

Grace's Demon

by

Carolyn Faulkner

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Chapter One

In-cu-bus. Is that a new type of minivan?

Grace Ferrentino wrestled the last suitcase into the foyer of her temporary home-away-from-home and just stood for a moment, hands on her hips, one wary eye on the rocking, hissing cat carrier and one on the beautiful horizon of nothin' but ocean. Out of the goodness of her heart – yeah, right – she'd offered to housesit for June, July, and August at a huge old beach house on Drake's Island. Tanya Hennessey was suffering through another whirlwind tour of Europe with Mr. Wrong, and she'd needed someone she could trust to watch her house. Some people had all the luck...well, in Tanya's case, maybe luck wasn't exactly the right word, but whatever she was doing, she must've been doing it right to be paid a teacher's salary and drive a Jag.

Of course, Grace's superhuman hearing vis à vis anything beach-oriented had perked up immediately. Personally she thought it was a horrible waste for anyone to live anywhere else... although the price of real estate along the coast translated into un-real estate, which is why she lived in a cramped little condo well inland. She carefully insinuated herself into the conversation the three teachers had been conducting in the small room at the back of the high school library. These cramped quarters functioned as a break/lunchroom for those who got neither breaks nor lunches. "What's this I hear about your needing a house-sitter, Tanya, and do you want the bribe in small bills or will you take a check?"

Luckily, Tanya liked Grace, and Lord knows that, considering Grace's distinct lack of anything even vaguely resembling a life, the house would certainly be safe enough with her, if one ignored the puddles of drool that were likely to dampen the carpeting. Arrangements were made and emergency numbers exchanged, and now she was finally taking possession – well, temporary possession – of the property. She'd left her roommate so fast, once school was out for the year, that there were probably still skid-marks in the driveway. But Lydia was one of the few people who seemed to truly understand her perverted obsession with this house.

Probably because Lydia had a good idea just how perverted Grace really was, she thought with a wry smile.

Grace was the librarian at the same high school where Tanya taught history. They had known each other for years, although not terribly well; Grace always attended the annual holiday get-together that Tanya threw for her staff friends every year. And, from the first time she'd stepped into it, there had been something about this place that had poked at her from the back of her mind: a feeling – an aura that both attracted and repelled her at the same time, niggling at her like a loose tooth that you just can't keep your tongue away from.

Only Gracie was thirty-six years old, old enough to know better. Creaky, creepy houses that had been there since Noah was a pup abounded in New England, and they all naturally had that "been around since dirt" feeling. Grace was enough of a house

connoisseur that she should have just sloughed off the disturbing aura, but it wasn't that easy. Not at all. And she'd noticed that the feelings didn't recede until she'd left the house, dispelling slowly on the drive home as if severely reluctant to let go of her. She'd been teaching at the same school for almost ten years now, and had attended ten such parties at Tanya's beautiful house. That sense of nervous expectation, that mantle of uncomfortable, almost sexual awareness settled onto her and into her like a musty cloak every time she crossed the threshold.

And here it was again, only tenfold as strong.

Grace straightened her shoulders. She was not going to let whatever weird spooky things might be haunting her territory for the next two-and-a-half months get the better of her. Before she loosed one very pissed off kitty from her crate, she got her stuff put away – the fewer things for Mouse to shred, the better. Once the litter box was in place in the downstairs bathroom – the better to chase away any guests with - Grace put the carrier in a quiet corner of the kitchen and opened the door.

Now, Mouse wasn't much of a cat's cat. Having been raised from kittenhood by her devoted Mommy, she was very attached to Grace, and, although she had a very demanding schedule which included at least sixteen hours of sleep a day, she also required plenty of loving attention, which Grace was more than happy to provide. But instead of tentatively sniffing her way out of the crate as Grace expected, Mouse literally race over her sneakered feet to dart down the cellar stairs in stark fear. Grace, a seasoned cat owner, just shrugged. She'd come up when she was hungry. Tuna-breath's food and water dishes took up residence next to a solid oak wastebasket.

