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SUGAR
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*The Demon's
Christmas Present*

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Sugarplum: The Demon's Christmas Present
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Sugarplum: The Demon's Christmas Present

Leona Grey

So a demon walks into a bar... No, seriously.

Peter is a wealthy, philanthropic mystery man who loves children and just happens to confess, while in a state of drunkenness, that he is, in fact, a demon. A Christmas demon, no less. Of course, he also happens to confess his burning desire for Lacey and challenges her to return to him if she thinks she can handle it. Who could say no to that? Especially when the man issuing the challenge has chocolate brown eyes, broad shoulders, and a huge heart.

Even demons deserve a Christmas present...

Chapter One

Peter had to be the sweetest man alive. Lacey couldn't fathom why he was still alone. He had a great, kinda-Spanish-sounding accent, which he would never explain. "I travel a lot," he would say. Not to mention he was just plain hot. He had that dark and broody thing down, with his serious brow and the set of his broad shoulders. He probably would have looked a little scary if he weren't always entertaining the kids and helping serve food at one of the local shelters. She'd heard of him in the charity circuit since he'd moved to the area a couple of years ago. The fact that he got extra broody around Christmastime just lent him a romantic quality. It was the wounded warrior ideal, and Lacey was the nurturing type. She always wanted to make things better.

As the coordinator of the Open Door homeless and battered women's shelter, Lacey had a pretty good idea how much money the man had given over the years. She'd noticed him in the children's wing of the hospital while she was there checking on an elderly man who had come to Open Door a few days ago. When Peter saw her he gave a small nod, his usual greeting, but it was the respect she saw in his face that made her feel proud. He actually saw the work she did and the difference she made. She wasn't invisible to him. A person like that should not be so down at Christmas. He was on his way out the hospital door and into the parking lot when she decided to do something about it.

"Peter, wait." He turned around, looking comical with his serious expression so at odds with the blinking red lights on his Christmas sweater. He was more of the elegant suit type, but he had been visiting the kids at the hospital. They'd probably loved the shirt.

"You seem so sad when December starts that I decided to give you your gift early. It's not much." That was definitely the truth. Her type of work rarely paid well. The money was always needed somewhere else, but she didn't mind.

He took the small green package she held out to him. "Am I that bad?"

"Yeah, you really are." One corner of his mouth lifted, and he snorted quietly, shaking his head.

He unwrapped the ornament and stared at it for several moments. It was an engraving in silver of a small, smiling child holding out a present.

"This is a beautiful gift. Thank you." His accent made it more difficult to guess his emotions, but she thought he really liked it. "I should have brought yours."

"I wasn't expecting anything from you."

He raised his dark chocolate eyes to hers. "You do good work, Lacey, and I know you don't get paid much for it. You deserve something for yourself, too." He was carefully returning the ornament to the box when his cell phone rang. He answered and held it out from his ear. It sounded like the caller was at a raucous party, and he was speaking very loudly in German. Peter replied in German, as well, and hung up quickly.

"Easy for you to say," he mumbled afterward. He looked again at Lacey. "I have a sudden urge to drink. Would you like to come with me?" Lacey's heart jumped. Of course she would have a drink with him, even in his blinking Christmas shirt.

"I would like that. Was that your business partner who called?" He never went into much detail about his job, which made her extra curious about it.

"Yeah, that was David. He wanted me to come to some party his girlfriend's throwing."

"In Germany?"

That made him smile slightly. "No, he just reverts to German when he's drunk. They live in Illinois now."

"He wanted you to travel to Illinois for a party?"

"No, the party isn't that far from here. It's in Philadelphia. He's probably visiting friends or something. The man has friends everywhere." There was a hint of disgust in his voice.

"It doesn't sound like you like him very much."

"David's a good man, one of the best. He just doesn't understand some things and he can be a little... insensitive because of it. Come," he said, obviously wanting to change the subject. "We will stop and get your present first and then go for drinks."

