Friends in Ghostly Places
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Summary

A Talking Skeleton.... Danny stared for a moment. Well, it made sense, in the Ghost Zone.
Wouldn't You?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

So, many years later I thought I'd drop in,
And there was old Jack still looking quite thin,
With four or five skeleton children at hand
Playing strange little tunes in their xylophone band.

And I asked old Jack, "Do you remember the night
When the sky was so dark and the moon shone so bright?
When a million small children pretending to sleep
Nearly didn't have Christmas at all, so to speak?
And would, if you could, turn that mighty clock back,
To that long, fateful night. Now, think carefully, Jack.
Would you do the whole thing all over again,
Knowing what you know now, knowing what you knew then?"

And he smiled, like the old Pumpkin King that I knew,
Then turned and asked softly of me, "Wouldn't you?"

-Closing Song for The Nightmare Before Christmas.

"You're not getting away from me!" Danny shouted as he chased after the spectre who had grabbed his sketchbook from him through the Ghost Zone. There were so many interesting things to look at in the Ghost Zone that sometimes when he got home and collapsed onto his bed, his fingers itched because he wanted to sketch, get it on paper before he forgot it. But he never seemed to have the time or the energy to do so.

Which is why he'd set this time aside be by himself for a bit, to go to the Ghost Zone and relax by do nothing but draw. Actually, not so much 'set aside the time', Tucker was at a Computer Expo and Sam was at some sort of dark goth revel thing, so he had the afternoon off and decided to make the best of it. And avoid doing his chores at the same time.

And then some idiot spook had decided since Danny was obviously concentrating on the sketchbook, it must be important, so it had stolen it. So now Danny was getting a whirl wind tour of the Ghost Zone, one that he really could have done without. It was supposed to be his day-off-, for goodness sake!

The ghost laughed and opened a door that looked like a Jack O' Lantern before dashing inside. "Oh, no you don't!" Danny muttered, putting on a burst of speed and following him inside. There was a moment of distortion and swirling energy, then he came out into a dimly lit sky, illuminated by a sickly looking sun with a maliciously grinning face.

"What?" He blinked, his eyes adjusting to the different light. Unlike the swirling purples and greens of the Ghost Zone, this place seemed to be all various variations of grey, no truly bright colours anywhere. Something white floated by and he grabbed it, recognising one of his doodles that had been folded and placed inside his sketchbook. "My sketchbook!"

"Oh, it's yours?" A jovial voice called from below him. Danny looked down and discovered a tall
skeleton in a well fitted tuxedo and a bat bow-tie grinning up at him, holding his sketchbook in one hand. A small scarecrow giggled and poked at what looked like a ghost stuck in a closed bell jar. "You do nice work!"

... Talking skeleton.... Danny stared for a moment. Well, it made sense, in the Ghost Zone. "Um... Thank you-?"

"You're quite welcome." The skeleton said cheerfully, waving him down with one bony hand. "And welcome to Halloween Town! I'm Jack Skellington, the Pumpkin King, and this is my son, Nick."

The small scarecrow looked up at him and pulled back his face to show a skeleton child of perhaps four or five underneath the rags. Nick waved. Danny waved back, floating down towards the grey-brown ground. "Hi. I'm Danny Phantom."

"Ah, the halfa!" Jack extended a hand towards him. Danny hesitantly took it and was surprised to find himself almost bounced up and down in the skeleton's enthusiasm. "Then this truly is a pleasure to meet you! I've heard such amazing things about you!"

"Um... Thank you?" Danny got his hand back and flexed it experimentally. For a guy who didn't have any muscles, Jack really didn't know his own strength. Kind of like his own Dad, also named Jack.

"You're welcome!" Jack patted him on the shoulder. "Come, you must meet the missus! Nicholas, are you going bring that with you for your sister?"

"Yeah." Nick picked up the bell jar, the ghost inside the glass illuminating his round skeletal features. "Ja~ck!" A voice shouted. "I just heard the good news!" A... well, Danny wasn't sure should to describe the man as fat or thin, really. The bottom was wide, but got narrower the closer it got to his smiling head, in a triangular shape that was accented by an official looking coat. A long tall thin hat topped off, making the man look taller than he really was.

Jack immediately turned to face the newcomer, blocking Danny from the other man's view, Danny's sketchbook behind him, then wiggled it in a sort of beckoning gesture. Danny floated down and hesitantly took his book back. "Mayor! So delightful to see you! And what might this good news be?"

"We have company!" The Mayor cheered, pulling out a rolled up scroll, uncurling it with a flick of his wrist. The paper unrolled down his front, to the street and down past Jack. Danny looked at it and swallowed. That was a long paper. "Just in time! I just got a new speech all written up!"

Danny turned invisible, hiding behind Jack's bony back. Jack subtly pointed away from the Mayor, backing up a step and Nick nodded, backing up as well. "How fabulous, Mayor. But I'm afraid that Nick and I must be going. Sally will be most disappointed in us if we don't get home in time-" The skeleton man babbled, his words picking up speed as his feet did until they were all but scrabbling away from the public official.

"This way." Jack instructed, escorting his son down a street with a fond hand on the boy's head. "Are you still with us my friend?"

"Just maintaining a low profile." Danny smiled nervously. "Wasn't sure if it was safe or not."

Nick snorted, still clutching the glowing jar. "Safe enough if you don't mind long speeches." Jack said cheerfully. "The Mayor's good people, if a touch enthusiastic."
"I'm sure." Danny muttered, not quite able to keep the slight scepticism out of his voice as he looked around. They walked past several witches, compete with green hair and broomsticks, who cackled at Jack and flirted slightly. Jack smiled and waved back, but continued walking. They passed by a one-eyed mummy, a large werewolf, a man with an axe in his head and several monsters that Danny didn't have the words for. The architecture here was all twisted, never a straight line when a crooked or wobbly one would do. Spirals and curves seemed to be the decoration of choice.

It would have been scary if it hadn't been so cheerful. Like walking down any street in Amity Park, only spooky. Or gruesome. There was a fine balance there, between horrifying and friendly that they somehow managed to carry off. They passed by a cemetery and a pumpkin patch that also had the same twisted feel.

