

X-mas Day on Skellington Street

Re-Revised George Lucas special edition

"This night. It's been..."

"Chaos?"

"Yes. Chaos. *Chaotic* even...it's...oh...". In the back of her mind, Sally had always dreamt of such a thing happening; Jack **coming to her**. But, she was completely unprepared. Of the many things she knew of herself for certain, Sally did not like being unprepared.



"Chaos is...GOOD...right?". Watching Sally tremble just trying to speak to him tickled Jack's bones with the strangest mix of pity, protectiveness and delight. He wasn't used to this either. It had been a **century** since he put his necromancing days behind him. In fact, he'd all but sworn off romance entirely in his youth - a pumpkin farmer's plot demands such things, even when he becomes king. Best to steer clear of the topic. It might upset her.

"In a sense," Jack started, "my Christmas was technically a success."

"You were shot out of the sky," said Sally wearing her

usual smile, content with a hint of malice in her seams.

"You were nearly *boiled into a stew*. You're telling me you didn't feel *anything* from that? What *nerve*."

"I would have gotten away. How was I supposed to know those three...*children* could sew? *And so fast!*"

"So you **DON'T** know how you would have escaped?"

"No," Sally admitted. "But, I don't always *know* what to do. It just comes to me."

"It?"

"*It*. It just comes to me somehow. Sometimes. When *I'm* ready."

"You must have a gift," Jack said, beaming with wonder. "You said you see things don't you?"

"I said I had a vision. Just one."

"But that is still a gift. Why, you could be having clairvoyance, Sally!"

"Or," Sally said, "I had a *single* vision. I simply go wherever the wind takes me. Once I find a place where I can stand on my own without it, I stay. Besides, I don't scare easily."

Inside Sally stuttered to a halt, realizing she'd said a very dangerous thing to the king of fear itself. And yet she didn't take it back. She said it as surely as she meant it in the moment. The look on Jack's face alone filled her with righteousness. He was intrigued, grinning inside and out at the challenge she'd just laid out for him.

"*MARVELOUS* strategy. Fickle, but positively *MISCHEVIOUS*. Diabolical even, dare I say," Jack chimed. How had he never known this side of her before? Where had she been all his afterlife? A plotter, a schemer- and one who could convincingly not reveal themselves as one. "I'll have to write that one down before the Mayor makes me forget!"

Jack was walking as they talked and had begun then to walk towards the closed town gates- until he realized, suddenly, that Sally wasn't following.

"Aren't you coming?"

"Me?"

"Yes *YOU!* Who else would I be talking to? You're coming over to my house, right?"

Sally knew she shouldn't be surprised by what he had just offered. In light of the circumstances, it'd be odd for him not to- Still, she was shy, even a little more than cautious for reasons she didn't fully understand. Following her own advice, she let the wind take control and carried her next thought; "I just didn't think you'd want me to spend *the day* with you."

"Day?" The word floated midair as the realization slowly overtook him. Suddenly Zero's apparition appeared out of his grave. Freshly awoken after a much needed nap, he yipped for Jack's attention and twirled about in the air. "It's *daybreak?*"

"We've been in the graveyard all night Ja-"



"*IT'S CHRISTMAS,*" screamed Jack **loudly** into Sally's face, holding her by the shoulders. He took her by the wrist and pulled her along. "Where are we going!?" "This is my *OUR* first ever Christmas morning, Sally! This is

HISTORY! We have to make something of it!"

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Sally wasn't weightless and Jack wasn't the strongest, but in his excitement alone he effortlessly swept himself and Sally by each ghoul and specter who clambered up to see him that day.

"Hello Jack!"

"This is *wonderful* Jack!"

"How are you Jack?"

"We're so happy you're alright, Jack!"

"Merry Christmas" he said exuberantly to each passer-by. Sally was sure he'd pull the wrong seam and she'd fall apart any minute but thankfully, Jack finally slowed down in front of his manor.

"*Oh!* I am so excited! I can't wait to celebrate my first Christmas. I have everything we need, Sally! I'm going to love it! You're going to love it!"

"*YOU!*" barked a meager but sharp voice. Jack and Sally spun around to see Dr. Finkelstein approach them in his wheelchair. A curvy woman with a face just like the doctor's was standing behind him, holding the automated chair as if she were pushing it. "Finally decide to show your face, *aye?*"

Sally had her back against the gate. She'd forgotten about her creator that night. All night in fact, and how diligently she had been trying to avoid him. Now here she was and here it was happening. Best to get it over with. "Hello, Doctor Finkelstein."