* * *

She studied his home while she sat wrapped in her coat, waiting in the car for him. His house was big and old. She liked that -- it gave it a certain warmth. Of course, she liked pretty much anything old or antique, but the place really seemed to fit him. It seemed strong and warm, like him.

When he emerged from the house he was wearing a burgundy, button-up shirt and carrying a small rectangular box. He handed it to her and waited expectantly. She almost hated to unwrap it, it was so pretty. The copper and silver paper shone under the streetlight.

"The best part is inside," he prompted with a small smile. She stuck her tongue out at him and opened it. In the box was a carnelian cameo pendant on a strand of pearls. It looked to be antique. Lacey stared at it.

"Tell me this isn't real. I can't accept it if it's real."

"It's not real."

"You're lying. Look at it. It is so real."

He shrugged. "Put it on. It would make me happy for you to have it." Well, if it would make him happy... She put it on, feeling completely undeserving but at the same time not caring.

"Why are you so generous?" Such a beautiful antique couldn't have been cheap. It was not the kind of thing one generally bought on a whim. It was a gift meant for someone special. What could it mean?

His smile was a little bitter. "If I get drunk enough, I might just tell you." It took her a moment to realize he wasn't answering her mental question. Once it came to her she sat quietly while he slid behind the wheel and wondered what he meant by it. It sounded like he wanted to make up for something. Though, she supposed, it didn't matter. He was a good man, and he was sad. Her goal for this evening was to cheer him up.

"So, what kind of music do you like?"

"Anything but Christmas music."

"Yeah, they do tend to play it nonstop after Halloween. Um, what do you do for fun?" She hoped to get him talking on light subjects as they drove -- nothing he could be too serious about.

He thought a moment. "Most of the time, I like camping and hiking. Around this time of year, working with kids and getting drunk, just not at the same time."

"Okay, avoiding the subject of Christmas. Where do you go when you're camping?"

"All over, really. I look for spots that I haven't been before. I prefer the little-known ones, where you can go without seeing other people. Sometimes it takes a lot of research to find those places."

"Not much of a people person, are you?"

"No. I'm sorry. I'm not very good company. Would you like to go home?"

"No. I'd like to cheer you up. I plan to get a real smile out of you sometime tonight."

He snorted. "Good luck."

"Are you doubting me?"

"Oh, no, if anyone could do it, it's probably you."

She blushed a little at that. "That's right and don't forget it."

He did a mock salute. "Yes, ma'am."

Finding him agreeable to being cheered up, she went on making little remarks and silly jokes until they reached the bar. As she expected, it was small and afforded

some privacy. What dismayed her was the amount he was drinking. He must do it a lot, because he wasn't acting nearly as drunk as he should have been.

"It takes quite a lot to get me drunk," he explained. He must have noticed the way she was looking at him. "So, tell me about you. Why did you decide on charity work?"

"It's important. I feel like I'm making a difference, and that makes me happy. Why are you involved in it?"

"I like seeing kids happy. I don't see that much with my job, and it bothers me."

"It sounds like you don't enjoy your work." She supposed it was his business, but she would never choose a job that made her unhappy, no matter how good the money was. Of course, it was what enabled him to help others, so who was she to judge?

"I don't, but it's something that needs to be done."

"Like city sanitation."

He laughed quietly. "Close enough." He watched her from the corner of his eye while he took a drink.

She had a suspicion. "Do you want to tell me about it?"

He took another drink. "I think I might. You'll probably just think I'm a rich eccentric, anyway." Another drink. "I'm Black Peter." He watched her expectantly.

"Are you a musician?"

"No, no. Knecht Ruprecht? A cert?" His sigh was exasperated. He leaned closer to her. "I'm a Christmas demon."

She stared at him. Obviously, he was more drunk than she'd realized, talking about Christmas demons and breath mints. She smiled a little; it was time to take him home.

"Never heard of that either, huh? Come on. I have books at my house that will tell you all about it." He didn't notice her hesitation at going to the home of a man who thought he was a Christmas demon, of all things. Still, she reasoned, she knew him pretty well and even if he was crazy and not just drunk, he wouldn't hurt her. So she

drove his car to his house while he gave directions when she forgot the way. He explained more as they went along.

