



Ghost Town I Do (Seawolf Beach)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: A Seawolf Beach short story, which takes place between Sugar Plum Serenade and Jasmine Street Blues.

All Colt and Anna wanted was a small wedding on the beach, with close friends and family present. An unrelenting spring storm and a couple of interfering ghosts have other plans for their special day.

Will the bride and groom make it to “for better or for worse?” Is their love enough to get past all the obstacles the universe puts in their path?

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Source Creation Date: August 1, 2025, 4:55 am

The rain came down in sheets, making the world on the other side of the glass gray and distant. Colt stood at the front window of Hart's Vinyl Depot, intensely focused as if maybe a hard stare would change the weather. It did not.

A beach wedding in mid-March had seemed like such a good idea a few months back.

Temps were on a warming trend, and if a brief rain shower popped up they could easily work around that, right?

All they had to do was wait a while and the rain would pass.

Just a few people would be affected, since the wedding party was small and there weren't going to be many guests.

At least, that had been the plan.

He heard Anna approach, even though her step was soft. She joined him to stand at his side, staring much as he did. Until this moment she'd been such an optimistic bride. Would she be a bride at all? Well, yes, but maybe not today.

He put his arm around her shoulder; her blond ponytail brushed his arm as she turned her head to look up at him. "We should've eloped," she said wistfully.

Colt didn't respond. He'd said all along that he didn't care, that he'd be glad to elope any day.

Any time. But Anna wanted a wedding. The white dress, the flowers, the ceremony

that would mark their commitment to one another.

Even though she'd been married before, this was new.

It was fresh. It was a celebration of them , of the future, not the past.

Her mother wanted a real wedding even more than Anna did. Nina Miller was the reason the original small guest list had grown the way it had. Colt would've been happy on the beach with a preacher, a best man, a bridesmaid, and maybe three other people. He wanted to be married but the wedding...

Their simple wedding plan had gotten complicated, and now the storm was ruining even that.

"Maybe it'll clear up before this afternoon." Anna tried to force a hint of cheer into her voice.

"Nope," Colt said. They had hours before the scheduled wedding start time, but he'd checked the weather radar several times and it didn't look as if they had even a slim chance of a clear afternoon.

The location of the ceremony had been Colt's idea, so this was entirely his fault.

When he was on the beach the ghosts that were a constant part of his life left him alone.

Here in this old depot that had been turned into his record store and his home, in the loft upstairs, spirits were everywhere.

He saw them; they knew it. He'd managed to keep his ability a secret for years, but these days so many people knew that secret he might as well tell everyone.

Maybe a new sign. Records, Coffee, and Ghosts . He wasn't ready to go there.

Anna huffed, sighed, and screwed up her nose.

“Are you okay?” Colt asked.

She looked up at him and forced a smile. “Sure.”

“You say that but you're not, not really. I see the truth on your beautiful face. If it's a rainy wedding that's bothering you we can elope. Here, now, go get it done and tell everyone else after the fact. If it's me, if you're not sure...”

She took his face in her hands. “You know it's not you. I love you, so much.”

“I love you.”

Anna glanced out the window again, then turned back to him. “I do have some news. I was going to wait but I can't.”

“Good news or bad?”

“Good. The best, although...” She hesitated and grimaced a little. “The good news is, I'm pregnant.”

He grinned. They'd talked about the possibility of having a kid or two, but when it hadn't happened right away they'd accepted that it might not. “What's the although part.”

His bride-to-be pursed her lips and narrowed her eyes. “The doctor said this is a geriatric pregnancy, because of my advanced age. Geriatric! Thirty-six isn't all that old. Is it? Women do have healthy babies well into their forties.”

“That they do. Thirty-six isn’t old at all.”

She looked out the window again. There it was. Another sigh. “I guess we could postpone the wedding for a week or two.”

The news of a baby on the way decided it for Colt. “No. Absolutely not. We’re getting married today.” He kissed her. “I’m going to get a shower and think. We’ll come up with something.”

Before this day was over, he was going to be married. Rain or no rain.

* * *

Anna watched Colt walk up the stairs to their loft apartment.