"That's all you have to say, girl? You abandon me in my time of need for a full month with NOTHING ELSE to say?"

"It doesn't look like I'm needed anymore," she said. The lady-Doctor-faced creation smiled and thoughtlessly waved at Sally from behind Finkelstein's chair.

Jack meanwhile was taken aback. Dr. Finkelstein was always so kind *to him*. He knew as well as anyone else that the good doctor was old and full of crank...but he'd never thought he could talk like this.

"Well, why don't you stop by and teach my Darling here a thing or two about manners?" He was now closer to them both and grabbed Sally by the arm.

"Let go!"

"You're not getting away that easily, Sally," Finkelstein barked. "You're going to either be a good example to your successor or I'll MAKE YOU into one!"

"Let GO!"

But he didn't. Finkelstein forgot his age for a moment and found his most inner pettiness - it wouldn't work on Sally, but he was itching to use it on her. "Don't be that way. Why not start with flying lessons?"

"Dr. Finkelstein! That's ENOUGH!" Jack inserted himself between creator and creation and tore the doctor's hand from Sally's wrist. "DON'T touch her like that." Sally fell back toward the gate, stunned.

Dr. Finkelstein was shocked. "Jack?! *What are you doing?*"

“Sally has had a long night, doctor. And even if she hadn’t, that’s no way to talk to her!”

“Jack, my boy, just...WHAT has she been saying to you? Didn’t you know that she threw herself out of my window?”

“Yes,” Jack said, his arms crossed. “She told me all about it. She didn’t tell me about *you*, though. You don’t actually talk to her like that. Do you, Doctor?”

The truth was, in fact, Sally had told him about Finkelstein. Not much, but enough to know there was more than a suspected rift between her and her maker. She explicitly said she didn’t want to talk about it when she was with him.

The Finkelsteins stood there gobsmacked, as had a tiny crowd of onlookers, frozen in place in more ways than one. Jack was young and ignorant and *their king*. They most certainly did not want to upset such a powerful friend.

“Of course...not?”

Jack unlocked the gate and ushered Sally through it where Zero yipped for her at the top of the stairway.

Without even looking Finkelstein’s way, Jack calmly said “Merry Christmas, Doctor,” before walking up to his front door.

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“Dr. Finkelstein usually talks to you that way?”

Sally shrugged in a manner that unnerved the king of fear. “I suppose. We don’t really talk much at all anymore.”

She wasn’t uncomfortable so much as she was bored by the subject -and of course, taken aback by Jack’s abrasiveness. She was embarrassed but also secretly touched. Two emotions so intersected that it took her a good while until she realized she was in Skellington manor. What a **sight!**

The Pumpkin King was usually in his tower, so there was no reason to think of what made up the rest of his house when she knew that’s where he was.



There they both stood aside a stairway between three halls, one to the left, one to the right, and one leading up a tinsel-decorated spiral staircase.

"It's wonderful."

"It is, isn't it?" said Jack, thinking she was talking about the tinsel. "Just wait until you make your way past the banisters! My portraits just love the added bits of color!"

"Your house," Sally breathed, struggling to think of something exact to say of it. "Do you share it with any ghosts?"

"Only Zero, at the moment. I should have some ghosts over though, now that I think about it. I'd love to lend one of them 'A Christmas Carol'. I think they'd really like it!" Jack let out his hand for her to take in an oh-so gentlemanly manner. Sally took it, bashfully, before being lurched forward up the stairs.

"There are *MOUNTAINS* of tinsel in Christmas Town! I wish you could have seen it with your own eyes, Sally. I'm telling you; my hallways simply can't suffice! I've trimmed every inch of them, just like the songs! The spiders seem to love it, not that I blame them. Oh! I suppose I should explain what tinsel is. You see in Christmas town they put this garland of-" Jack looked down to meet his guest's starstruck eyes only to find himself flopping around a twitching detached hand.

Below, besides Zero's bark, Sally called "I'm coming," on her way up the stairs. She took back her hand and didn't seem bothered.

"I've never seen a more *beautiful* place in all my life, Jack," she hummed. Then realizing what she had just said, stammered, "Uh... *I mean*, I've never seen a more *horrible* house in all my life."