"Different countries have different versions of Santa Claus, right? In the Netherlands, St. Nicholas is accompanied by *Zwarte Piet*, or Black Peter. *Zwarte Piet* carries the sack of presents and punishes the bad children. There are different versions of me, too, but only the Czechs got it right. They know that I'm a demon that frightens children into behaving and they know about David. He's the angel that also goes with us. Come on."

She walked with him to the front door but when he tried to pull her inside, she resisted. "I think you really need to rest now, Peter. We can talk some more later, when you've slept it off."

He frowned at her for a moment, then sighed and shook his head. "Shit," he breathed quietly. "I shouldn't have... I'm sorry... but since I've already messed things up..." The dark chocolate eyes met and held hers before he leaned in for a warm, drugging, malt-tinged kiss.

"What was that for?" she asked breathlessly. His smile was rather self-satisfied.

"Mistletoe. See?" He pointed above their heads, and when she looked up he stole another kiss.

"Liar. There is no mistletoe." The heat of his gaze searching her face and lightly touching her body had made her completely forget about the crazy things he'd said.

"I know. I am a liar, but I've wanted to kiss you for so long I didn't want to miss my chance." He'd wanted to kiss her? Dark, handsome Peter Deidrichs had wanted to kiss her for a long time?

"What took you so long?" she asked with a smile. He stroked a thumb over her cheek.

"You, Lacey, are far too bright a light for... someone like me. You deserve someone with a joyful and generous heart. I don't have that." Then a lick of flame lit his eyes and he leaned his mouth closer, speaking almost against her lips. "But I do have passion. I could give you all the passion you would ever want, if you'd let me."

She leaned that breath closer that allowed their lips to meet, and he proved his statement. He dragged her tight against him as his tongue caressed her mouth with slow, deep strokes. His hands kneaded her muscles where they held her, as if he couldn't keep them still. When she gave a moan and began to return his kiss with equal passion he stopped trying to be any kind of gentleman. His firm touch roved her back and hips and buttocks, and she returned the favor. Mercy, the man felt good, so large and hard. And that wasn't just his broad shoulders.

Her hips were pressing toward him of their own accord as he began to fondle one of her breasts. She moaned into his mouth. With an answering, "Mmm," he pushed her backwards until her legs hit the railing around the porch. He lifted her onto it and trailed a hand down until it circled between her spread thighs. He seemed to know exactly where her clit was and gave it his full attention though he was still kissing her deeply and firmly squeezing her breast.

Circle, circle, stroke over her clit again and again. Then the circles got faster and just a little harder... and harder... hard... and she was coming, right there on his front porch. He slowly stopped kissing her.

"I wouldn't dream of making love to a lady like you while drunk. You're far too good for that."

No, I'm not, her body said. Take me, now.

"But, judging from your reaction, I think you might need me as much as I need you. If I'm right, come back tomorrow night, and I'll show you the other things I've wanted to do to you." He pulled her hips against his rather impressive bulge before stepping back. "Goodnight, *angel brillante*."

She had no idea what he'd said at the last but it'd sounded beautiful. Something about an angel? The thought of him calling her an angel after what they'd just done on his front porch made her laugh. Her thoughts were far from angelic right now. She felt a little drunk as she walked to the cab he'd insisted they call to take her home. Would she be coming back tomorrow? Did she dare?

Yes.

Chapter Two

Lacey sat in her car in front of Peter's house, fidgeting. She'd been there for at least five minutes. She'd fussed with her hair and makeup, adjusted the bow on the expensive box of chocolates she'd bought him, toyed with the necklace he'd given her. But she couldn't make herself get out of the car until she saw a rather rough-looking man making his way to the house. He was gray-haired and tall with a large frame, but it was the way he kept to the shadows and carried himself as if he was used to action that made her watch him closely.

Wrapping her hand around the can of pepper spray in her purse and clutching the box of chocolates, she finally got out of the car. The man had almost made it to the porch and was turned away from her. When she said, "Excuse me," loudly and precisely, he jumped and disappeared. Literally disappeared.

