

Ascension of the Fallen

By DismalSpecter

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Jack Skellington's midnight flight had brought two worlds together. However, the fragile union is threatened by an ancient enemy as well as from forces from within.

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Chapter 1 - A Strange Visitor

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Ascension of the Fallen - Complete Piece

Chapter 1: A Strange Visitor The gutter was badly in need of a good cleaning. A sludge of rainwater, rotting leaves, and dirt choked the passage causing the metal shuttle to sag from the deadweight. Sadly, circumstances drew its attention elsewhere, leaving the gutter (as well as the rest of the house) in pitiful neglect. Hardly anyone would believe that the King of Halloween would live in such squalor. Yet inside such an abode lived Jack Skellington, whose mind was on anything other than mundane tasks. With a cup of Witch s Brew at hand and a copy of the Daily Scare propped against the toaster, Jack did his best to enjoy what little time he had to himself before the mid-morning mayhem began. A slight pop signaled that the toast was done. Reaching a bony hand over to retrieve it, Jack caught a glimpse of the gift basket of foodstuffs. A skeletal grin crossed his features as he recalled the night before. Yesterday s dance lesson was a success and he felt sure that Sally knew it as well. Painstaking practice had paid off and together they performed the foxtrot. It was hard to believe that only a fort night ago, all she could manage was the two-step. Jack hummed happily as he studied her thank you letter, which was folded intricately in the form of a cat. He made a mental note to pick up a pound of crow giblets for her soup cabinet. Only too soon his morning reverie was broken. His thoughts were interrupted by the shriek from the doorbell. Hesitantly, Jack got up and readied himself. The heavy oak door swung back to reveal a much disheveled Mayor struggling to close an orange and black umbrella which dwarfed the stout man. Horrid weather, Jack, just plain horrid, the Mayor grumbled as he stamped his boots. I haven t seen a storm this bad since the Surrey Flame Salamanders forfeited the cup. Jack nodded, taking the sopping mess of his guest s coat and hanging it unto the dead tree coat stand. Worse this year than last, I believe. I do hope the rain won t ruin the pumpkin harvest. With a cup of slime mold tea, the Mayor was back to his bubbly self. He wasted no time going into his ramble for the last minute details for the upcoming Halloween. Since there was only one week before celebrations, his stays became longer and his nerves shorter, much to Jack s chagrin. However, Jack knew better than to not give the Mayor his full attention. After a fiasco in which Jack approved one of Mayor s hare-brained ideas, the Pumpkin King wasn t taking any chances. Two cracked ribs, a concussion, and getting half-charbroiled from a raging horde of dragons would teach anyone to take the Mayor seriously. The subjects varied from the usual decoration arrangements to the locations of where a scare would be designated. The latter being most important since an error could mean two monsters ending up fighting for the same spot or worse with them scaring the other instead of scaring children. As fun as Halloween was, humans knew nothing about the drudgery of planning for it. The Vampire Brothers are complaining how the low visibility will

