs (implied), dubious consent, explicit sexual activities/nudity, gore, grief, lying, molestation, morbid interest in sex/nudity, murder, necrophilia, potentially patently offensive content, potentially prurient content, profanity, prostitution (mentioned), rape, sexual harassment, smoking, stealing and violence.

Adult

By Charlaine Harris

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CONTENT WARNING

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Adults Only

Page	Content
10	<p>I remembered Mack's contemptuous dismissal and the fact that he never left me a tip. Mack first. I'd never actually been in a fight before. Somehow I was positively looking forward to it. I leapt out from behind a pickup and swung the chain. It thwacked across Mack's back as he knelt beside his victim. He screamed and jumped up. After a glance, Denise set about getting the third Vacutainer plugged. Mack's hand dipped down to his boot and came up shining. I gulped. He had a knife in his hand. "Uh-oh," I said, and grinned at him. "You crazy bitch!" he screamed. He sounded like he was looking forward to using the knife. I was too involved to keep my mental guard up, and I had a clear flash of what Mack wanted to do to me. It drove me really crazy. I went for him with every intention of hurting him as badly as I could. But he was ready for me and jumped forward with the knife while I was swinging the chain. He sliced at my arm and just missed it. The chain, on its recoil, wrapped around his skinny neck like a lover. Mack's yell of triumph turned into a gurgle. He dropped the knife and clawed at the links with both hands. Losing air, he dropped to his knees on the rough pavement, yanking the chain from my hand.</p>
24	<p>Mack Rattray jumped out from behind my car and in one stride got close enough to clip me in the jaw. He didn't hold back one little bit, and I went down onto the gravel like a sack of cement. I let out a yell when I went down, but the ground knocked all the air out of me and some skin off of me, and I was silent and breathless and helpless. Then I saw Denise, saw her swing back her heavy boot, had just enough warning to roll into a ball before the Rattrays began kicking me. The pain was immediate, intense, and unrelenting. I threw my arms over my face instinctively, taking the beating on my forearms, legs, and my back. I think I was sure, during the first few blows, that they'd stop and hiss warnings and curses at me and leave. But I remember the exact moment I realized that they intended to kill me. I could lie there passively and take a beating, but I would not lie there and be killed. The next time a leg came close I lunged and grabbed it and held on for my life. I was trying to bite, trying to at least mark one of them. I wasn't even sure whose leg I had. Then, from behind me, I heard a growl. Oh, no, they've brought a dog, I thought. The growl was definitely hostile. If I'd had any leeway with my emotions, the hair would have stood up on my scalp. I took one more kick to the spine, and then the beating stopped. The last kick had done something dreadful to me. I could hear my own breathing, stertorous, and a strange bubbling sound that seemed to be coming from my own lungs.</p>
50	<p>The male vampire with the tattoos put his arm around Janella and rubbed her breasts. I could feel the blood drain out of my face. I was disgusted. It got worse. Janella, as lost to decency as the vampire, put her hand on his crotch and massaged.</p>
102	<p>He worked on in silence for a while, until I could tell the comb was running free through my hair. He picked up the white towel I'd tossed on the arm of the couch and began to pat my hair dry, and as it dried he ran his fingers through it to give it body. "Mmmm," I said, and as I heard it, it was no longer the sound of someone being soothed. I could feel his cool fingers lifting the hair away from my neck and then I felt his mouth just at the nape. I couldn't speak or move. I exhaled slowly, trying not to make another sound. His lips moved to my ear, and he caught the lobe of it between his teeth. Then his tongue darted in. His arms came around me, crossing over my chest, pulling me back against him. And for a miracle I only heard what his body was saying, not those niggling things from minds that only foul up moments like this. His body was saying something very simple. He lifted me as easily as I'd rotate an infant. He turned me so I was facing him on his lap, my legs on either side of his. I put my arms around him and bent a little to kiss him. It went on and on, but after a while Bill settled into a rhythm with his tongue, a rhythm even someone as inexperienced as I could identify. The nightshirt slid up to the tops of my thighs. My hands began to rub his arms helplessly. Strangely, I thought of a pan of caramels my grandmother had put on the stove for a candy recipe, and I thought of the melted, warm sweet goldenness of them. He stood up with me still wrapped around him.</p>