"Hey," she yelled, jogging toward the porch. There was movement toward the top left corner of her vision. A disturbed bird's nest? No. It wasn't easy to make out in the dim light but a small, dark red, demonic creature clung to the awning.

"Oh, shit, Lacey," it said. She stopped dead in her tracks. It knew her name. She screamed and began to raise the can of mace. "Wait, no," it said in a panic right before it jumped down. She screamed again and backed away, spraying as she went, but it had turned its face away. She started to run but something was happening to it. It was changing, growing. It grew to the height and semblance of a man she knew well.

Peter.

He turned slowly toward her with his hands protecting his face.

"Don't, Lacey, it's me. Just wait. Ohhh, I think I'm gonna be sick." He clutched his head. "Just don't shoot me with that until I explain, okay?"

"Hah! I can't wait to hear that one."

He squinted his eyes at her. "Just come inside, would you? You can keep your pepper spray handy if it makes you feel better."

"Oh, I think so," she retorted. He unlocked the door and led her into the living room where he promptly dropped onto a dark suede couch. He was looking a bit green and coughing. She kept the pepper spray trained on his face but came a little closer to check on him. Whatever he was, he was more pitiful than threatening at the moment. "Are you all right?" she couldn't help asking. He snorted a laugh.

"Ever the caregiver, aren't you? I'll be fine in a few minutes. I'm just not supposed to change that often in such a short amount of time and that spray is pretty strong stuff even when you don't score a direct hit. Have a seat." He waved his hand toward an overstuffed armchair, and she perched on its edge, still paying attention to his features.

"I didn't really think you'd come," he said in a low voice. "Why did you come back?"

"I think I'll ask questions first. What the hell are you?" His sidelong look was annoyed.

"I tried to tell you last night."

"Yeah, like I was gonna believe talk about demons -- Christmas demons, no less -- and breath mints wasn't brought on by alcohol."

"Breath mints?"

"Yeah, you told me you were a breath mint." His head dropped forward and he laughed, a real laugh. It looked good on him.

"I said I was a cert but I didn't mean breath mint. If you noticed, I didn't quite pronounce it that way. I also said if anyone could make me smile it would be you and you have. Anyway, a cert is that little demon you saw outside. It's one of my forms. I'm one of Santa's helpers, a Christmas demon."

"Uh-huh. Who needs elves, right?"

"I take my job very seriously. I may not enjoy it but I help... well, I scare little children into behaving themselves. If you have a problem with that, talk to Nicholas. He won't let me out of my contract, damn the man. Apparently, no one else wants the job, if you can imagine that."

"I've never heard of Christmas demons before. That must be a very trying line of work." No wonder he hated Christmas. As soft-hearted as he was, being in that position would be miserable for him.

"Well, it's not in the American myths. I don't do much in America, only on Nick's special requests. Actually, I enjoy it more, though. I get to be more of a stern father figure than a boogeyman here. But here --" He pointed to the bookcase along the wall, and several books came floating out. They opened to different pages and stayed suspended in the air around her. She looked closely while keeping an eye on him. He'd made no threatening moves, and he was Peter. So she wasn't too worried about him anymore, but still. The man had just shifted shapes a few moments ago.

"These are some depictions and descriptions of me." The pictures did seem a pretty close match for the things she'd seen outside his home. What a thing to discover! All the time she'd known him he'd been a demon working for Santa Claus. She didn't remember smoking anything funny that morning. "You happened to catch me as I was coming in from work. I'd just been to Germany before you caught me. I was hoping to rest before having to change forms again," he said with a note of accusation.

"Well, excuse me, but I was invited. And I brought you chocolates." She tossed them onto the couch next to him. They'd cost a heck of a lot more than your average candy bar but after he'd given her the necklace, she'd felt the need to get him something more than the little rinky-dink ornament.

"You needn't have gotten me anything else. The ornament was more than enough. It meant quite a lot, actually." He studied her as she studied the books floating in front of her. "You're being much more accepting than I would have expected."