It looked like something out of Sam's twisted Goth Fantasies. She'd never believe him about this place.

"Here we are." Jack announced, motioning to a building that fit in to the rest of the area, tall lean and slanting to the side. Nick scurried ahead, opening the door with just a touch. Evidently they didn't need locked doors around here. "Sally! We're home!"

"Welcome home!" A sweet feminine called back. A woman who appeared to be a large curvaceous ragdoll walked out of a side room, a bowl of batter under one arm, a small child attached to her ankle. It was another skeleton child, maybe about two years old, wearing a patchwork teddybear outfit. Nick held the light up for his mother to see and she smiled down at him. "And I see you've got Lucy's nightlight. Good job, Sweetie."

The boy glowed under his mother's praise. Jack chuckled, walking up and giving his wife a kiss on the cheek. "Yes. And I've brought company." He said, motioning to where Danny was hovering.

Danny solidified and waved. "Hello."

"Oh, a guest!" The rag doll smiled at him. "Welcome to Halloween Town."

"Um. Thanks." Danny smiled back. Everyone here seemed to be rather proud of their town.

"Danny, this my wife, Sally." Jack said, motioning from one to the other. "Sally, this is Danny Phantom."

"Pleased to meet you." Danny nodded.

"I'd shake your hand but I'm afraid I'm kind of messy at the moment." Sally gave him a small curtsy, somehow managing not to dislodge anyone or anything. "We don't get many visitors here. How did you find us?"

"Through the Ghost Zone." Danny motioned under his shoulder, shifting his sketchbook in his hands. "I was drawing and a ghost grabbed my sketchbook and I chased him into here."

Nick tugged on his mother's skirt, holding up the bell jar with the glowing ghost inside. "And you caught him." Sally concluded, smiling at Nick, who smiled back. "Good boy, Nickie."

"Lucy's afraid of the dark." Jack confided in Danny, amusement tinged with worry. "Imagine that! The daughter of the Pumpkin King! Afraid of the dark!"

"Jaack." Sally scolded, waving her spoon. Nick was glaring at his father, evidently for picking on his little sister. Danny muffled a laugh.
Jack ducked his head, leaning down and picking up the small girl attached to her mother's leg. "Not that there's anything wrong with that." He quickly amended. "That's where the best nightmares come from after all."

Sally rolled her eyes and wandered back into the kitchen. "I need samplers for this latest batch of cookies, in case anyone is interested." She called over her shoulder. Nick straightened up and shot into the room, causing Danny to laugh. Jack inclined his head, following his wife into the kitchen, the small skeleton girl curled up against his shoulder.

"Rawr." Said Lucy, waving a curled hand at him. Jack smiled proudly, like his baby girl had just done a trick. Danny waved back, following them.

"So... What do you do here?" He asked, looking around. Spider webs seemed to be the major architectural theme here. It was cosy, in a spooky sort of way. "In Halloween Town?"

"We get ready for Halloween, every year." Jack said proudly, ducking his head through the doorway. "It's our job to make sure that the human world has the best, scariest, Halloween we can."

"But I thought the Fright Knight was the Spirit of Halloween." Danny mused. Where had these people been when he'd been building his Haunted House for Mr. Lancer? They could have saved him soooo much trouble.

"He may be the 'Spirit.'" And Danny could practically see the quotation marks around the word 'Spirit', the way Jack said it. "But Halloween is our life. Halloween is what we do. It's what we are."

Outside, he could hear voices singing. "That's our job, but we're not mean~"

"-In this Town of Halloween!" Jack, Sally and Nick sang along.

Sally giggled. "That old song." She said fondly, pulling a cookie tray out of the oven. "Here we are. Pumpkin cookies. The faces are marzipan, it was a suggestion from Mrs. Claus that I've been dying to try. Careful, they're hot."

"Mrs. Claus?" Danny questioned as he looked at the pumpkin shaped cookies with yellow Jack O' Lantern features on them. "Like Santa?"

"Oh, yes." Jack nodded. "We're old friends. Our Nickie is named after him."

"Nicholas Scratch." Nick piped up, grabbing a cookie. "That's me."

"And we're still thinking up names for our next little skelling." Sally patted her belly. Danny belatedly realised that some of her curves went out, just starting to be noticeable. "And no, we're not going with 'Bunny' if it's a girl, dear."

"But it would make the Easter Village -so- happy." Jack moped, taking a cookie. He cheered up as soon as he bit into it. "These are wonderful, Sally-love."

"Thank you." Sally picked up a cookie for herself and tried it. Danny figured it couldn't hurt and picked one up to try as well. It was sweet, with just a bit of pumpkin spice to it.

"Mom would love this recipe." He mused, happily munching away. Skeletons were Skeletons, and Ghosts were Ghosts, but he was a growing boy and these were good cookies. "Thank you."

"I can give it to you before you go." Sally assured him.
The cookie turned kind of bland in his mouth. "Um... about that... Is there an easy way to get back to the Human World from here?"

"Of course." Jack waved it off, absently offering little Lucy a bite of cookie. "How else would we get there and back on Halloween? There's portals to the Ghost Zone here as well, although it's usually the lower level ghosts that flitter through like moths."

Now there was a mental image that was going to linger. He made a mental note to tell Sam and Tucker that one.

Jack sat up. "I am so sorry! Did you need to return immediately?!"

"No! No!" Danny hastened to assure him. "I was taking a day off, figured I'd explore the Ghost Zone a bit when I stumbled across here. I've got time before I need to be back."

"Oh, good!" Jack beamed at him, grinning from ear to ear. Literally. Jack reached over and picked up the sketchbook, flipping through it. "If you've got the time, perhaps you can tell us stories about some of these amazing pictures! We're always looking for new and innovative ways of scaring people. Look at this one, honey."

Danny looked at them for a minute as they poured over the sketchbook, marvelling at the strangeness of -his- home, then started laughing to himself. These people were definitely weird. Nice, but weird.

He was totally going to have to drag Sam here sometime, she'd love it. He could see her wearing a patchwork dress like Sally's, but with a shorter hem.

"I'm not the best person at scaring others." He grinned, resting his elbows on the table as he grabbed another cookie. Okay, so maybe this wasn't quite the relaxing afternoon he'd envisioned, but it worked as well. Definitely interesting things to see and draw. "But I can see what I can help you with."