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102	<p>“Where?” he asked. And I pointed to my grandmother’s former room. He carried me in as we were, my legs locked around him, my head on his shoulder, and he lay me on the clean bed. He stood by the bed and in the moonlight coming in the unshaded windows, I saw him undress, quickly and neatly. Though I was getting great pleasure from watching him, I knew I had to do the same; but still a little embarrassed, I just drew off the nightshirt and tossed it onto the floor. I stared at him. I’d never seen anything so beautiful or so scary in my life. “Oh, Bill,” I said anxiously, when he was beside me in the bed, “I don’t want to disappoint you.” “That’s not possible,” he whispered. His eyes looked at my body as if it were a drink of water on a desert dune. “I don’t know much,” I confessed, my voice barely audible. “Don’t worry. I know a lot.” His hands began drifting over me, touching me in places I’d never been touched. I jerked with surprise, then opened myself to him. “Will this be different from doing it with a regular guy?” I asked. “Oh, yes.” I looked up at him questioningly.</p>
103	<p>“It’ll be better,” he said in my ear, and I felt a twinge of pure excitement. A little shyly, I reached down to touch him, and he made a very human sound. After a moment, the sound became deeper. “Now?” I asked, my voice ragged and shaking. “Oh, yes,” he said, and then he was on top of me. A moment later he found out the true extent of my inexperience. “You should have told me,” he said, but very gently. He held himself still with an almost palpable effort. “Oh, please don’t stop!” I begged, thinking that the top would fly off my head, something drastic would happen, if he didn’t go on with it. “I have no intention of stopping,” he promised a little grimly. “Sookie . . . this will hurt.” In answer, I raised myself. He made an incoherent noise and pushed into me. I held my breath. I bit my lip. Ow, ow, ow. “Darling,” Bill said. No one had ever called me that. “How are you?” Vampire or not, he was trembling with the effort of holding back. “Okay,” I said inadequately. I was over the sting, and I’d lose my courage if we didn’t proceed. “Now,” I said, and I bit him hard on the shoulder. He gasped, and jerked, and he began moving in earnest. At first I was dazed, but I began to catch on and keep up. He found my response very exciting, and I began to feel that something was just around the corner, so to speak—something very big and good. I said, “Oh, please, Bill, please!” and dug my nails in his hips, almost there, almost there, and then a small shift in our alignment allowed him to press even more directly against me and almost before I could gather myself I was flying, flying, seeing white with gold streaks. I felt Bill’s teeth against my neck, and I said, “Yes!” I felt his fangs penetrate, but it was a small pain, an exciting pain, and as he came inside me I felt him draw on the little wound.</p>
110	<p>“Maybe we can bathe together?” Bill suggested. I felt my cheeks flame, and my heart began to pound a little faster. “Maybe now?” Bill’s fingers tugging at my shirt where it was tucked into my black shorts. “Oh, well. . . maybe.” I couldn’t seem to look at him straight when I thought of how this—okay, man—had seen more of me than I’d ever let anyone see, including my doctor. “Have you missed me?” he asked, his hands unbuttoning my shorts and peeling them down. “Yes,” I said promptly because I knew that to be true. He laughed, even as he knelt to untie my Nikes. “What did you miss most, Sookie?” “I missed your silence,” I said without thinking at all. He looked up. His fingers paused in the act of pulling the end of the bow to loosen it. “My silence,” he said. “Not being able to hear your thoughts. You just can’t imagine, Bill, how wonderful that is.” “I was thinking you’d say something else.” “Well, I missed that, too.” “Tell me about it,” he invited, pulling my socks off and running his fingers up my thigh, tugging off the panties and shorts. “Bill! I’m embarrassed,” I protested. “Sookie, don’t be embarrassed with me. Least of anyone, with me.” He was standing now, divesting me of my shirt and reaching behind me to unsnap my bra, running his hands over the marks the straps had made on my skin, turning his attention to my breasts. He toed off his sandals at some point. “I’ll try,” I said, looking at my own toes. “Undress me.” Now that I could do. I unbuttoned his shirt briskly and eased it out of his pants and off his shoulders. I unbuckled his belt and began to work on the waist button of his slacks. It was stiff, and I had quite a job. I thought I was going to cry if the button didn’t cooperate more. I felt clumsy and inept. He took my hands and led them up to his chest.</p>

