



## The Pact (An Indigo Novel)

By Monica McKayhan

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### Break up for the summer...

That's the deal Indigo Summer makes with her boyfriend, Marcus Carter. That way, they can both enjoy their vacations, no guilt, no questions asked. Not that Indigo isn't worried when Marcus heads to Texas to spend time with his estranged mother—kissing Marcus goodbye is hard enough, and who knows who'll be kissing him in Houston? But Indigo barely has time to think about her temporarily ex-boyfriend by the time she gets to Chicago. She's hanging out with her cool cousin, who lives alone at seventeen and has her own life—a life Indigo thought she wanted, until things get way out of hand. She needs Marcus, but he has his own thing going on...and his mother wants him to stay with her permanently.

Maybe it's time for a new pact.

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## **The Pact (An Indigo Novel) By Monica McKayhan Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

### About the Author

Monica McKayhan writes adult and young adult fiction. She currently has 9 titles in print. Her YA novel, *Indigo Summer*, was the launch title for Harlequin's young adult imprint, Kimani TRU. *Indigo Summer* snagged the #7 position on the *Essence* bestsellers list and appeared on the American Library Association (ALA)'s list of Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. To schedule an appearance, book signing or interview with Monica, please email [publicity@monicamckayhan.com](mailto:publicity@monicamckayhan.com).

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### *Indigo*

Exam.

The last five questions on the test were trick questions. *Miss Harris thinks she's slick*, I thought as I gnawed on the eraser of my number-two pencil. I'd studied hard for this test but now was doubting my answers. I glanced at the clock on the wall, the one with the big black numbers and the second hand that you could actually hear ticking. The second hand seemed to be moving at a faster pace than usual, and I was running out of time. Some of the questions on the test offered a list of multiple choice answers, and I was able to use the process of elimination on them. But others required a specific answer, and those were tricky.

To make things worse, in the middle of the test, my mind started drifting to thoughts of Marcus. It was the last day of school, and the beginning of summer vacation, and Marcus and I were both going away for the summer—separate vacations. He was going to visit his mother in Houston and I was bound for Chicago to spend the summer with my grandmother Nana Summer. Marcus and I would be away from each other for two whole months and some change, and the thought of it was bittersweet. On the one hand, I couldn't wait to see Nana Summer again and spend some time with my cousins in Chicago. But on the other hand, it was going to be hard not seeing Marcus every day, going to the movies or for a bite to eat at Sonic Drive-in. I would miss riding to school with Marcus every morning, tossing my books into the backseat of his Jeep and kicking my feet up on his dash, only to hear him threaten to put me out if I didn't take them down. I would miss our trips to the old airport to watch the rickety planes land, and to count the stars and look for the Big Dipper. Most of all, though, I would miss Marcus's smile and his Jolly Rancher-flavored kisses. Two months would be like two years.

As I approached the last question on the exam, I glanced at the clock on the wall once more. The bell would be ringing soon, and I'd have to turn in my exam, despite my bogus answers to the five questions that weren't multiple choice. Even if I got them wrong, I'd still wind up with at least a C, I thought—maybe a low C, but a C nonetheless. And that was better than a D any day of the week. The last time I'd brought a D home, I'd been on punishment for two weeks and had my cell phone and TV privileges taken away. That was not fun, and I definitely didn't need those kinds of problems now—not at the beginning of my summer vacation. Even though I was headed to Chicago and my parents wouldn't receive my final grades for a few weeks, they would still find a way of making my life miserable if my grades weren't up to par. I would pay one way or another.

"Okay, ladies and gentlemen, I need for you to turn your exams facedown on your desks," said Miss Harris, "and I will come around and pick them up. You will receive your final grades in the mail. Good luck to you all, and have a wonderful summer vacation!"

As the bell sounded, students rushed from their seats and out the door. I took my time about stuffing my book into my backpack. I threw it across my shoulder and stood, sort of moped toward the door.

"Indigo, what's the matter?" Miss Harris asked, cocking her head to the side as if she was trying to read my thoughts.

"I just hope I did okay," I said. "There were a few tricky ones on there."

"You shouldn't worry. You know this stuff. We've gone over it a million times."

"I thought I knew, but some of them had me stumped."

"You'll do fine." She placed her hand on my shoulder. "Have a great summer, Indigo. Your freshman year is over. You'll be a sophomore next year."

She smiled, and I thought about what she'd said. I'd be a sophomore next year. That had a nice ring to it. Meant that I was closer to being a grown-up. It was nice graduating from being a lowly freshman and being at the bottom of the totem pole. You got no respect at the bottom. But as a sophomore, you could push the little people around, and next year, I could do just that. I couldn't wait.

"Thank you, Miss Harris. You have a great summer, too."

I stepped out into the hallway as kids rushed to their lockers, grabbed the few things that were left in them and headed toward the buses.

Let the summer begin!

I waited out front for Marcus until he finally approached, running his mouth with a couple of his friends from the basketball team. They gave each other high fives and bid each other farewell for the summer. Then Marcus headed my way.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Been standing here all day," I said, and then wrapped my arms around his waist. "What took you so long?"