"Excellent!" Jack beamed at him and Danny felt like he just gained a new friend.

He ended up staying until the smiling moon was low on the horizon and both Lucy and Nick were falling asleep. Lucy held onto the glowing jar like a strange teddy bear, her drowsy eyes staring into the ghost's glow as she sucked on a bony thumb. Danny didn't feel too sorry for it, they'd let the ghost go in the morning.

They'd spent the afternoon talking, sharing stories of their respective worlds. Danny talked about his becoming a halfa and fighting the ghosts that slipped through to his world. They talked about their first meetings with the other Holidays, each of the Seven Holidays learning about the others and the confusion and delights that had come from it.

Danny actually remembered the Christmas that Jack had taken over. He'd been young and chalked up the man-eating stuffed animal he'd gotten to his general overall hatred and bad luck for the holiday at the time.

Sally put the children to bed as Jack escorted Danny to the cemetery, a large golden moon rising on the horizon. Danny watched its glow for a moment as Jack examined the various mausoleums, trying to remember which one was the right one.

"Hey, Jack?" He questioned, his sketchbook firmly under one arm, filled with sketches of the Skellington family and house. The skeleton paused, turning to look at him. "If you could do it again, knowing what you know now? Would you do it again? Take over Christmas?"
Jack smiled, a small one this time, as he leaned over and opened up a set of doors built into a crooked building, half underground. A swirling light came from within. "Looking into your parent's portal, knowing what you know now, knowing what you knew then... Wouldn't you?"

Danny thought it over for a minute. "Yeah." Sure his life was harder than it was for most kids his age, but he didn't think he'd give the responsibilities they brought for anything.

Jack stretched his long arms out, fingers spread wide. "There you go. Travel safe, my friend. And come back and see us sometime. Before Halloween."

"I will." Danny promised. If not, he'd probably see them on Halloween. "Thanks, Jack."

And then he dove through the portal. There was a moment of dizzying distortion, not knowing which way was up, much less down or sideways, then he was spat out the other end, in the Amity Park cemetery.

Danny grinned as he brushed himself off and took to the air again. Sam -definitely- had to hear about this one.

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Chapter End Notes

Before anyone gets confused, Nick and Lucy are our own twisted little creations, based off the closing song of the Nightmare Before Christmas, posted at the beginning. 'Old Nick' or 'Old Scratch' are old historical names for the Devil, or 'Lucifer'. Which is then where we got 'Lucy'. Just some word play that amused us.

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Undermining the Status Quo

Chapter Summary

Pre-Phantom Planet. "We've been voted the 'Best Dressed Guy and Girl' on the Gothic Fantasy Guild Forum for the past three years running."

Chapter Notes

Recently wandered back into the ‘Big Wolf in Campus’ fandom and started re-reading ficcage. And it struck me that we were familiar with the whole ‘loner goth’ school situation from another series. And Hey! It’d cross over really easily. And so a little snippet.

"Remind me what we're doing out here again?" Danny yawned, draped across three of the stairs leading up to Casper High. He spent enough time at school without voluntarily hanging out here on the weekends. Especially when he didn’t have detention.

Tucker pressed a few buttons on his PDA, looking as bored as Danny felt. "Waiting for Sam's internet buddy to arrive from 'Pleasantville'." He said the town’s name as if it was a disease.

"And we're needed here-?"

"In case he turns out to be some sort of crazy psycho blood thirsty axe murderer." Tucker deadpanned.

"Oh. Right." Because with their luck, he would be. Hence the ‘neutral’ ground. Or as neutral as it got around here.

"Guys...." Sam rolled her eyes but was apparently too excited to bother with swatting them on the backsides of their heads. "I’ve known him for years. He's not some sort of crazy psycho blood thirsty axe murderer. Merton's a Goth, like me. We've been voted the 'Best Dressed Guy and Girl' on the Gothic Fantasy Guild Forum for the past three years running."

"What kind of name is 'Merton'?” Danny muttered darkly to Tucker. Sounded fishy to him. Probably some sort of made up mystical voo-doo wanna-be name.

Tucker apparently didn't hear him, pointing to a dark vehicle coming down the street. "... Is that a hearse?"

"What?"

Sam let out a gleeful squeak as a 1950s looking polished black hearse pulled up across the street from them. The driver's side door opened and out stepped a tall skinny guy dressed from head to toe in various shades of black, long dark spikes of hair sticking up all over his head and some of the palest colouring Danny had seen outside of the Ghost Zone.
The goth may have been alarming if it wasn’t for the broad grin on his face and the happy puppy-dog atmosphere he radiated. "SAM!" He shouted, enthusiastically throwing fingerless black gloved hands into the air.

"MERTON!" Sam shouted back, dashing down the stairs, just as excited. The two Goths ran towards each other, meeting in a crushing hug in the middle of the street and started yammering at each other about the twisted things of the dark like a pair of highly caffeinated valley girl cheerleaders at the mall.

... It was kind of a disturbing sight, for a pair of 'Denizens of the Night' to be so cheerful. It made Danny grin. So that was what kind of name Merton was. His parents must have really hated him.

"Uh-oh." Tucker straightened, shoving his glasses higher on his face, nerd senses tingling. "Incoming."

'Incoming' was a tall blond haired guy with shoulders like whoa wearing a letterman jacket that just screamed 'Jock'.

The Jock. The Geek’s natural enemy. Worse yet, Danny would lay odds on the Jock being a Senior, making him doubly dangerous. Danny got to his feet, ready to defend Sam, or get all three of them out of there if need be.

"Okay, you two." The Jock said, putting his hands on Merton’s shoulders and giving him, and thereby Sam, a tiny push towards the sidewalk. His hands remained on Merton’s shoulders as they made their way out of the street. “No happy meetings in the middle of the street where you can get run over by cars.”

"Sam, meet Tommy." Merton bounced a little on the balls of his feet as he glanced between the Jock and Sam, apparently comfortable with the close physical proximity. “My best friend.”

Tucker nudged Danny in the side with his elbow. “Dude. Eyes.”