Grace shook her head. Tanya needed to float down to Earth with the rest of the humans and buy a butt-ugly Rubbermaid wastebasket, she thought. Who the hell uses oak for a wastebasket, for God's sake?

Still mumbling to herself, she wandered out onto the screened-in wraparound porch and just stood there, taking deep breaths of cool evening salt air, listening to the wonderful, soothing sounds of the waves and the gulls. As she stood there, though, Grace couldn't rid herself of the idea that someone was standing behind her. That was silly. She'd locked the door; she knew she had. But, paranoia reigning supreme, Grace went back and rechecked everything. Yup. Locked. Screen door: locked. Deadbolt: locked. Doorknob: locked.

Heck, this was backwater Maine, for God's sake – at least until the herds of tourists arrived in a couple of weeks. And even then. You'd think she was in an apartment in the middle of the combat zone in Boston!

Trying to laugh it off, Grace grimaced and headed back to the porch. She couldn't believe she was here until the end of August – heck, she could practically roll out of bed and onto the –

Something was rubbing against her clitoris, and it wasn't the seam of her jeans, because she was wearing gym shorts. Grace could feel her lips being parted, as if around a big, male finger as it granted itself access to that hidden nub of flesh...

She turned around, half expecting to find the owner of that finger standing behind her, but, of course, no one was there – hadn't she just checked the locks?

Flick – flick.

She had to brace herself against the wall of the house with one hand, gulping air as she did. That was a finger. Grace knew fingers and that was someone's finger!

Flick – flick.

Holy fucking Christ, she was standing alone on a porch getting brought off by a – by nothing! By something...invisible! Oh, God, her nipples were both being coaxed into livid, aching peaks by something hot and wet and slightly rough that suckled and tugged and pulled at her deliciously...relentlessly – Grace's knees almost gave away as she moaned, long and low –

And then it was gone. Nada.

Nothing but a very deep, faintly amused chuckle, but that must've come from next door.

Still shuddering, still pulsating, blood thrumming through now-swollen flesh, Grace forced herself to stand up straight and walk back into the house.

Why the hell hadn't Tanya told her that this house was haunted by a perverted ghost?

All through the unpacking process, Grace kept looking over her shoulder and jumping at everything, including the phone when it rang next to her ear. Quickly recovering from the near-heart-attack, she picked it up. "Hello?"

"Grace?" It was Lydia, her roommate.

"Lyds!" Grace greeted, dropping bonelessly down onto the freshly made king-sized bed.

Lydia liked to live vicariously through Grace - she might have spent the summer at the beach house also, but then Lydia actually spent more time with her boyfriend than at their apartment anyway. "Where are you now?"

"I'm in the master bedroom – it's freakin' huge! The bed and the room itself – you know, she's got a walkthrough closet dressing area thingie and a bathroom that's the size of our goddamned apartment!"

"Well, we all knew she was a clothes horse..." Disapproval was rife in Lydia's tone. "Is there any room for you to put your stuff?"

Grace snorted. "Yeah, like I have the gowns and stuff she has. I can just see hanging my Jaclyn Smith's from K-mart next to her Diors – they'd probably curl up and die. I'd wake up tomorrow morning to find all of her stuff had segregated itself into one corner of the closet!"

She figured she was pretty much done for the night, so she put the toe of one foot to the heel of the Reebok on the other and pulled each of her shoes off, flexing and stretching each foot as it was released from sneaker purgatory.

A thought struck her suddenly and she tuned out Lydia's story about her rascal of a boyfriend – should she mention the bizarre happening on the porch, or just write it off as an ode to the fact that she hadn't gotten some in a while...okay, an enormously long while? Lying stretched out on the bed had made her T-shirt ride up above her shorts, which she didn't usually allow, not being the skinniest of people, but what the hell...

She was alone. She hoped.

Grace raised her head and looked around her furtively, just to assure herself that she was, truly alone. Then she relaxed back on the bed again, her hand landing on her bare, much-too-round tummy, rubbing lazily as she tuned back into Lyd's story, able to pick it up without missing a beat.