hurt their chances in winning the Most Drained Blood in a Single Evening Award said Mayor. Jack sighed. Remind them that their job is not to outdo the Acid Bath Leeches. Besides, how can I help it if the sky wants to rain? The Mayor paused as his owl-feather pen scribbled furiously. I fear that this year there won't be as big a turnout as before, Jack. Only the more dedicated trick-or-treaters will brave this storm, he said glumly. Jack scowled in frustration and worry. All their plans would come to naught if this dreary trend continued. And by what? A little drizzle? Sharing Jack's sentiment, Mayor's other face swiveled to the front, reflecting a more panic-stricken side of him. You're not giving up on this Halloween are you? Shaking his head wistfully, the Pumpkin King sighed. No Mayor. I wouldn't dream of it. After all, we shouldn't disappoint our fans right? Right. I see that you're a bit exhausted, Jack. I'll call on you another time then? With a nod, Mayor left the forlorn skeleton to his thoughts. As the door clicked shut, Jack turned his head to glance at the spindly grandfather clock and noted that a good chunk of the morning was gone and noon was coming on fast. Still, there might be time to stop by the apocraphy shop before his meeting with Sally. At the thought of Sally, Jack felt his spirits rise a bit. He needed to pour out his troubles and knew that she was always willing to hear them. Somehow she knew how to alleviate whatever bothered him. He rose from the firm-backed electric chair, startling a dozing Zero from his slumber. The ghost dog let out a few yips as his master tucked a couple bottles of newt juice and a loaf of garlic bread into a basket. I won't be gone long, boy. Mind the house, all right? Umbrella in hand, Jack eased the door jamb shut. The basket swung to-and-fro on his gangly arm as he took wide stride down the stairwell. Past the gates he went and onto the cobblestone street where the four hulking forms of the dirge band members stood, huddling themselves against the sharp, biting autumn wind. Jack caught the sax player's eye. A flick and two coins clattered into the almost empty tin-pan. The old zombie said nothing but nodded his thanks. The streets were practically empty. Most of the town residents were inside, bunkering down and listening to the rain pound rhythmically against the windows. But Jack had a destination in mind and his steps became more brisk as he neared the entrance to Dr. Finkelstein's lab. Yet as he turned the corner, he ran into a small figure. A yelp startled Jack and he halted as he felt a bump to his shin. Staring down he made out a tiny bundle of brown fur curled at his feet. He gasped and bent down quickly. Oh my, I didn't see you there! Are you all right? A sharp stinging rap to the knuckles was the response. Get away. I don't need ya help. To Jack's surprise, he found himself face to face with the last creature he expected to wander Halloween Town's streets. Hoofs, antlers, fur and all was a wizened little reindeer who glared back with indignation. A pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez glasses perched upon his short snout. About its neck was a red collar with silver bells. Judging by the crooked posture of its back, it seemed to be of advanced age. At a loss of words, Jack stared. That is until the creature's shrill voice spoke. Well? Are ya just gonna stand there gawking at me or are ya gonna open the door? It snapped, rapping its candy cane walking stick on the stones smartly. Jack blinked but came to his senses. Yes, of course. He reached out and lifted the latch, pushing the heavy iron-cast door agape. Huffing, the deer passed Jack without another glance. Nevertheless, the skeleton followed, a whirlwind of questions churning in his mind. What was a reindeer doing in Halloween Town? Unfortunately, the deer was aware of Jack's presence and turned, glowering. Just what are ya doing stalkin' me? Have you no one else to scare? I only want to know what business you have here. So what? Is there a crime for old bucks to visit a graveyard? came the reply. What if I decided to just keel over and let the worms eat me? What's it to you? The walking cane rose, pointing at Jack's chest. Who do you think ya are? The police? I'll not hesitate to report this harassment to the Halloween King himself if you don't buzz off! Irritated, Jack snapped back. Yeah, well you're talking to him! The elderly reindeer squinted hard at Jack. Hah! You're just as Santa said you'd be; though he failed to mention that you're a half-wit. Insulted, tired, and hungry, Jack was not in the best mood. And if looks can kill, the glare Jack gave the deer would have skinned the buck alive. The deer pushed back a tuft of gray-brown fur from its eyes. The name's Old Man Deer. Original, isn't it? Anyways, that fool of a

Mayor told me to talk to you. Jack eyed the creature. And you were searching for me at Finkelstein's Lab? So sue me if all these houses all look alike. Ya people really should use color. My eyes aren't like they used to be. What are you here for? Only seeking citizenship. Jack stared incredulously.

Citizenship? Here? Why?! Old Man Deer smirked. I realized it was about time I retire. I couldn't stand living in Christmas Town any longer. I've grown sick and tired of seeing happy faces. So I figured a change of scenery would do me good. Somehow Jack couldn't see the logic in it. Halloween Town was the last place for tourists and even more so for those looking for a new home. Sighing, Jack replied, Very well, I have the papers at my desk. Let's head on back and I'll get you all set up. Exiting from the Doctor's property, Jack followed Old Man Deer and opened the gate. He gazed up longingly at the looming tower and saw the light pouring forth from the window, a beacon of warmth and hope in a cold and wretched world. Reluctantly, he turned away, letting the door shut into place. As they passed the band, Jack dropped the basket of food onto the tin-plate.