Danny glanced down and realised that he could see the green glow of his eyes against his clothing. He pinched his eyes shut and took a deep breath, attempting to calm down. The last thing he needed was to Go Ghost on Sam’s internet buddy.

Sam, for her part, didn’t look that upset by the intrusion of the jock as they approached the stairs. “Oh!” Recognition flashed across her face as she grinned cheerfully at the blond guy. “-You’re-Tommy! I didn’t recognise you without the glowing eyes.”

… Glowing eyes? What?

Unfortunately, the train of thought was cut off by a rather unwelcome nasally voice. “HEY FENTONIA~! CATCH!”

Aw, crap. Dash. He sensed more than saw the football coming towards his the back of his head. He ducked, Sam and Tucker diving for cover on either side of him. The meaty sound of the impacting leather football was loud in his ears and he looked around, the question if everyone was okay on his lips.

The question died unasked, the football trapped in Tommy’s outstretched hand, preventing it from striking the half-crouched Merton. Merton let out a soft breath, reaching up and placing a hand on Tommy’s arm. “Thanks, Tommy.”

Tommy nodded back, his eyes trained on someone behind Danny. Danny glanced back to see Dash
running up, wearing his own letterman jacket. “That was pretty schweet!” Dash cheered, ignoring them in favour of the other Jock. “Ya gotta show me how ya caught it with one hand, man!”

… He had snatched the ball out of mid-air, Danny realised. Tommy wasn’t just a Jock, he was some sort of Senior Super Jock. And they were Freshmen Geeks. They were sooo screwed.

Dash seemed to realise this as well, grinning as he eyed Danny, Sam and Tucker. “But before that, ya wanna smush some dorks?”


Warning signs started going off in Danny’s head. He checked to see if his Ghost Sense was going off, but strangely enough, it wasn’t. Tucker seemed to be as confused as he was while Sam watched the goings on with an odd smile on her face.

“What?” Dash had this strange expression, a cross between alarmed and confused. “But… That completely undermines the entire High School social hierarchy status quo! How am I supposed to make my Bullying Quota if you’re makin’ friends with the lower tiers?!”

Tommy shrugged. “You know, that’s not a problem I’ve ever had to worry about.” He said, cupping the ball in both hands before drawing it back in a classic football pose and Danny could have sworn that he caught a glimpse of long thick claws on the end of each finger. “Catch!”

The ball seemed to burst into flames as it flew off towards the empty parking lot on the far side of the school, a smoke trail following behind it. Dash stared slack jawed after it for a moment before taking off running to fetch his ball. “You gotta show me how to do that too!” He called over his shoulder as he disappeared into the distance.

”Dude.” Tucker swore softly. “Did that ball just…”

Danny nodded absentmindedly, glancing up at Tommy. He wasn’t sure if it was his imagination or not, but were Tommy’s eyes glowing yellow?

Merton leaned forward, talking softly and quickly into Tommy’s ear, the two practically draped over each other. Tommy took a few breaths, visibly calming down under his friend’s attention.

”Merton and I have been talking with each other for years.” Sam said calmly, looking amused at the entire incident. “But over the past year, our best friends got… unusual. We’ve been trading information back and forth to help each other out. It’s nice to have someone to talk to who’s going through something similar.”

Danny became half ghost and Tommy… He looked over at the other two. Tommy gave them a slightly embarrassed crooked grin. “Tommy Dawkins.” He said, offering a hand, one without fur and claws. “Werewolf.”

… The Pleasantville Werewolf. Danny had heard stories.

”Do you speak Esperanto?” Tucker blurted.

Tommy looked confused while Merton brightened, waving a hand in the air. “A little bit!” He said enthusiastically. The two of them launched into a rapid fire exchange of the language, Sam making the occasional comment.

Danny took Tommy’s still offered hand and shook it. “Danny Fenton.” He said, then let his hand turn invisible and phase through Tommy’s hand.
Tommy’s eyes went round as Danny’s hand appeared again, a grin growing. “Cool…” He breathed, probably silently filling in ‘Amity Park’s resident ghost, Danny Phantom’.

Danny grinned back. Even if Tommy was a Jock, he could still get to like this guy.

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Would have preferred to have something more action-y with buttkicking, but they just kinda wanted to say hello instead. *Shrugs* Maybe later.
Friends in High Places

Chapter Summary

Something was definitely strange with the new transfer student.

Chapter Notes

This is been haunting me for a couple of weeks now, since I caught part of the movie. *spazz* Mostly BJ cartoon-verse with some movie-verse thrown in.

“Oh… dangit.” Danny groaned as a blue wisp escaped from his mouth. “Not another one.”

“What is that? The fourth today?” Tucker asked sympathetically.

“Something like that.” Danny passed them his backpack, not even bothering to ask for Sam and Tucker to cover for him as echoes of ‘BEWARE!’ rumbled in the background. “This is getting old.”

He dashed down the hall, vanishing as he went. There was the faint whooshing sound of transformation. Sometimes it was good to be invisible to the masses.

“Poor Danny.” Sam murmured as they walked into English, tucking Danny’s bag next to hers over her shoulder. The sounds of a ghostly fight started in the background, followed by students fleeing in screaming terror. “He find out what’s with the sudden influx yet?”

“Not yet.” Tucker fiddled with his PDA, adding more information. “But I can tell you that this is a much larger invasion then we’re used to.”

“Great.” She muttered. Late nights all around again. Just what they needed to bring their GPA up. Not that Mr. Lancer was much help in that regard.

Sam rebounded as Paulina stepped in front of her, blocking her path. “Oh, look! It’s Goth Number One!” Paulina cooed in obvious fake saccharine, with just a hint of malice underneath. “Better watch out Mason, looks like someone’s trying to take over your anti-social spooky gig.”

”Huh?” Sam stared after the cheerleader, wondering how much of Paulina’s head was made of air and how much was brains. Probably mostly air. Like a chihuahua.

”Whoa.” Tucker tugged on her arm, pointing her towards the back of the class where they usually tried to sit. The shadows seemed to be slightly darker there than usual, almost masking the figure sitting there. “For once, she wasn’t exaggerating.”

”… Huh.” Sam said again. A practical joke by someone in the A-List? She dismissed the thought. Didn’t look like Dash or Kwan in a dress for one thing.