"– and then I said, 'Fuck, no, you're not gonna touch me there...'" Lydia was the world's youngest prude, Grace swore.

"Lydia!"

The snort that wafted through the wires was somewhat less than ladylike. "Well, not all of us are slut puppies like you!"

"I am not a slut puppy!" Grace protested, then relented. "Well, not in reality."

"I don't care that you haven't slept with many guys – when you do sleep with them, I'm sure they don't hear 'no' very often..." came the teasing comment.

"Bite me," Grace responded with no real rancor.

Lydia didn't hesitate with a comeback. "No, thanks. I'm not into that, but I'm sure you are..."

"Grrrrrrr."

Her best friend giggled like a little girl. "Well, I'll let'cha go – dipnod is coming to pick me up – we're going to see the new Star Trek movie. Wanna come?"

She knew that the offer was genuine, but Grace didn't want to be a third wheel, and regardless of how well she got along with Lydia and Rick, anyone who went anywhere with a couple that was romantically involved could rarely rise above that. "No, thanks, I'm kinda wiped and I think I'm gonna open the French doors onto the balcony and fall asleep to the sounds of the waves crashing onto the beach – " she teased mercilessly.

"Bite me."

"Isn't that what you have Rick for?" Grace replied sweetly. "Or isn't he quite up to the task?"

Lydia groaned. "That man is never down for any length of time, unfortunately – he's never down on anything, either. I definitely have that bone to pick with him – "

"– But not his bone, I take it?"

Grace could hear Lydia's grimace. "I've been pickin' his bone for far too long with no reciprocal consideration, if you know what I mean..."

"I do, I do. So tell him you ain't gonna give him any of your hot, nasty love until he settles up his... er, debts."

"Yeah. I guess I'm gonna have to." Lydia sighed heavily. "Well, I gotta go get ready."

"Okay, talk to you later."

Grace hung up the phone and fell into an all-out stretch that had her groaning like she was in the midst of the most torturous of orgasms. When she was done, she lay there panting for a long moment, then got up, pulled all the shades and the curtains over the balcony doors, and indulged herself in a hot, steamy shower. Tanya's huge garden bathtub was an entirely separate entity from the big shower stall, but she still managed to cloud up the whole room nicely. Grace took a long time in the shower, shaving her underarms

and legs, even her mons – the pantyhose-pubic-hair demon had gotten her for the last time in college. Since then, she'd never let that hair get long enough to get caught in its clutches. Then she wet her unfashionably long strawberry blonde hair, washing it twice with an unbelievably expensive shampoo that sluiced down her whole body and scented it lightly with wintergreen...while something vaguely man-shaped watched avidly through the glass, clearly outlined by the vapors– if she had known to look.

After shutting off the water, Grace stepped out of the shower, wrapped one towel around her hair, then dried herself off with a second luxuriously soft one, sprinkling Ralph Lauren's Romance powder liberally all over, then walking nude into the bedroom to flop down on the end of the bed and apply scented lotion to her horribly dry shins, arms...everything. Then she slid into a soft jersey-knit nightshirt that proclaimed "Hand over the chocolate and no one gets hurt," as well as a pair of little-girlish flowered cotton panties, and she flung open the doors to the balcony to invite the salty sea air and the natural rhythm of the waves to lull her to sleep.

Despite her usual neurotic tendency not to sleep the first time in a strange bed, she had no such trouble that night, except for the fact that when she awoke, she felt less rested than when she'd gone to bed. Her whole body seemed to tingle and ache, as if she'd spent the night making love...and the dreams! Grace lay half-awake in the morning sun, and her whole body flushed a bright red at the thought of how every dream she'd had last night had been entirely sexual. Usually her dreams had some sort of story to it – occasionally fairly elaborate plots – but not these! It was as if she'd set her REM sleep television to the Spice channel – and then some!