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110	<p>“Slow, Sookie, slow,” he said, and his voice had gone soft and shivery. I could feel myself relaxing almost inch by inch, and I began to stroke his chest as he’d stroked mine, twining the curly hair around my fingers and gently pinching his flat nipples. His hand went behind my head and pressed gently. I hadn’t known men liked that, but Bill sure did, so I paid equal attention to the other one. While I was doing that, my hands resumed work on the damn button, and this time it came undone with ease. I began pushing down his pants, sliding my fingers inside</p>
111	<p>his Jockeys. He helped me down into the spa, the water frothing around our legs. “Shall I bathe you first?” he asked. “No,” I said breathlessly. “Give me the soap.”</p>
112	<p>“Tell me, Sookie.” His voice was coaxing, his eyes big pools of curiosity. He ran his thumbnail down my stomach, and I shivered. “I had a . . . funny uncle,” I said, feeling the familiar tight smile stretch my lips. He raised his dark arched brows. He hadn’t heard the phrase.</p>
113	<p>I said as distantly as I could manage, “That’s an adult male relative who molests his . . . the children in the family.” His eyes began to burn. He swallowed; I could see his Adam’s apple move. I grinned at him. My hands were pulling my hair back from my face. I couldn’t stop it. “And someone did this to you? How old were you?” “Oh, it started when I was real little,” and I could feel my breathing begin to speed up, my heart beat faster, the panicky traits that always came back when I remembered. My knees drew up and pressed together. “I guess I was five,” I babbled, talking faster and faster, “I know you can tell, he never actually, ah, screwed me, but he did other stuff,” and now my hands were shaking in front of my eyes where I held them to shield them from Bill’s gaze. “And the worst thing, Bill, the worst thing,” I went on, just unable to stop, “is that every time he came to visit, I always knew what he was going to do because I could read his mind! And there wasn’t anything I could do to stop it!” I clamped my hands over my mouth to make myself shut up. I wasn’t supposed to talk about it. I rolled over onto my stomach to conceal myself, and held my body absolutely rigid. After a long time, I felt Bill’s cool hand on my shoulder. It lay there, comforting. “This was before your parents died?” he said in his usual calm voice. I still couldn’t look at him. “Yes.” “You told your mama? She did nothing?” “No. She thought I was dirty minded, or that I’d found some book at the library that taught me something she didn’t feel I was ready to know.”</p>
120	<p>“Oh, we can’t, Bill.” I heard his breath draw in. “Of course not, if we’re separating,” he said quietly, but he didn’t sound like he thought I meant it. “We should definitely not be kissing. Still less should I want to throw you back on the porch and fuck you till you faint.” My knees were actually shaking. His deliberately crude language, coming out in that cold sweet voice, made the longing inside me surge even higher. It took everything I had, every little scrap of self-control, to push myself up and go in the house. But I did it.</p>
128	<p>As I comprehended my own danger, Bill gripped my upper arms. He pulled me to him, slowly. There was no point in struggling, in fact I sensed that would only excite Bill more. Bill held me about an inch from him, I could almost smell his skin, and I could feel the turmoil in him, I could taste his rage. Directing that energy in another way might save me. I leaned that inch, put my mouth on his chest. I licked the rain off, rubbed my cheek against his nipple, pressed myself against him.</p>
129	<p>The next moment his teeth grazed my shoulder, and his body, hard and rigid and ready, shoved me so forcefully I was suddenly on my back in the mud. He slid directly into me as if he were trying to reach through me to the soil. I shrieked, and he growled in response, as though we were truly mud people, primitives from caves. My hands, gripping the flesh of his back, felt the rain pelting down and the blood under my nails, and his relentless movement. I thought I would be plowed into this mud, into my grave. His fangs sank into my neck. Suddenly I came. Bill howled as he reached his own completion, and he collapsed on me, his fangs pulling out and his tongue cleaning the puncture marks. I had thought he might kill me without even meaning to.</p>
130	<p>“If anyone can, you will,” he said. “I want to enter you again.” “You mean—? Oh, yeah. I see what you mean.” He’d taken my hand and guided it down to him. “I’d like that, too.” And I sure would, if I could survive it after the pounding I’d taken in the graveyard. Bill had been so angry that now I felt battered. But I could also feel that liquidly warm feeling running through me, that restless excitement to which Bill had addicted me.</p>