”You want back up for surveillance?” Tucker inquired, looking almost eager.
"Sure." She agreed. There was also the chance whomever it was was part of the latest wave of ghostly visitations. She’d feel better if Danny was here, but Tucker was good back-up as well.

They wandered over, perching on the desks next to the gothic figure. Sam tilted her head as she took in the new person. Thin skinny girl, in the lean, not skeletal way. Mass of spiky dark hair, some of it up, black almost 20s style dress and what looked like a cloak draped over the back of the chair that looked like it was made of a mass of spider webs.

If the girl hadn’t looked up with the weary expression of waiting for the heckling to start, Sam would have thought she was a ghost. It was almost the same look Danny often gave Dash, tired of the harassment but knowing it was coming. Sam held out her hand instead, giving the new girl what she hoped was a friendly smile. ‘I’m Sam. Local Goth.’ ‘High School Outcasts, Unite’ and all that jazz.

Speaking of Jazz, Danny’s sister would probably have a field day with the newcomer.

"Lydia.” The girl had a pleasant enough voice, high without being screechy. “Formerly from Peaceful Pines.” Sam didn’t know where ‘Peaceful Pines’ was, but she did note that Lydia’s hand was smooth and dry when they shook, not exactly cold like a ghosts, but not exactly warm either.


Lydia gave him a slight smile, but didn’t comment. She didn’t laugh either and Sam’s opinion rose slightly. “Nice cloak.” Sam said, eyeing the cloak appreciatively. “Where’d you get it?”

“I made it.” Lydia reached back and ran her fingertips down the material, petting it with a fond expression. Red fingernails, Sam observed. Odd choice for a goth. Not that Sam had room to talk, she was more partial to violets than black anyway.

"Seriously?” Tucker’s eyebrow rose as Lydia pulled the cloak off the back of her chair and draped it over the desk. There was a furry collar attached as well, but Sam couldn’t quite place the spiky fur.

"May I-?” Sam asked, reaching forward to touch. Lydia nodded and Sam gently pet the material. It felt like silk, only not quite. There was an odd texture to it, but it was eminently petable, the material almost clinging to her fingers.

"Niiiiice.” Tucker commented and she realised that he was doing the same thing.

"B… A good friend gave me the material.” Lydia said, stroking the collar. “But I can give you the pattern, if you’d like.”

“I’m not that great of a seamstress.” Sam muttered, pulling her hand back and blushing. A cloak! That would so rock, skulking around town in a flowing cloak, that billowed out around her. She’d hoped that her bathing cloak would be like that, but it fell in boring straight lines. Which made it ideal for when they went swimming, but not so much for fun late night dramatics.

"It’s easy.” Lydia assured her. “I… could probably help, if you wanted.” She added hesitantly, strange newcomer approaching possible friends.

"Sure!” Sam smiled. She still wasn’t discounting the idea that Lydia was a ghost, but it’d be a nice change of pace to do some girl-type stuff with someone else with good taste in clothes.

They saw Danny briefly at lunch, looking exhausted and ready to fall asleep in his tray of cafeteria food. It wouldn’t have been a huge loss, except that he was barely having any time to catch anything
to eat as it was. “Anything?” Tucker asked, exchanging a worried look with Sam.

Danny shrugged, tiredly shovelling something wiggling and purple into his mouth. “Apparently someone’s coming. Someone powerful. Dunno who though.”

“No one knows?” Sam frowned. That was weird. Usually ghosts screamed on the top of their lungs who it was they were fleeing from, like a wailing warning system.

“No one’s willing to say the name.” Danny shrugged. “Guess it’s a summon or something. No one wants to accidentally do that.”

“Huh.” Sam mused. Something to research later, maybe see if anyone in the Gothic and Fantasy club knew anything about summons. She caught a dark shadow out of the corner of her eye and waved as Lydia looked around the lunch room, avoiding the Football players and the Cheerleaders with the reflex of an outcast. The other goth brightened when she saw them and waved back. “Oh, you have to meet-“

Danny’s Ghost Sense went off and he groaned, body sagging. A mad cackling from the kitchen followed, the Lunch Lady up to her hijinks again. “I’ll be back. Don’t wait up.” Danny muttered, turning intangible and sinking under the table and disappearing.

Tucker traded another concerned look with Sam. Maybe Lydia really was a ghost. The question was what then? They didn’t know what kind of ghost she could be. If she was a ghost, did they want to keep her close so they could keep an eye on her or run for the hills?

Tucker pulled a Fenton Thermos out of his backpack and she nodded. If Lydia was a ghost, a troublesome ghost, she silently amended, they could take care of her themselves. Danny had his hands full as it was with the ghostly masses.

”… Was there just someone else here a minute ago?” Lydia asked hesitantly as they turned and smiled at her, hiding the ghost fighting paraphernalia from view.

”Yup. Danny.” Sam smiled as Lydia took a seat next to where Danny had been. “You just missed him, he had a sudden emergency pop up.” It was amazing sometimes, how easily the lies and half-truths came out now.

”He’s the third member of our little trio.” Tucker added, stealing some fry-like substance from Danny’s tray and eating it. “You’ll meet him sooner or later.”

Later, at this point. Sam thought darkly. This was also the second time Danny’s ghost sense had gone off just as Lydia appeared, which was highly suspicious circumstances. Something to investigate. May be it was time to bring Jazz into it, see what their group psychologist thought of it.

”So…” Lydia said slowly. “I was wondering if you were serious about making a cloak if you wanted to stop by today and get started. I know it’s sudden and all, but it’d really help keep my parents off my back.”

”They’re a little over protective?” Tucker smirked, glancing at Sam. Sam rolled her eyes. She couldn’t be the only goth out there with ‘normal’ parents.

Lydia laughed, somewhat nervously. “You could say that. They didn’t really approve of my friends back home, so we moved here.”

”Ooooh.” Tucker playfully nudged Sam with an almost lecherous grin. “Boyfriend trouble?”
"Not quite." Lydia ducked her head. "He’s a good guy, really. Just a little… eccentric."