Now, she'd had wonderful, sexy dreams before, and these certainly qualified...but there was an edge to these...for one thing, the man she was making love with didn't seem to have a face; it wasn't that she couldn't recognize the features, it was that there weren't any features! Oh, Grace could remember details about his body – how tall and broad and muscular he was – just like she liked 'em. And she could certainly recall exactly what he'd done with those big, ham hands of his – all that probing and plunging and pinching while his mouth – ooooooooh God in Heaven his mouth– what mouth? – he was ravenous and almost animalistic with that thing! He'd kissed her everywhere he touched her, leaving no room for any sort of reticence on her part, as if he knew what she wanted and wasn't about to let her tell him "no" just because of some sort of false modesty...

Grace shifted restlessly under the light covers, noting that the muscles of her inner thighs hurt, just as they would if she'd spent the night with a guy. Her nightie was somehow too rough on her well-used nipples, and her lips still felt swollen from where he'd –

But he hadn't! No one had! She had been alone, all night, dammit!

Just to satisfy her own sense of security, Grace threw the covers back and padded barefoot downstairs to the front and back doors. Locked up tighter than a drum, just as she'd done last night. Absently, she looked at Mouse's food and water, but it was entirely untouched. The door to the cellar was still open, but apparently she hadn't done any noshing in the night... That was unusual, too. Mouse wasn't the kind of cat to ignore the dinner bell in her tummy, whenever or wherever it went off.

As she padded her way back into the bedroom, Grace had to determinedly throw off the remnants of those dreams – they invaded her consciousness insistently, flashes of her climaxing repeatedly...of someone's head between her legs for the fifth and seventh and ninth times...a large hard dick taking her mouth while she cupped a heavy ball sack, squeezing gently, rhythmically, but he hadn't let himself come down her throat. No, he would only come – such as it was for him – in her pussy, he'd said in husky, snaky voice – but he didn't speak with his mouth – that was much too busy teasing or torturing her to explosion after explosion. Instead the words forced their way into her mind with lots of moans and groans and hissing that could have been from either of them, amplifying them into a constant sensual background in her brain, invading her brain like his big cock plunged into her slightly-sore cunt.

Then he'd leaned forward, pushing himself even deeper up inside her until she thought he'd come out her mouth he was so big, collecting her legs over his elbows and forcing her to accommodate him in every way. "Until I take you hard up the ass, that is," he'd said in a threatening tone as he caught her eyes.

Only there was nothing for her to look into – no eyes, no nose, no lips that had suckled every intimate place she owned.

Grace could feel herself starting to swell and spread for him, as if welcoming him to take her again in the broad daylight. Out of a pure sense of self-preservation, she darted from the bed as if it were the source of her long night of sexual fantasies and grabbed her bathing suit. She was going to spend the day on the beach with a book even if she'd been fucked to death the night before – and she almost felt like she had.

She had breakfast and went down to the disgustingly immaculate basement to suss out where the kitty was holed up, satisfying her compulsive maternal concerns about whether or not the snotty little chit was okay. Grace padded out to the beach and sat down in a comfortable, low beach chair with the waves lapping at her toes, a steamy not-quite X-rated-but-very-close romance novel on her lap, a Diet Coke in the sand next to her, and a tourist's cheap boom box playing seventies and eighties hits just behind her. This was truly the life!

It was funny, but now that she was a ways away from the house, her concerns about the dreams seemed overblown. After all, they were just dreams. No sexy young stud had snuck into the house and ravaged her in the night – she couldn't be that lucky, Grace mused wryly, ignoring the very real twinges of the muscles on the insides of her thighs as she shifted position. It was probably just her subconscious, reminding her that she needed to either find someone to help her get there or she'd need to take matters into her own hands tonight, which was a more distinct possibility. All of those fantasies, which had, thank God, faded considerably in the stark morning sunshine, had definitely had an effect on her and she was, well, horny.