"You say 'beautiful' too?"

"Not every day. Is...is 'beautiful' good?"

"Yes. YES! Very good! No one's ever called my house beautiful before." For all they did and didn't know about the other, they couldn't have guessed the same vernacular. Jack felt awestruck with a fantastic wisp running through his sockets back at hers- she smiled, bright and intently at him. She could see it as much as he could. "I think you're the first."

Now he knew; and now he wanted to know *everything* about her. Hopefully she wouldn't mind. She didn't mind last night at least, when he was saying things faster than his brain could envision and held her tiny hands in his amorously that first time- listening to him. Hearing him.

Sally walked past Jack. "You were saying...the tinsel?"

No. She *didn't* mind at all!

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It took an hour to reach Skellington tower with the rate Jack was going with his tinsel tour. It was to be expected with how much and how loud the king could go on and on about Christmas and Christmas Town. For Jack he must've thought he'd wasted time, for Sally, it was as if time hadn't passed at all.

"Welcome to my abode, Sally!" he said once finally reaching the top of his staircase. Sally spun around in awe. What a large creative space. What a fantastic view and a means of collections; all the right spaces and all the right sizes all where they needed to be.

Jack plucked his genuine Christmas Town-Christmas tree out of a trash bin and carted it towards her. It was brown and worn out, with most of its ornaments broken and its lights all missing. It was a sight in so many ways. It made Sally think of her one vision she'd once had earlier. She didn't want to think of that now. She wanted to think of him and his tour and of Christmas. "This is the only Christmas tree I've ever had. You see in Christmas town, they put presents under the stock then they-"

"Decorate it. I was *there* at the meeting, Jack."

"You were?"

Sally bit her lip, sadly. She knew he hadn't paid **close** attention up until now, but-

Catching his mistake then, he shifted the conversation back to the tree. "Well... we decorate it with lights too. Lights, candles and a star on top, or sometimes there's an-

"-angel, yes." Then Sally covered her mouth, "I'm sorry. I did it again, didn't I?"

"No, that's alright." Jack felt an intense sense of guilt and regret. He had been awfully mad at his congregation since that day in November. Incensed. Sure that NO ONE had heard a real word he said of Christmas... and here was his one keen listener, knowing the entire time what he felt. It was uncanny. It was frightening. Delightful, but sad. "I didn't know anyone was listening to that part."

"Everyone was just so excited. I don't think they knew they were talking over you," Sally brushed her hair out of her face. She spoke with an air of certainty, one that he was sure to pick up on -and he did- about how acquainted she was with people **talking over her**. Jack looked dumbfounded, then awestruck. Utterly devoid of words. Sally figured it best to get back to the tour, "you mentioned something about food in your meeting didn't you? That I don't remember *too* well."

"Yes this way! I have all sorts of Christmas Town delicacies here."

He pulled her proudly over to one of his study-desks but then grimaced with her at the sight of it. Empty jars and cans of uneaten food piled against a stack of dirty dishes made it clear that he'd been preparing all his meals here -or, not at all. She recognized the empty green potion bottle strewn over his experiment desk as the one she smuggled him weeks ago. Jack saw it too and leapt at the chance to clear it away, embarrassed, which left Sally enough time to make her way backwards to the dishes and the nearest bristle she could find. As he tucked the empty vile behind his books, she began scrubbing clean his filthy plates.

"No no! Sally, don't do that!" said Jack upon finding her doing his chores. "That's work. We shouldn't be working on Christmas."

Sally cocked her head, "we've *been* working on Christmas for years now, Jack. And really, it's no trouble at all. Consider it my Christmas present to you."

"Present?" Jack said, then gasped. Then he collapsed backwards into his desk-chair.

"Oh nooo..."

"What's wrong?"

"It's terrible Sally! Actually terrible! It's ruined, a travesty, a catastrophe a-"

"What's *wrong*?"

Jack hung his head in utmost shame. He felt so foolish, so stupid...he didn't deserve *her*. "Jack! What's wrong" She pulled on his shoulder, tender but firm, demanding he answer her.

With a heavy heart the Pumpkin King meekly said, "I..I didn't get you a present." Sally blinked twice. "I don't need one."