'Eccentric’, huh. Interesting. Could be used to describe so many things. “I’d love to come.” Sam said, drawing the conversation back to the previous topic. She could check out the house, scope around, get proof one way or the other if Lydia was a ghost. “I can’t stay too late, curfew, but maybe we could get started-?”

"Great.” Lydia looked hugely relieved. “Thanks! I’ll just text Delia back and let her know you’re coming.”

"Delia?” Sam echoed as Tucker shot her a pointed look.

"My step-mom.” Lydia rolled her eyes. “She means well, but… Well, you’ll see her gallery. She’s an ‘Artist’.”

"And your Dad?” Tucker asked, stealing some more food from Danny’s tray.

"He relaxes.”

Sam and Tucker exchanged a raised eyebrow look. Well, this would be interesting at least.

"So how’d it go?” Tucker asked, meeting Sam at her locker the next morning.

"Mom makes stuff that look like they came outta the Ghost Zone and if Dad wasn’t so mellow, he’d fit in with my folks.” Sam reported. “Mom was happy that she had some ‘normal’ friends.”

"If she considers you ‘normal’, I’d hate to think of what she’d call ‘abnormal’. Tucker mused, entering notes into his PDA.

"Abnormal enough to pull her out of 'Miss Shannon's School for Girls' that she's been going to for the past several years." Sam made a face. Her parents had tried to get her to go to something like that too. She didn't mind a little plaid, but not that blue and white checked stuff. "Mom showed me the pictures."

Although she hadn't seen anyone that looked too dangerous or troublesome in the photos. But there'd been no pictures of Lydia's mysterious boyfriend either, so she doubted it was the school.

“Any chance Mom’s a ghost?”

"Doubtful.”

Tucker made a thoughtful sound. "So everything just like she said?”

"Yup. Got started on a cloak too, she had enough scrap material laying around for a pattern.” Which was going to be -sweet-, even if it didn’t look like spun spider silk.

"Any sign of ghostly activity?”

"None.” Sam patted her waist. “I had the Spectre Deflector on the entire time. Not a blip.”

"So not a ghost.” Tucker looked almost disappointed.

"Or something the Spectre Deflector isn’t equipped to deal with.” Sam shrugged, turning the belt off to save power. There were more than one kind of ghost out there. Some of them friendly, some of them not. Sam hoped that if Lydia was a ghost, it was the former. Tucker shrugged and nodded.
"Hey, guys." Danny appeared, leaning next to Sam’s locker. He looked like it had been a busy night for him. Sam reached into her locker and pulled out a highly caffeinated soda and passed it to him. He nodded his thanks back, opened it and chugged it down.

"Anything new?” Tucker asked, shifting to hide Danny from view of most of their classmates, the two of them guarding Danny.

"Just that Big Bad is looking for his ‘Lost Bride’." Danny made air quotes for the last two words. “It’s not just the Big Bad, there’s a huge uproar in that section of the Neither World or something over this. Some Prince Mince or something even offered a reward for the safe return of the lost bride. Not his bride though. Friends, I guess.” He shrugged apathetically.

"So the recent activity is like a huge school of fish fleeing from a large hungry predator." Sam mused. "No one wants to become lunch by accidentally getting in between Big Bad and his prey."

"Pretty much." Danny agreed mildly. Which made Danny like a rock in the way of their ghostly flight. "How are things with you?"

"Making friends.” Tucker grinned. “New girl. She-“

She was coming down the hall towards them, Sam noted. But Tucker trailed off as a wisp of blue escaped Danny’s mouth, his Ghost Sense going off again. Danny muttered something very rude and anatomically impossible, undead or not.

"Group Hug!” Sam exclaimed, wrapping Tucker and Danny up into a hug. Tucker’s arms were warm around her, in contrast to Danny’s cold skin as he transformed. Chilled fingers brushed the bare skin of her waist before Danny vanished into the lockers and away.

"Hey…” Lydia was giving them a confused look as Sam and Tucker broke apart. “Wasn’t there just-?"

"Morning ritual.” Sam said quickly, holding her hands out. “Want a hug?”

"I’m good.” Lydia looked at her with amusement. “Maybe later.”

"Your loss.” Sam shrugged. Shouting and the sound of rocket fire shook the halls. Skulker’s booming voice rumbled something about ‘Ghost Child’ and ‘Stopping this madness before it got worse’.

Lydia looked around, slightly alarmed. “What-?”

"Just another day at Casper High.” Tucker shrugged nonchalantly, tugging Lydia down the hall as Kwan and some of the members of the football team ran past screaming. “C’mon, we’d better get to class.”

Sam and Tucker exchanged serious looks as they escorted their new friend to class. That was three times now, Lydia appearing just Danny’s Ghost Sense went off.

Something was definitely strange with the new transfer student.

They didn’t catch back up with Danny until after school had ended, cutting through the quiet park as they walked him home. As quickly as the sudden flood of ghostly activity had started, it had suddenly stopped. It left Sam with the eerie feeling of a lull before the major storm hit.
How ever long it last, she hoped it was enough time for Danny to catch a nap. He was cranky sour
puss when he hadn’t had enough sleep.

She and Tucker kept a paranoid eye on their surroundings, keeping Danny protectively between
them. The fact that he didn't notice the fact that they were guarding him wasn’t a good sign either.
"Any more hints as to who it is causing the chaos?" Sam asked, trying to keep Danny distracted.

"Not really." Danny yawned and stretched, joints popping as he reached for the sky. Sam willed
herself not to stare at the flash of smooth stomach revealed as his white shirt rode up, exposing the
tan skin. Tucker shot her an amused look and Sam blushed, glancing away. Sure. Mock the girl with
a hopeless crush. "The last few were really frantic, so Big Bad is probably pretty close."

Tucker made a nervous sound in the back of his throat. "How close is close, would you guess?"

"Uh..."

"Oh." Sam looked up and spotted who Tucker was staring at. If the greasy skin, sunken eyes and
green teeth didn't draw enough attention, the loud black and white stripped suit and magenta shirt
did. The nearly red aura was a pretty large warning sign as well. "I think we found him."

In retrospect, the park had been quiet, a little bit too quiet.

"Y’think?" Danny said dryly, stepping forward, blue rings flashing around his waist, leaving him in
his own black and white attire.