Of course, she'd bought the necessary accoutrements to take care of just that development. Grace liked sex, and since she was uncompromisingly picky about who she slept with, it had been a while – okay, a long while, since she'd slept with a man. Too long, Lydia always said. Lyds was always telling Grace that she needed to get laid, as if that was a news flash to Grace, for crying out loud. But, when the need arose, and it was

arising with alarming frequency with the onset of peri-menopause, she could take care of things quite nicely herself without having to explain her particular likes and/or dislikes to yet another man who inevitably slipped into that deer-in-headlights expression whenever she suggested anything other than vanilla, man-on-top-get-it-over-with-quick sex.

It was a lazy day, exactly what she wanted every day to be like for the rest of summer vacation. She didn't go anywhere, didn't see anyone; Grace wandered back into the house after only a couple of hours on the beach because she tended to burn easily even with SPF 90000 sunscreen on her fair skin. Although she tried to put the thought from her mind, she did notice that the closer she got to the house the more prominent those erotic memories – fantasies became until they were almost the only thing she could think about when she was in the house. That sensation of uncomfortable familiarity was back, too, but Grace resigned herself to patently ignore all of it. She was not about to let anything or anyone – real or imagined – disrupt her time at the beach.

Lunch was a toasted tuna salad sandwich and some chips, with coconut cake for dessert; dinner was spaghetti with meat and pepperoni sauce and lots of fresh grated Parmesan cheese, garlic bread and a tossed salad on the side, and some more cake for dessert. As she patted her full tummy and switched on the television, Grace resolved that, as of tomorrow, she needed to start actively walking the length of the beach at least once a day, or she'd end up having to be rolled out of the house at the end of the summer.

It was only seven-thirty or so, and the sun was just starting to set. There was nothing great on TV, so she just set it on the food channel as a background and opened up her laptop. Tanya had said that Grace could use her broadband Internet connection during the summer, since Tanya was going to be paying for it, anyway, and there was nothing Grace liked better than to surf the 'Net for sites with pictures and fiction that dealt with her specific preferences.

But as she clicked from site to site, Grace started to feel uncomfortable. Someone was watching her, she knew it. Grace looked uneasily around the room, but there was nothing there. The hair at the back of her neck was standing up straight, though, and she had goose bumps despite the balmy seventy-five or so in the house. Usually she just lost herself as she visited various sites – both old and new – read a little, tingled a lot, and became progressively more and more worked up. Not tonight. Grace just couldn't seem to quite let go enough to really indulge herself; she heard every creak and groan the old house emitted and jumped every time the refrigerator chugged on. When she looked up, the sun had set, but then she'd been looking up compulsively for the past couple of hours anyway to try – unsuccessfully – to reassure herself that she was, indeed, alone.

Finally Grace gave up. It was only about nine-thirty, but she was tired. With a wry grimace she realized, as she padded around, locking up, that – imaginary lover or not – she hadn't gotten much sleep last night – or at least much sleep in which she was not performing apparently exhausting sexual gymnastics.

When she crawled under the covers about a half hour later, the balcony doors were firmly shut and locked, the flower print curtains pulled. Hopefully, tonight she'd get some real sleep. She was too tired even to take care of her little "situation." Well, there was plenty of time to deal with that, anyway. No rush. Grace turned over onto her side

and promptly fell asleep.

He stood at the end of the bed watching her sleep, male flesh rising as he noticed how the nightie had ridden up to her waist. Grace was on her right side, one hand under her cheek and the other arm under her pillow, bottom leg straight, top leg bent at the knee as if she was going to do the can-can in her sleep. A silent chuckle. He bet she felt like she'd been doing just that last night. Her inner thighs were sore, he knew, nipples almost uncomfortably rosy and red, as if someone had dragged beard-bristle over them deliberately a couple of hundred times...

Someone like him.

With just that thought, he was beside her in the bed, his hands turning her – his mind reaching out to hers so that he didn't have to be careful not to wake her – until she was on her back as if presenting herself to him in sensual abandon. Her nipples were ripe and perfect when they peaked in his mouth, and he lapped up her guttural moans and delicate sighs like he lapped those buds up – relentlessly demanding that she give him more – that she yield more fully to him, that she hold nothing of herself back, taking all that she was and all that she had in the single-minded pursuit of pure, unadulterated bliss for both of them.