"Yes you do! It's CHRISTMAS!" he sounded so desperate; so sure of the matter. "Here, I have this! This is what's left of the treats they serve in Christmas Town. Try it!" He held out a cookie in the shape of a star to her. It was molding all over and there were at least five spiders nestled inside. When Sally admitted she didn't find them or the cookie delicious, Jack continued his fit. "It's supposed to be wonderful. I know I never had anything like it the first time I tried one."

"I like it. I do, Jack. Really, I don't want anything for Christmas. I'm just happy to be *with you*." Sally felt her feet tremble a bit. As though she hadn't held or kissed or told her beloved Pumpkin King much sweeter things hours before. She felt emboldened now. Terrified, but emboldened. She was almost scaring herself -especially when she saw Jack's face.

He was at loss for words. His mummified heart beat faster than the wings on his bowtie -which Sally couldn't help but smile at as he tried to calm them. It was amusing to her as it was true: she really couldn't think of anything else she wanted. Jack cleared his voice - and his head - and an idea sprung upon it.

"I've got it," he said.

"Hm?"

"If I can't get you something you want, then I at least have something you need."

"Oh?" Sally asked, leaving a fruitcake encrusted-plate to cross her arms. "And what would that be?"

"Stay here," he said, "in my house."

Then she stopped. "What? Here? But I-"

"Zero and I have more than enough space. Isn't that right Zero?" The little ghost dog, this whole time having dashing about the whole room like he was back on the flight team, barked "Arf! Arf!" Mutually agreed.

"If I'm right, you don't have any place to stay now that the Doctor's made a new wife?"

"Oh-no! That's not true. I found this alleyway besides the grotto that's-"

Sally

stopped, realizing how awful the suggestion was out loud. And again, she began to worry. She was **still** unprepared. She felt it. It was all happening so fast and she could barely make sense of any of it in a day. Oh, how she SO DEEPLY wanted to trust him and make him happy with an answer. Oh, how another part of her thought she might have been better never jumping from her tower. Inside, it was as though gnawing silkworm had burrowed into her head, eating her brain and belching out thoughts that were both her own and not of her at all: -*He's going to forget about you*-*This is just a passing faze*-*EVERYONE WILL KNOW about you two*-*He doesn't know what he's doing*-*He doesn't really know you*-*You don't deserve him*-

And then -her trembling stitched-up hands were overtaken by his long spider-leg fingers and pressed to her palms.

"I'd like you to stay here, Sally. I *want* to give you something. Everything. I've never met anyone like you."

The silkworm, all at once, seemed to choke up and die. She'd deal with getting rid of it for sure, but later. Not now.

"Oh Jack. I'll stay."

"ARF!" Zero yipped. It seemed he was still on the hunt for all things Christmas-y within Jack's study to show their new roommate. After all, **HE** liked Christmas too! It would be so nice to have someone who wasn't Jack to share it with.

"Atta boy Zero! Let's make Sally the happiest haunt in the manor!" Jack exclaimed. Zero, suddenly then reappeared with a sprig of green leaves and white berries held together by a white ribbon.

"Is that your Christmas present Zero," Sally laughed, "Holly?"

"No, no this isn't holy. It's mistletoe."

"Oh! Isn't that poisonous?" She was a little eager to learn about new plants, being stuffed with leaves. And **especially eager** to learn about new poisons. **So many...**

"Yes! It is actually! And, in Christmas Town they hang this poisonous plant over a doorway and when two people stand underneath it they-"

Sally's eyes lit, "expire? On Christmas!?"

"No! They *kiss*."

"Oh. Is that so?"

"Yes," Jack said rather amorously. Zero held the sprig proudly above them, joyously.

"I-I've meaning to test out this one's properties with a willing participant. It's just, this year has been so busy and with all the Sandy Claws research I've done I just didn't have time for-"

"I did work at a lab, Jack. I was made in one. If you really need someone to assist you in your Christmas experiments," she said, coyly, and just as amorously as him, "I can help."

"Close your eyes." So she did.

The feeling of his warm, boney, cross-stitched face against hers brought the ragdoll woman's will to shambles. **It would take some getting used to.** Not that she minded at all...

And the way she **leaned into him**, almost waiting for him to lead but still also leading the way, sent a shiver up the Pumpkin King's tall spine. Indeed, **it would take some getting used to.** They pulled away with Zero's happy specter bobbing up and down in approval, dropping the mistletoe on their heads.

"Merry Christmas, Jack" she said, pulling him close.

"Merry Christmas, Sally."



