

Francine Pascal's

# SWEET VALLEY



## Twins



BOOK THREE  
IN THE  
FRIGHTENING FOUR  
MINISERIES

House of nightmares . . .

# THE BEAST MUST DIE

SWEET VALLEY TWINS

*The Beast  
Must  
Die*



Written by  
Jamie Suzanne

Created by  
FRANCINE PASCAL

BANTAM BOOKS  
NEW YORK • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

# *To Katherine Beatrice Powell Prescott*

RL 4, 008-012

THE BEAST MUST DIE

*A Bantam Book / September 1996*

*Sweet Valley High® and Sweet Valley Twins® are  
registered trademarks of Francine Pascal*

*Conceived by Francine Pascal*

*Produced by Daniel Weiss Associates, Inc.  
33 West 17th Street  
New York, NY 10011*

*Cover art by James Mathewuse*

*All rights reserved.*

*Copyright © 1996 by Francine Pascal.*

*Cover art copyright © 1996 by Daniel Weiss Associates, Inc.*

*No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted  
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,  
including photocopying, recording, or by any information  
storage and retrieval system, without permission in  
writing from the publisher.*

*For information address: Bantam Books*

*If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware  
that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and  
destroyed" to the publisher and neither the author nor the publisher  
has received any payment for this "stripped book."*

ISBN: 0-553-48204-1

*Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada*

---

*Bantam Books are published by Bantam Books, a division of Bantam  
Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Its trademark, consisting of the  
words "Bantam Books" and the portrayal of a rooster, is Registered in the  
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Marca  
Registrada. Bantam Books, 1540 Broadway, New York, New York 10036.*

---

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OPM 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## **Trapped with the monster . . .**

*Elizabeth was about to reach out and touch the doll when the figure moved, lifting its head. Two menacing eyes looked up at her.*

*It's the monster! Elizabeth's heart pounded in her chest as she took a step backward, preparing to flee.*

*At that exact moment the door she'd so carefully propped open slammed shut with a bang.*

*Elizabeth backed up against the door. "N-No," she gasped. "Please, don't—"*

*The monster reached out with large, clawlike hands. The flesh on its face was melting, and as it stepped closer to Elizabeth she saw the monster's eyes were glowing, as if a fire burned within.*

*"What—what do you want?" Elizabeth stammered.*

*The monster didn't answer. Instead it reached out, its arms oozing, and wrapped its claw fingers around Elizabeth's neck!*

*"No!" she screamed, gasping for air.*

# One

---



"Elizabeth, we're going to die in here!" Jessica Wakefield shouted to her sister. She pounded on the heavy wooden door, which had somehow locked shut behind them. "Please! Wake up! Someone! Anyone! Let us out of here!" she cried desperately.

Elizabeth stared at her twin sister, her heart pounding in her chest. She didn't even know how they'd gotten into this horrible situation, but they were trapped in a secret bedroom on the third floor of the Riccoli mansion—there was no way out! And from the strong smell of smoke that was seeping through the floorboards, it was obvious that somewhere, somehow, the house had caught on fire!

Downstairs the five Riccoli kids Elizabeth and Jessica were baby-sitting for were in serious danger. *And we can't save them as long as we're trapped up here*, Elizabeth thought, dread rising in her throat.

Frantically she looked at her watch. "Look—it's almost time for Mrs. Riccoli to get home!" she cried, showing Jessica her watch. "When she gets back from SVU—"

"We won't have to worry about dying in here because she'll *kill* us," Jessica moaned. "Can you imagine what she's going to think? When she drives up and sees her house on fire?"

"Well . . . maybe she'll be late," Elizabeth said, her hands trembling as she began pounding on the door.

"But what good would that do? If she doesn't come home on time, we might really be in trouble," Jessica said. "Like, we might not ever get out of here! No one even knows we're upstairs. They might not even know this room *exists*."

"We'll get out," Elizabeth said determinedly. "And it's—it's not that big a fire."

"Elizabeth! How do we even know how big it is?" Jessica argued. "If we can smell smoke, it's bad enough." She shook her head. "Don't you remember *anything* from our fire safety day at school?"

Elizabeth frowned, looking nervously around the room for something she could use to smash open the door. But it was only an old bedroom that had once belonged to a child. The room had been sealed up for years apparently, though Elizabeth had no idea why. It was filled with stuffed animals, picture books, and dolls—nothing Elizabeth could use as a weapon to break down the door.