"Well, I did actually see you change your physical body into three different forms. I kinda have to be open-minded at this point. Hey... why would you be helping Santa tonight? Christmas isn't for another two days."

"We spread our visits out over many nights. We just don't let the children remember it until Christmas day. It makes things much easier. We used to do it all in one night but it just wasn't worth being so tired after."

"Makes sense," she conceded, bemused. "Are you okay now?" His features looked less pinched.

"I am, thank you. So... now you know."

"Yes, now I know."

"And you're still here."

"Of course I am."

"Do you have more questions? Since you already know, I might as well answer them."

She was far too shocked by it all to think of any more logical questions, so she shrugged and shook her head.

"Then answer mine. Why did you come tonight?" Lacey blushed as she remembered the reason she'd originally come.

"To bring you those and..." Oh, forget it. "You know why." He was watching her much too closely for comfort.

"I honestly never believed you'd come. I hoped you would, of course, but you're so... pure." Lacey rolled her eyes. That thing again. Apparently, being sweet and caring for people meant she wasn't supposed to enjoy sex. She'd never gotten that memo.

"Is that what you thought when you kissed me last night?"

"When I kissed you, I couldn't think at all. You're intoxicating, surely you know that."

She could only raise her brows with amusement and shake her head. "Oh yeah, I hear that all the time."

"You don't believe me. Perhaps I should convince you." As he rose from the couch and stalked toward her, small black horns began to curve from his forehead. She gasped, and he stopped walking, but only for a moment.

"You already know and accept what I am, but I can put them away if you want." Now he was standing right in front of her.

"No, don't. I like them." And she did. Brooding but sweet Peter was now dark and dangerous. It was incredibly sexy. The horns were sleek and black, curving toward each other, and warm when she touched them.

For the second time, she heard a real laugh from him, and it was a rich, decadent sound. "I can hardly believe you're real. And that you're here."

She laughed at that. "*You can hardly believe I'm real?*"

"And that you're here. Look, mistletoe." He pointed up but this time she didn't look.

"Liar."

"No, I'm telling the truth this time. Just look." So she did, and there was mistletoe above them. But when she tilted her head back he took advantage and kissed her exposed neck instead of her mouth. She gasped softly. His breath was warm against her skin, and his teeth gentle. His hands slid up beneath her sweater, first stroking across her lower back and then circling over her belly. She soon realized he was an accomplished tease.

His fingertips brushed across her ribs just below her bra but instead of cradling her breasts he dropped his hands to her hips, stroking over the curves there. They traveled down her thighs and then curved in, but swept back out before they touched the now-sensitive flesh of her center.

Finally, she grabbed his head and kissed him in such a way as to tell him she was done with teasing. He laughed and lifted her, picking her up. With his mouth always on some part of her skin, he carried her upstairs to an opulent bed with silky burgundy sheets. He sat on it with her straddling his lap.

"Have you been a good little girl?"

"Oh, is that the best you've got? Talk about original."

"I have horns on my head, and you say I'm not original. I can see you'll be hard to please, but I'll do my best." There was a wicked gleam in his eye as he said it. She realized this was probably the happiest she'd ever seen him, and it made her want to kiss him.

"Anything else like that I need to know about? Have you got a tail hidden somewhere?"

He grinned. "No."

"Well, maybe I should check anyway. Just in case."

"Be my guest, lovely one. As long as I get to 'check' you as well, I don't mind."

"Oh, of course," she said while threading her fingers through his silky, dark hair. "Hmm, nothing under here." She lightly grazed her fingertips down the back of his neck and into his shirt collar before starting on the buttons. He seemed to be sensitive on the back of his neck so she kissed him there as she removed his shirt. He was grinding his hips up into hers but then he slipped his hand between them and felt her there.

He groaned. "I can feel the heat coming off of you. Do you know what that does to me?" He guided her to lie back on the bed as he kissed her. Though his tongue was dominating her mouth, his hand continued to stroke softly between her legs and he began a rolling motion with his fingers and palm that seemed to touch every sensitive part of her center.