He was just this side of rough with her now, grasping a breast in each hand and squeezing, making them hurt, but hurt good – if the way her head was moving back and forth on the pillow was any indication. She was so responsive to everything he did – he loved that! Each breast was massaged hard in a manner that had to be painful, each nipple pinched and pulled well away from her body as he twisted and twirled them with his fingers, practically lifting her by just those two delicate points, making her arch on moans that sounded like they started between her legs and filled the room with her tortured joy.

In an instant he flipped her over and pulled her back onto her knees, taking his rightful place behind her as she offered her dripping, lewdly displayed pussy for ravaging. But that was not quite enough for him. He nudged her knees further apart, making her whimper, grabbing a handhold in that mane of curls and using it as reins to force her to hold her head up and back, so that he could nuzzle and bite her neck if he was so inclined while he plunged into her – and he would be before he was through with her – making her arch her back uncomfortably. What was she thinking about all of those naughty uncomfortable positions – and so much more – if she didn't want someone strong enough to see that she submitted to them?

Finally satisfied with her subjugation, a wave of his hand made the wall behind the headboard into a mirror, displaying their coupling for his enjoyment alone now...eventually she would be forced to watch as he positioned her in this submissive manner, ripe for the taking, presenting herself to him and mewling for him, indeed dripping on the cock he rammed up into her. Grace's eyes were still tightly closed; she was deeply asleep. He felt almost as though he were raping a blind woman. His hold on her hair wouldn't allow her to rock very far forward, and this was exactly what he wanted – he wanted her hips up tight against him, so that he bumped her cervix each time he roughly rammed himself inside her.

He rode her for a long time, rode her hard and fast and entirely to his own pleasure, knowing that that, too, would pleasure her in turn. When he was getting close, he leaned over her and bit her exposed neck, as if in punishment for enjoying the rape...but then, you can't rape the willing. And Grace was definitely that.

As if to prove his point, he reached around to the front of her luscious cunny, at first just cupping it, then rubbing that impudent nub with a finger, her hips moving her own clit against him with each powerful stroke. He loved to make a woman come as he fucked her, especially when she was getting fucked in such a submissive position. He knew she adored and desired exactly this; her body and her subconscious mind were his willing partners as he prodded and agitated her down that wild, aching road, setting her mind to thinking of his mouth and teeth on her nipples even though he was behind her, adding their stinging ache to her overloaded body and flinging her over the edge.

She surprised him when she threw her head back, mouth opened on a long, silent scream while her body convulsed violently around him. He didn't let up, grabbing her breasts and stabbing into her forcefully, not letting her come down from that orgasm, but requiring that she ride that crest to three more peaks before he finally allowed himself a release of sorts...

It had been a while for him, too. A sad smile, or what passed for one when he was in this state. He had certainly been waiting longer than Grace.

But no more. He didn't need to wait any more, now that he had her.

She was his, and he would never let her go.

But maybe she could let him go...

Chapter Two

To Sleep, Perchance To Come

Every night for the first week she stayed at the house – except for Friday night for some strange reason - Grace awoke in the morning feeling...used. Like she'd been ridden hard and put away wet, as one of her boyfriends used to say – only he was not very likely to do so, unfortunately. The area between her legs grew and remained very puffy and ultra-sensitive, and even naked she was particularly aware of it when she was sitting or standing. The hot shower spray seemed entirely too much on her raw, delicate skin, so her showers were almost tepid, and even the washcloth seemed to irritate her, so she often had to soap herself up using just her hands.

Grace had always been very sexually responsive, but now it seemed she could think of nothing else, no matter how hard she tried to divert her mind. She took to spending time every morning walking from one end of the beach to the other, then sitting for a while in the ocean, taking the occasional dip. The obsession was less overwhelming if she was away from the house. Afternoons were spent napping, and it was really the only undisturbed sleep she got. Instead of being able to catch up on her soaps like she'd