"Maybe we could take those big wooden boards

off the windows," she suggested to Jessica, who was still pounding on the locked door.

"And then what?" Jessica asked. "We're on the third floor. We can't exactly jump."

"Maybe we could scale down to the second floor," Elizabeth said.

"With what?" Jessica replied. "A hair ribbon from one of those dolls?" She frowned. "Actually, maybe that's not a bad idea." She picked a doll with curly blond hair off the bed. "Hey, this is kind of pretty. It reminds me of that doll Grandma Wakefield gave me—you know, back in first grade? Do you think my hair would look nice if I curled it like this?"

Elizabeth shook her head. "Jessica, how can you even think about hairstyles right now?"

"Well, excuse me for trying to help!" Jessica put the doll back on the bed. "I guess I'll just start tying some sheets together!"

Elizabeth watched as her sister tried to yank the sheets off the old, unused bed. Actually it didn't really surprise her that Jessica would start talking about hairstyles in the middle of a fire. The twins were identical on the outside: each had long blond hair, blue-green eyes, and a dimple in her left cheek. But Elizabeth sometimes thought Jessica's main interests were a little frivolous—she could spend hours talking about boys and trying on clothes, and her friends in the Unicorn Club, a group of girls who considered themselves the prettiest and most popular in Sweet Valley Middle School, were the same way. Elizabeth liked to have

fun with her friends too, but she wasn't easily distracted from her serious interests—her schoolwork or her work on the *Sweet Valley Sixers*, the sixth-grade newspaper.

And at the moment all she could think about was how horrible it felt to be trapped in a secret bedroom. She couldn't count the number of strange things that had happened since she and Jessica started baby-sitting for Mrs. Riccoli. "Jessica . . . do you think this house is evil? Like . . . more than just haunted?" she asked her sister.

"This thing won't budge!" Jessica said, giving up on pulling the sheet off the bed. "I don't know if this house is evil, but there has to be *some* explanation for all the weird scary stuff that keeps happening. First Juliana's bad dreams, then that creepy old gardener Mr. Brangwen died, then I had that awful dream about the monster. . . ."

Elizabeth shuddered, remembering Jessica's nightmare. It was so vivid in her mind, from Jessica's description—it was almost as if she'd had the dream herself. Mr. Brangwen had warned Elizabeth several times never to fall asleep at the Riccolis' house. And when Jessica did fall asleep there, she'd had the worst dream of her entire life. In the dream a scary monster, its face yellow-black and rotting, had come after her, threatening to hurt her. . . . Elizabeth shuddered just remembering the details Jessica had described to her.

It sounded like the same dream one of the Riccoli kids, Juliana, had been having a little while

back. Juliana had been so frightened by the nightmare, she hadn't slept for days. And then some of the other kids started having the same dream too—and what was more, Juliana had even ended up with scratches on her back . . . scratches that neither Elizabeth nor Jessica could find a logical explanation for.

There was something very strange about the Riccoli house, that was for sure. All Elizabeth knew was that years ago, a family called the Sullivans had lived there. No one had inhabited it since, until the Riccolis moved in a few weeks back. Mrs. Riccoli had asked the Wakefield twins and their friends to baby-sit on a fairly regular basis. Her husband hadn't been able to move to Sweet Valley yet, and Mrs. Riccoli worked evenings as a professor at Sweet Valley University. She needed help, and Elizabeth had been happy to take the job at first. But now . . .

*Who knows if I'll ever baby-sit again?* she thought forlornly, her eyes beginning to tear up from the smoke seeping through the floorboards.

"Shouldn't Mrs. Riccoli have a smoke alarm?" Jessica asked, turning around from the door. "Why isn't that going off? Why aren't the neighbors—"

"Jessica—your hands!" Elizabeth exclaimed. She rushed over to her sister. Jessica's knuckles were bleeding, the skin scraped raw. "You have to stop knocking on the door!"

"Well, what else am I supposed to do?" Jessica asked, her voice hoarse from shouting. "Somebody

has to hear us! I don't want to *die* up here. And the kids are downstairs and . . ." She gulped. Her lips were clenched tightly together, as if she were trying not to cry.

"I know," Elizabeth said, reaching out to hug her sister. "Don't worry—we'll get out of here. *Somehow!*" She pounded her fists against the door. "Please! Somebody! Let us out!"