"It makes me impatient," he growled. Then her pants were gone. He didn't pull them off or anything. They were just gone and he was stroking her through a thin layer of silk. The sudden change in texture and pressure made her gasp. He was nibbling a sensitive spot on her neck while watching her face. Apparently, he saw something that made him press inward on one certain spot. She rotated her hips into his hand.

Suddenly, he was lying on top of her, and there were no clothes between them. He continued the rolling motion with his hand but more firmly. Two fingers dipped into her, and she moaned. His warm bulk felt so good on top of her. His breaths were

causing his chest to caress her breasts. He began licking a path down her body, pausing at her breasts while his fingers stroked inside her. She drew her breath in when he found just the right spot. So he stayed there while sucking and nibbling her nipples. "So soft," he whispered to himself, and there was something in his voice, almost a groan.

Her muscles were beginning to tense and grasp at his fingers. In response he began to thrust them into her. Then he added a third.

"Aaaah," she cried. She wanted more of him, but she knew this was an exquisite appetizer. The anticipation would only add to the moment when she felt all of him inside her. She whimpered, and her head pressed back into the pillow as her inner muscles tightened. He pulled away before she was done and replaced his fingers with something much larger.

The sudden change made her moan low and long. After all the teasing, to suddenly be full was almost too much. The orgasm that his fingers had started kept growing, and for the first time she had one that came from deep inside. It was so strong that it lifted her from the bed at times. Then when it finally, fully broke it shattered her into tiny glittering pieces. She couldn't move, then she couldn't help but move. Her body was reacting totally on instinct, smashing her hips wildly into his and causing him to lose control as well.

He flipped her over and lifted her with one arm around her middle. He wrapped her hands around the scrollwork in the iron headboard and began to pound into her from behind, pushing her knees apart ruthlessly. He regained some measure of control because he kept going, not holding back his strength, while she had two more bone-bending climaxes that were so divine she wanted to weep.

"Yes," he hissed, urging the tightening of her muscles around him. "Yes, let it go. Come for me, Lacey." And she did. She couldn't help it when he said such wicked things with that sexy growl. His climax closely followed hers, and after, he lay beside her with an arm around her, stroking her hip. She was having aftershocks, and he was still relearning how to breathe. "You have five minutes," he announced.

"What?"

"Before we start again, you have five minutes." He watched avidly as she licked her bottom lip then sucked it into her mouth.

"I lied," he told her, pushing her onto her back none-too-gently. His big hands easily spread her thighs farther apart and up.

"Mmm," he hummed again before pressing his mouth to her exposed, wet pussy. The hums only got louder as he sucked and licked at her clit and labia. He plunged his tongue inside her as if he wanted to catch all her juices. She couldn't keep from pushing her hips up to meet that exquisite, tormenting mouth. After the deep, penetrating climaxes she'd just had, the relative softness of his stroking tongue threatened to drive her insane, and she began to shake.

Unconsciously, her hips tried to disengage from his mouth but he held her fast, pushing her until she broke apart again. He held her and kissed her pussy gently until the tremors subsided. When she could speak, she felt the need to say something profound.

"Peter?" But it wouldn't come. Her eyes wandered the room as he pulled the covers up over them. Right next to his bed sat the ornament she'd gotten him, displayed like something valuable and beautiful in a lovely, velvet-lined box. "The ornament," she said in wonder.

"Yes. I consider it quite precious. It's the second-best gift you've ever given me."

Her eyes started to tear up, and she squeezed him close. Who knew demons could have such big hearts?

Leona Grey

Leona Grey lives in the South, about ten miles away from The Middle of Nowhere. Her home is far enough away from civilization that she can let her dark side out to play when she so desires. She loves her family, reading, writing, dancing, and walking around her house naked when her child is not there. Erotic romances are her guilty pleasure and she wonders if she should be worried that writing them seems so natural. Tell her what you think. She loves to hear from readers. She can be contacted by email at leonagrey@yahoo.com. Or feel free to visit her website: leonagrey.com.