"Yo." The ghost said in a parody of politeness, stopping a few steps away from them. His voice was
an odd mix of nasally and gravelly at the same time, but deadly scary at the same time. The sound of
it gave Sam goosebumps. Yup, they had found the Big Bad.

"Hey." Danny nodded, floating upwards slightly so the taller ghost didn't have the height advantage.
"Can I help you?"

"Yeah." The ghost stuck a hand in his striped pants pocket in a fake casual gesture. "M'lookin' fer
someone. Goth girl, black hair, nice laugh-"

"You can't have her!" Danny shouted angrily, charging towards the other ghost. The striped ghost
grinned evilly, green teeth glinting as if he relished the chance to fight.

"BEETLEJUICE!!!!!" A shrill voice cut through the air, the other ghost turning in the direction the
shout came from, Danny flying right past him.

"BABES!" The malicious aura vanished in a second, the ghost holding out his arms. Behind him,
Danny paused, shaking his head and looking confused. It was like anticipating being attacked by a
rabid Doberman, only to unexpectedly have it turn into a puppy.

Sam turned and found Lydia running towards them, her own arms outstretched with a nearly frantic
look on her face, red spider-web poncho flaring out behind. She did a nearly impossible looking
leap, tackling the striped ghost, the two of them spinning a circle as they clung to each other.

"Oh-kay." Danny floated back over to them. "What'd I miss?"

"Dunno." Tucker commented, tucking a Fenton Thermos part way back in his bag. "But I think
we're all missing it." Danny and Sam nodded in agreement.

"I've been trying to summon you, I've been calling your name for WEEKS!" Lydia scolded, holding
the ghost at arm's length, each gripping the other's forearms, not letting go. "I was beginning to think you weren't coming!"

"As if I'd never come for you." The ghost scoffed. "Didn't have all my parts, so I couldn't use my magic. Had to -walk- a ways to get to a portal to the Otherworld."

Lydia frowned as she looked him over with a proprietary air. "You look okay to me."

"Lyd..." The ghost's voice was almost impossibly gentle as he put a hand on her chest in an intimate gesture strangely at odds with his greasy appearance. "Didya think I was jokin' when I said you had m'heart?"

"Oh." She covered his hand with hers with a small smile. There was a small 'pop' and some sort of odd shift in the air, both of them laughing as they suddenly started floating off the ground. Red fingernails on both, Sam noted absently.

"Uh..." Danny cleared his throat, catching the couple's attention. "I'm lost-?"

"Oh. Sorry!" Lydia turned around, still holding on to the striped ghost. She paused. "... Who are you?"

Sam stepped forward, placing her hand on the back of one of Danny's cold ones. "He's our friend."

"I thought you were after Sam." Danny looked embarrassed. "Sorry about that. I didn't know there was another goth around here."

"I oughta-" The growl was abruptly cut off as Lydia jabbed an elbow not-so subtly into the ghost's stomach.

"Apology accepted." Lydia said with a small smile. "I guess I owe you guys a bit of a story, huh?"

"Only if you want to." Tucker waved it off with a generous air. "But it'd be nice, yes."

Lydia laughed, motioning to the ghost who had a possessive grasp around her waist. "Guys, meet Beetlejuice. I wouldn't recommend saying his name more than twice though." Which meant that his name was a summons. No wonder no one wanted to say it.

"Betelgeuse." Tucker straightened, his voice taking on the slightly monotone air that he did when he spat out another cram fact. "A bright-red intrinsic variable star, 527 light-years from Earth, in the constellation Orion."

"The -armpit- of the constellation Orion." Beetlejuice corrected haughtily, buffing his nails against his magenta shirt.

"Wait a minute..." Several pieces began to click into place. "-He's- the friend your parents moved you here to avoid?"

Lydia shrugged. "Well, Delia had some commissions down here and they thought Amity Park would be significantly more 'Ghost Free'..."

"Boy, did they get -that- one wrong." Danny muttered.

Sam glanced between Lydia and Beetlejuice, noticing the protective arm they had around each other. "So... Your not-quite boyfriend-?"

Danny's eyebrows vanished into his hairline. "'Lost Ghost Bride'?" He echoed, putting in the pieces
from his end.

Beetlejuice shifted his feet somewhat nervously and Lydia ducked her head a second before holding up her left hand so they could clearly see the gold ring on her ring finger, red stone glinting at them.

Sam sensed more than saw Danny and Tucker's jaws drop, just a little. Which was okay, because she was doing the same thing. Tucker was the first one to recover, and then only by a little bit. "Dude..."

Beetlejuice scratched the back of his head. "Yeah, well..."

"It's not quite what it looks like." Lydia smirked, eyes half-lidded and mischievous, unlike the quiet girl they'd previously known. "I needed some help to save some ghost friends of mine, so in exchange I agreed to marry him. Only... stuff happened and it didn't quite work out."

"Think this is better anyway." Beetlejuice waved it off. "There's lots for Lyds and I to do and you Breathers only breath fer so long, y'know what I mean? You're only a kid for a short time--"

"-But immaturity is forever." Lydia added with a pointed smirk. Beetlejuice proudly chuckled in response. "Anyway. Like I said, we've been best friends ever since. But Dad and Delia recently found out about the ring and that we're hanging out together, so they moved me down here to get away from Beej."

"Not like a little thing like that would keep me away from my Babes!" Beetlejuice added proudly. Lydia made a happy sound and hugged him again.

Sam, Tucker and Danny exchanged looks and shrugged. But if they were happy, more power to them. It wasn't like she could say anything about being in love with a ghost.

Although Ghosts lived for a long time, and they usually didn't get that powerful of an aura if you were a young ghost. Talk about spring/winter romance... Friendship. Whatever.

"Sooo...." Danny drawled uncertainly. "Now that you've found your friend, you planning on causing any more havoc?"

Beetlejuice's cackling was far from reassuring and more than just a little bit crazy. Sam took a step backwards, on her guard. Tucker tightened his grip on the Fenton Thermos, ready to pull it out should he need to.

Lydia rolled her eyes, nudging her friend again. "He's good. I'll keep him in line." She promised. "If you guys don't mind, we're going to go catch up. It's been a few weeks since we've seen each other."