*A young girl stands behind the closet door, hiding. She watches as a line of bright orange flames crosses the bedroom floor, almost making a circle around the young boy's bed.*

*Slowly the flames begin to grow higher, inching toward the boy's action-figure comforter.*

*If they were scared before . . . then this is going to absolutely terrify them, the girl thinks with a wicked smile. Which is exactly the way I want it to be. The more scared they are, the sooner they'll leave my house.*

*She grins as an orange-blue flame shoots up the edge of the comforter. Amazing, she thinks, that the little boy hasn't woken yet. But some kids will sleep through anything.*

*Some kids . . . but not me.*

*Revenge is sweet, Alice, she thinks, staring at the boy's peaceful, unknowing face. Soon his entire bed would be engulfed in flames.*

*Which was exactly the way she wanted it.*

*This is going to be so excellent. Steven Wakefield laughed out loud as he revved the motor on the*

mower he was riding down the sidewalk. Not the huge job of mowing Mrs. Riccoli's lawn—that would probably take him all evening, if he was lucky. But what he was planning to do *before* he mowed the lawn—well, that was another story.

Just a couple of weeks ago he and his best friend, Joe Howell, had come over to “visit” his twin sisters while they baby-sat. He and Joe had been polite about it, Steven thought, chuckling to himself. They'd knocked before entering . . . on the windows, anyway. And they'd worn horrible, scary masks. His sisters had completely freaked. He'd gotten them so good, in fact, they wouldn't even speak to him the whole next day.

Which was a blessing, the way they sometimes talked . . . and talked . . . and talked. About hairstyles. And boys. And anything else that was absurdly silly and juvenile.

Unfortunately his sisters had gone and turned him in to his parents for his last little stunt. His father had wanted Steven to get a part-time job, as his sisters had done, so he would be “responsible,” like them. Then his dad had gotten a new riding mower, which had gotten him into even *more* trouble, since he didn't know how to work it.

But that was all over now. He knew how to work the mower, and he planned on making a lot of money over the next month, picking up mowing jobs wherever he could. Mrs. Riccoli was his first client. If he did a good job on her lawn, she'd tell her neighbors, and presto! Steven would be set for

life. Or at least until he turned fifteen, when he'd be too old to bother with dumb things like mowing lawns for a living.

Steven gunned the motor, heading for the Riccoli house. Before he started cutting the grass, he had something to take care of. It involved the very scary, gooey, oozing mask he was wearing over his face. With any luck Jessica and Elizabeth would be so busy playing with all those little Riccoli kids that they wouldn't see or hear him drive up. And then he'd show them just how grateful to them he was for ratting on him to their parents.

He'd creep around to the back of the house and look through the window again. The way the twins were acting lately, as if the house were spooked somehow, his gag was guaranteed to turn them into quivering, petrified chickens. He had come at dusk on purpose so they wouldn't be able to see him in the shadows.

But Steven knew he couldn't wait too long—Mrs. Riccoli would probably be getting home soon. And once it got completely dark, he wouldn't be able to see the lawn well enough to mow it.

He pushed the accelerator, cruising toward the house at top speed. The sudden takeoff made his mask slip a little. The gooey strings of fake flesh hung down over the eyeholes.

Steven frantically tried to brush them out of the way, but each time he took a hand off the steering wheel, the mower threatened to lurch out of control. He felt like he'd just grown very long, very irritating

hair! *Now I know why girls are always flicking it out of their eyes!* he thought as another giant, thick string of flesh-colored rubber flipped across the right eyehole—and a fake extra eyeball swung down in front, completely covering the left eyehole. Now Steven couldn't see at all!

"Agh!" he cried as the mower crashed through something thick and prickly. The front edge of the mower then hit something rock hard and came abruptly to a stop.

Steven cut the motor and pushed the mask on top of his head. "Phew. OK. So I ran into the house, but nothing really bad happened," he consoled himself, getting off the mower to check the front porch for damage. No broken pieces of wood. No paint scraped off. No giant dents. Nothing.

But there was a strange, acrid smell in the air. Steven wrinkled his nose. A smell like smoke. *Don't tell me I broke the mower!* Steven panicked. He put his nose closer to the mower, sniffing the engine area. But the smoky smell wasn't coming from the mower. Which meant . . . something else must be burning. But what?

Steven turned around and stared up at the house. Why hadn't his sisters come outside when he plowed into it? Wouldn't they have heard the noise?

Suddenly he noticed a thin wisp of dark smoke drifting out of an upstairs window. The house was on fire!