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130	<p>“Honey,” I said, caressing him up and down his length, “honey.” I kissed him, felt his tongue in my mouth. I touched his fangs with my own tongue. “Can you do it without biting?” I whispered. “Yes. It’s just like a grand finale when I taste your blood.” “Would it be almost as good without?” “It can never be as good without, but I don’t want to weaken you.” “If you wouldn’t mind,” I said tentatively. “It took me a few days to feel up to par.” “I’ve been selfish . . . you’re just so good.” “If I’m strong, it’ll be even better,” I suggested. “Show me how strong you are,” he said teasingly. “Lie on your back. I’m not real sure how this works, but I know other people do it.” I straddled him, heard his breathing quicken. I was glad the room was dark and outside the rain was still pouring. A flash of lightning showed me his eyes, glowing. I carefully maneuvered into what I hoped was the correct position, and guided him inside me. I</p>
132	<p>Though Bill didn’t say anything directly, I knew from the course our conversation took from time to time that he was worried about my safety with the murderer of Dawn, Maudette, and my grandmother still at large. If the men of Bon Temps and the surrounding towns thought burning out the Monroe vampires would set their minds at ease about the murders, they were wrong. Autopsy reports from the three victims finally proved they had their full complement of blood when they were killed. Furthermore, the bite marks on Maudette and Dawn had not only looked old, they were proved to be old. The cause of their deaths was strangulation. Maudette and Dawn had had sex before they’d died. And afterward.</p>
139	<p>“Not groin,” I said hastily. “I don’t know, Bill. Yuck. Whichever.” “Neck,” he said. “Lie on top of me, Sookie.” “That’s like sex.” “It’s the easiest way.” So I straddled him and gently let myself down. This felt very peculiar. This was a position we used for lovemaking and nothing else. “Bite, Sookie,” he whispered. “I can’t do that!” I protested. “Bite, or I’ll have to use a knife.” “My teeth aren’t sharp like yours.” “They’re sharp enough.” “I’ll hurt you.” He laughed silently. I could feel his chest moving beneath me. “Damn.” I breathed, and steeling myself, I bit his neck. I did a good job</p>
140	<p>because there was no sense prolonging this. I tasted the metallic blood in my mouth. Bill groaned softly, and his hands brushed my back and continued down. His fingers found me. I gave a gasp of shock. “Drink,” he said raggedly, and I sucked hard. He groaned, louder, deeper, and I felt him pressing against me. A little ripple of madness went through me, and I attached myself to him like a barnacle, and he entered me, began moving, his hands now gripping my hip bones. I drank and saw visions, visions all with a background of darkness, of white things coming up from the ground and going hunting, the thrill of the run through the woods, the prey panting ahead and the excitement of its fear; pursuit, legs pumping, hearing the thrumming of blood through the veins of the pursued . . . Bill made a noise deep in his chest and convulsed inside me. I raised my head from his neck, and a wave of dark delight carried me out to sea. This was pretty exotic stuff for a telepathic barmaid from northern Louisiana.</p>
145	<p>My eyes sought his corner before I could open my mouth, and then he was on me, Long Shadow, vaulting over the chair holding Belinda to land on top of me as I crouched in front of her. I was bowled over backward into Eric’s desk, and only my upflung arms saved me from his teeth sinking into my throat and ripping it out. He bit my forearm savagely, and I screamed; at least I tried to, but with so little air left from the impact it was more like an alarmed choking</p>
146	<p>I was only conscious of the heavy figure on top of me and the pain of my arm, my own fear. I hadn’t been frightened that the Rats were going to kill me until almost too late, but I understood that to keep his name from leaving my lips, Long Shadow was ready to kill me instantly, and when I heard the awful noise and felt his body press even harder on me I didn’t have any idea what it meant. I’d been able to see his eyes over the top of my arm. They were wide, brown, crazed, icy. Suddenly they dulled and seemed to almost flatten. Blood gushed out of Long Shadow’s mouth, bathing my arm. It flowed into my open mouth, and I gagged. His teeth relaxed, and his face fell in on itself. It began to wrinkle. His eyes turned into gelatinous pools. Handfuls of his thick black hair fell on my face. I was shocked beyond moving. Hands gripped my shoulders and began pulling me out from under the decaying corpse. I pushed with my feet to scabble back faster. There wasn’t an odor, but there was gunk, black and streaky, and the absolute horror and disgust of watching Long Shadow deconstruct with incredible speed. There was a stake sticking out of his back.</p>

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193	Into my head poured images that made me sick, made me terrified. Dawn, asking someone to punch her, then finding out that he'd got one of her hose in
194	his hand, was stretching it between his fingers, preparing to tighten it around her neck. A flash of Maudette, naked and begging. A woman I'd never seen, her bare back to me, bruises and welts covering it. Then my grandmother— my grandmother—in our familiar kitchen, angry and fighting for her life. I was paralyzed by the shock of it, the horror of it. Whose thoughts were these? I had an image of Arlene's kids, playing on my living room floor; I saw myself, and I didn't look like the person I saw in my own mirror. I had huge holes in my neck, and I was lewd; I had a knowing leer on my face, and I patted the inside of my thigh suggestively. "Your sister," I yelled. "Is Cindy still alive, Rene?" "Bitch!" he screamed, and I knew in that second that the first woman to die had been Rene's sister, the one who liked vampires, the one he was supposedly still visiting from time to time, according to Arlene. Rene had killed Cindy, his waitress sister, while she was still wearing her pink-and
195	white hospital cafeteria uniform. He'd strangled her with her apron strings. And he'd had sex with her, after she was dead. She'd sunk so low, she wouldn't mind her own brother, he'd thought, as much as he was capable of thinking. Anyone who'd let a vampire do that deserved to die. And he'd hidden her body from shame. The others weren't his flesh and blood; it had been all right to let them lie.

Profanity & Sexual or Derogatory Terms	Count
Bastard	2
Bitch	7
BoobsBreast / Tit	3
Fuck, Fucked, Fucking etc.	3
Penis	1
Piss	4
Shit / Bullshit etc.	6
Whore	3
Slut	1
Sacrilegious & other offensive language usage	Count
Damn	15
God / God damn etc.	25
Hell	25
Jesus	3
Lord	3
Christ	1