Beetlejuice looked annoyed, but it was clear who held the leash in their relationship.

"Okay." Danny nodded. He floated down onto the ground, touching down between them. He wobbled slightly and Sam put her hand on his arm to help steady him. He'd been gearing up for a fight, which never happened, and now he was crashing.

"You guys go have fun." Sam gave them a small smile, taking more of Danny's weight. He didn't complain, which was a large sign right there. "We're gonna go catch a nap."

"Sounds good." Lydia waved with a grin. "See you later!"

"Later!" Tucker waved as Lydia and Beetlejuice walked away. Well, Lydia was walking, Beetlejuice floating companionably next to her, his hand in hers as they chattered animatedly, their laugher mingling in the air.
Danny waited to change back until they were out of eyesight. "So that's your new friend, huh?"

Sam shrugged. "No stranger than the rest of us." Half ghost, geek and goth.

Danny nodded, then yawned. "Cool. Introduce me tomorrow?"

Tucker and Sam glanced at each other with a small smile. "Sure."

"Great."

-fin-
Chapter Summary

Training the Next Generation of Trick or Treaters.

Chapter Notes

For waywren, for commenting she wouldn't mind seeing more of this. There is no redeeming plot value in this fic, just touching up on previous stories.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Are you sure it’s okay for you to be out and walking around?” Sam asked, eyeing their companion’s rather large bulging stomach.

"I think she means ‘waddling around’” Tucker corrected in sotto voice. Sam stepped on his foot and Tucker yelped.

Sally laughed, one hand on her rather prominent belly, carrying a surprise pair of twins. “It’s fine.” The ragdoll assured them with a grin. “They may be due soon, but it’s –Halloween-.” The word almost sounded exotic in her mouth, like rich deep dark chocolate after a lifetime of milk chocolate.

Considering the culture of Halloween Town, Danny wasn’t too surprised. The citizens of Halloween Town lived and breathed Halloween.

"In other words, there was no way that you weren’t coming.” Danny grinned, floating above them in his ghost form. Halloween, the one night of the year where it was somewhat okay to float around Amity Park without too big of a deal being made of it.

Especially considering their current company. He could take the night off and relax, which he gleefully planned to do. No ghost fighting tonight, thank you.

"I may not have a job that wins awards.” Sally shrugged. “But training the next generation of Trick or Treaters is important too.”

Nicky and Lucy came scurrying up, dressed as a scarecrow and a teddy bear respectively, waving the brightly wrapped candy they had just received in their tiny bony hands. It was cooed over, then the tiny skeleton children ran off to the next house with shrieks of delight.

Somewhere in the distance, someone screamed. “And it’s nice to see my husband at work.” Sally added with a fond little smile. Sam had a funny fond look of her own as she blushed, looking everywhere except at Danny. Tucker gave Sam a knowing look. Weird.

It definitely took someone very special to marry the Pumpkin King, Danny reflected. for all he was one of the nicest people Danny had ever met, Jack Skellington could be horrifying beyond belief when he wanted to be.
"Speaking of screams…" Tucker gulped. "What happened to the other guys?"

"Lock, Shock and Barrel?" Sally asked sweetly.

"Yeah."

"They went on ahead with ‘The Ghost with the Most’." Danny smirked, barely remembering not to say Beetlejuice’s name. The last thing he needed on this reasonably-silent night was to accidentally summon trouble.

"Aren’t you worried about that?" Sam’s forehead crinkled. “Pranksters with a Poltergeist?” The first thing Halloween Town’s trio of troublemakers had done was to try to feed them live snakes and paint them all green. The operative word being –try-.

"Nah." Danny’s smirk grew bigger. “They’ve got Lydia with them. She’ll keep them all out of trouble."

"That’ll work.‘ Tucker relaxed. Apparently hanging out with Beetlejuice had been good for Lydia’s reaction time and trickster sense. She’d been the one to disarm Lock, Shock, and Barrel.

"So have you settled on names yet?" Sam asked, turning the conversation back to the original topic. “I heard something about ‘Bunny’?"

"As much as it would thrill Easter Town, no." Sally said firmly. “Although ‘Patrick’ is still up for debate. But after meeting Danny for the first time, we expanded our explorations and discovered other holiday towns from other cultures.”

"Really?" Danny blinked in surprise. Well, it made sense, as the Ghost Zone was supposed to be linked to the Earth.

"Yes. The Japanese ‘O-bon’ and the Mexican ‘Dia de los Muertos’ are somewhat similar to ours.” Sally grinned excitedly. “We’ve been thinking of choosing a name from one of their towns, to increase ties among the holidays."

Lucy and Nicky ran up, waving candy. They handed it over with a delighted squeal and darted ahead again.

"That’d be cool." Tucker nodded, pulling out his palm pilot and scrolling through it, no doubt looking up the holidays for name ideas and suggestions. Or talking to Merton in chat about how weird Halloween was this year. Unfortunately the goth and the werewolf hadn't been able to leave Pleasantville to join them for Trick or Treating.

"So when are you due?" Sam asked. "No offence, but you look about ready to burst." She added with a small self-deprecating laugh.

"All Soul’s Day.” Sally said, rubbing her tummy.

"Wait…” Danny traded a look with Sam.

"… Isn’t that the day AFTER Halloween?" She finished the question.

"Yes." Sally agreed. “My water broke not too long ago.”

Sam, Tucker and Danny stared in shock and horror, their minds racing a mile a minute. A blood curdling scream echoed from a few feet away from their small group and Danny spared a brief
moment wondering if that had been inside of his head.

"The contractions are still far apart so it’ll be a while still." Sally’s eyes crinkled as she smiled peacefully at them. “I –do- have some prior experience with this.”

"Moooooooooom!!" Nicky’s voice cut through the teenager’s panic filled minds, drawing their attention to the house ahead, and the woman sprawled across its doorway in a dead faint. “Lucy’s jaw fell off again!”

"Just re-attach it, dear.”

"‘Kay.”

-fin-

Chapter End Notes

Voices have decided that the twins are 'Black Peter' and 'Bloody Mary'. Currently having a joking debate about the fifth one named 'Bub'.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!