## Two

---



Steven flew into the house, running straight toward the kitchen. "There's always a phone in the kitchen," he muttered to himself, looking around nervously. Where were his sisters? Was everyone outside or something? *Maybe they went to the beach for an evening walk!* he thought, hoping it was true.

Steven flicked on the overhead light in the kitchen. "Aha!" He spotted a cordless phone on the counter, beside a loaf of bread. After quickly dialing 911, he told the dispatcher the Riccolis' address and described the fire. "I don't know how big it is," he said. "I just got here! But hurry!" He slammed down the phone and dashed for the stairs.

*Please let everyone be OK!* he thought, charging up the stairs two at a time. The upstairs hallway wasn't that smoky. He dashed to the room where

the smoke had been coming from. He pressed his hand against the door, and it fell open. Steven gasped. The little boy's bed was surrounded by fire!

"Hey!" Steven yelled, flicking on the light. "Hey, wake up! Are you OK?"

The little boy didn't move. Steven felt his heart pounding. What if the smoke had already gotten into his lungs and . . . *No. I can't let that happen*, Steven told himself, his resolve strengthening.

He quickly slid the scary mask back over his face, hoping it might protect him from the hot flames. Then he jumped toward the bed, yanked off the comforter, and pulled off a wool blanket. He smothered the flames with the blanket, blocking out all the air.

The boy sat up in bed, coughing and rubbing his eyes. "Mommy!" he cried. "Help!"

"It's OK—I've got you," Steven said. "Just hold on a second." He leaped around the bed, putting out all the fire. The floor was slightly scorched, but other than that he seemed to have prevented any serious damage.

"Who—who are you?" the boy asked, peering up at Steven with wide blue eyes. His forehead was creased with worry, and his dark brown hair was sticking out all over the place.

"My name's Steven. It's OK—don't be afraid. I'm Jessica and Elizabeth's big brother," Steven quickly told him, walking around the room to make sure he had gotten all the flames.

The little boy shrank away from Steven, pressing

his back against the headboard of the bed. "But—but—your face . . ."

"Oh, this!" Steven laughed, pulling the mask up off his face. "It's a Halloween mask."

"But it's not Halloween," the boy protested, still looking frightened.

"I know, but I wanted to be ready." Steven grinned at him. "Do you like it?"

"I guess so." Then the boy nodded eagerly. "Yeah! It's cool!"

"Then I'll put it back on," Steven told him with a smile. "OK, now I'm going to pick you up and carry you out of here. There was a fire, and the floor might still be hot," Steven warned. He paused for a moment. "You're not scared of me, are you?"

The boy shook his head. "Not anymore!"

"Good." Steven leaned over the bed and the boy wrapped his arms around his neck. "Now let's get out of this smoky room!" he told the boy. "What's your name?"

"Andrew," the boy said.

"How old are you?" Steven asked.

"I'm eight!" Andrew said proudly.

"Cool," Steven told him, carrying Andrew out into the hallway. "You wait here while I check on your brothers and sisters, OK?" He set Andrew on the top stair. "I'll be right back!"

Steven rushed around the second floor, knocking on doors, making sure everyone was awake. Nobody seemed to be hurt . . . nobody even seemed to have woken up during the fire. Which

was fine, except . . . where were his sisters?

"Have any of you guys seen Jessica or Elizabeth lately?" he asked the groggy-looking group of kids assembled by the stairway.

*The girl watches, glaring as the boy in the stupid Halloween mask makes sure everyone is all right. How dare he? He doesn't belong there. Now he's ruined everything for her.*

*She shudders, remembering her utter disgust and disappointment as she watched him put out every last little flame. Not even leaving a chance for the fire to start again. And after all her hard work . . . her planning . . . everyone in the right place at the right time . . . now it's all ruined.*

*This is something simple for her to fix, however. In fact, there is only one solution to this little problem.*

*The firefighting boy must die too. It is the only way for her to have what she wants.*

*And he will die. Soon.*

*Nobody will get in her way next time. Nobody.*

"Did you hear that?" Jessica gasped, her ear pressed tightly against the door.

"Hear what?" Elizabeth asked.

"It sounded like someone yelling," Jessica said. "Maybe somebody came to rescue us!" She wanted more than anything for her guess to be true. But she also knew she was so desperate that the slightest sound might make her think someone had come to save her and Elizabeth. Even the Riccolis' cat