"I had to say goodbye to some teachers and some of my friends. You know how it is when you're popular and good-looking." He laughed as he unlocked the passenger door of his Jeep and opened it for me.

"Whatever, Marcus." I laughed, too, as I hopped into the passenger's seat and pulled the seat belt across my waist. Marcus jumped into the driver's seat.

"Wanna go to the airport and talk?" I asked.

"Talk about what?" he asked. "I thought we would run by the mall so I could pick up those Jordans I been eyeballin'."

"We need to talk about what we're gonna do this summer," I said. "You know, we're both going away. Remember?"

"Okay, so we're both going away. And?" Marcus started his Jeep and let the power windows down. Since there was no air-conditioning, we hoped for just the smallest breeze as we sat there in the school's parking lot.

"And we need to decide what we're gonna do."

"Do about what, Indi? I'm not following what you're saying."

I twisted in my seat, wiped sweat from my forehead. I had already thought this through over the past few weeks. Marcus would be heading to Houston, where I was sure there would be lots of pretty girls all up in his face. And I was heading to Chicago to visit Nana. There was a boy there—Jordan Fisher—who had lived around the corner from Nana for as long as I could remember. I would see him sometimes when I visited during spring break or during the few summers that I spent with Nana. He gave me a ring once—one that he got out of the bubble-gum machine at Jewel's drugstore when I was seven years old. The ring meant that I was his girlfriend, but only during my short visit. After that, I'd forgotten all about Jordan—at least until the next time I saw him. He was sort of a "pretend boyfriend" or "summer boyfriend." We had promised to always be together whenever I visited Chicago, with no strings attached once I returned to Atlanta.

I kept thinking that I might bump into Jordan while I was there. Or maybe I'd bump into someone else who would make my summer worthwhile. I wouldn't have any fun if Marcus and I decided to stay committed to each other. We'd both spend the entire summer wondering what the other was doing, and I wasn't up for that. I had to convince Marcus that breaking up—just for a few months—was the best thing to do. It would only be temporary, and at the end of the summer, it would be as if we'd never missed a beat. Things would go back to being just the way they were.

"Can we drive? It's too hot to just sit here. I got sweat pouring down my face," I said.

Marcus tightened his seat belt around his waist and then pulled out of the school's parking lot. He headed toward the small airport—the place where we went to have serious conversations, or to simply watch the sunset or find the Big Dipper amongst the stars. The old airport was the place that Marcus's dad used to take him when he was a little boy, to teach him about manly things and about life. It was the place where Marcus went to clear his head and spend some quiet time with himself. It was a special place.

During the drive he slipped in a CD and T.I.'s voice rang through the speakers. T.I. was one of my favorite artists. In fact, it was my CD. I had picked it up at Stonecrest Mall the day it was released. Marcus had jacked me for it. I let him borrow it once, and he never gave it back. But I never said anything because I'd lost count of the CDs I'd borrowed from him and never given back. The way I figured it, whatever Marcus had, I had, too...and vice versa. If I needed lunch money, he had my back. And I always slipped a package of M&M's into his backpack. That was his favorite candy.

I bounced my shoulders to the music and peered out my window as Marcus pulled into the airport parking lot.

"Okay, here we are," he said, and shrugged.

I was the first to jump out of my seat, hopping out of the Jeep.

"Wanna race?" I asked, and then took off running.

"Not really" was Marcus's response, but he took off running, too.

When Marcus finally caught up, he wrapped his arms around my waist from behind. "So what's up with you, girl?" he whispered in my ear. "What is all this talk about the summer?"

"The summer is three months, Marcus." I turned to face him. "You'll be gone to Houston, and I'll be in Chicago."

"What's your point?"

"My point is, you might meet someone in Houston that you like better." He started laughing. "What's funny? This is not a joke, Marcus. I'm

serious." "You might meet someone in Chicago that you like better." "So what are you saying?" "What are you saying?" "Maybe we should break up just in case." "Are you serious?" "Only for a few months, until we come back," I

suggested. "If we meet someone new, we won't feel bad about hanging out with them. If we don't meet anyone, and we still feel the same way about each other when we come back, then we get back together."

Marcus stared at me for a moment, waiting for me to laugh or say I was joking. After realizing I was serious, he turned away, picked up a few rocks. Threw one across the field. The rock hit the ground with a thump, and he threw another one.

"Are you trying to hook up with someone else for the summer?" he finally asked. "Is that what it is, Indi?"

"No, not anyone in particular, Marcus, but you never know."

"That's cool, Indi. If that's what you want."

"Marcus, three months is a long time." Why didn't he understand?

"Two and a half months," he corrected me. "But that's cool. If you think you can't be faithful for that long, then we can break up. No problem."

"Why you gotta make it sound like that?"

"Make it sound like what?"

"Like it's the end of the world."

"Well, if it's not, then what is it?"

"It's just a pact, Marcus," I said. "We make a pact to break up for the summer. If we don't meet anyone new while we're gone, then we'll hook up again when we come back."

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Grady Long:**

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#### **Patrick Taylor:**

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