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Tantalize

Cassandra Fugal

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Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Tantalize*. Candlewick, 2007. ISBN 9780763627911. \$16.99. 310 p.

Reviewer: Cassandra Fugal

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: fantasy;

Subject: Supernatural--Juvenile fiction; Restaurants--Juvenile fiction; Vampires--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Tantalize: To torment with the sight of something desired but out of reach; to tease by arousing expectations that are repeatedly disappointment.

Fortunately, the book lives up to its title. Quincie Morris is tantalizingly in love with her best friend Kiernan, a hybrid werewolf. She cannot stand to be away from him, but his presence torments her. He is so close to her that she cannot believe he is oblivious to her love, and yet each day he moves further away from her as he prepares to leave in order to join a wolf pack. To distract herself from the pain of her unrequited love, Quincie throws herself into the re-opening of her family's vampire themed restaurant. After the chef is viciously murdered, suspicions rise about the involvement of a werewolf in the crime. Quincie must deal with these suspicions while finding a replacement chef who can not only cook like the devil but also portray a debonair vampire. Enter Henry Johnson, a nerdy cowboy who can cook extraordinary dishes, but can Quincie make him over as a sensual vampire cook in time for the opening? As the kitchen sizzles with scrumptious dishes so does the tension between Henry and Quincie.

As the title implies, the reader is teased with expectations that are repeatedly disappointed. The story has suspense, danger, wit, and tenuous romance. Quincie is smart and unlike any teenage heroine. The reader hopes that she will come out on top despite the werewolves and vampires that haunt her life. Although readers may be disappointed with the twist the story takes at the end, they will remain tantalized.