Normally she’d follow and shower with him, but she was so distracted, so discombobulated!

Between the excitement of her wedding day, the crappy weather, and the baby growing inside her...

it was too much. Her mind jumped from trying to figure out what to do about the wedding, to cursing the rain, to wondering if they were going to have a daughter or a son.

She turned her back on the window and sat on the old depot bench to think.

Focus! The planned beach wedding was out.

Wasn’t going to happen. Colt didn’t want to delay the wedding and to be honest neither did she, but it was too late to start the planning all over again.

Maybe they could have a few people in her old house, which had recently been declared livable again.

The repairs had taken much longer than she'd thought they would, but it was now done.

Her mom and the new boyfriend were staying there at the moment.

She hoped Harlan was staying in Jack's old room, but that was probably not the case. Ewww.

The guest list was small, so the living room would do. That seemed to be the logical answer.

Now that Colt had been told about the pregnancy, she'd have to tell her mother. Anna had mixed feelings about that. Nina Miller didn't like Colt all that much, but then she didn't understand why he'd lived such a solitary life for the past few years, or why he talked to himself so much.

By the way, Mom, the squirrely boyfriend you don't like all that much has knocked me up. Maybe she'd be so thrilled to become a grandmother that she wouldn't care who the father was. Yeah, right.

The window-rattling knock on the glass door made Anna jump.

The sign posted there made it clear the depot was closed today, and for the following week.

Colt never took a vacation, but he'd insisted.

They would have a honeymoon. She stood, intending to shoo whoever was at the

door away as nicely as she could.

When Anna saw the woman standing there, peering in, she knew no shooing would be necessary.

Olive had become a close friend in a matter of a few months.

Ghost business had brought them together.

Funny how ghost business could do that in record time.

Nate Tucker, Tuck to pretty much everyone, had been the one to convince Olive to stay in Seawolf Beach.

Since the first of the year she and Colt had been on a couple of double dates with Olive and Tuck, and the two women had lunch and/or coffee on a regular basis.

It had been a long time since Anna had called anyone a best friend, but now there was Olive. Olive, who was going to be her maid of honor. If there was a wedding.

She unlocked the door and swung it open.

A damp Olive, wearing a massive yellow raincoat, stepped inside.

Her car was parked at the curb, just a few feet away, and still she'd needed that raincoat.

Earlier in the day, during a brief conversation over the phone, Anna's mom had called this a frog strangler. She wasn't wrong.

Anna closed and locked the door.

Olive shed her raincoat, tossed it onto the back of the bench, and looked directly at Anna. A former ballerina, the dark-haired, dark-eyed Olive was small but undeniably strong. “So, what’s the plan?”

“The plan?”

“I assume a beach wedding is out, so what’s the plan?”

Anna sighed. Her shoulders drooped. “I don’t have any idea. Maybe in Mom’s living room...”

Olive dismissed that option with a wave of her hand and a smile. How rude, to smile at a time like this!

“You do know I’m an event planner,” she said. “Well, I was, and I will be again. It hasn’t been so long that I’ve lost my chops.”

“If you have a better idea than the living room in my old house, you could’ve just called,” Anna said.

Olive blew air between her lips, in a way that revealed her disgust at that idea. “You would’ve brushed me off and told me everything was fine, and that would’ve cost us hours. We don’t have hours to waste. Besides, standing here I can see the worry on your face.”

Of course she was worried! “I can’t think of any option other than Mom’s living room.” Unless she and Colt decided to live there, which they would not, the house would soon be up for sale. They hadn’t yet reached that point. “The living room isn’t huge, but there won’t be many guests so it’ll do.”

“No,” Olive said sharply. “Everyone in town has been so looking forward to this

wedding, it would be wrong to exclude anyone.”

Everyone? “Just a few people have been invited.”

“It was supposed to be on the beach and y’all have been talking about it for weeks. Everyone knows, and they want to be there. Surely you realized there would be wedding crashers.”

Well, no. “What alternative do we have?”

“Tuck said you’re welcome to use The Magnolia, if you don’t mind getting married in a bar.”

That wouldn’t be ideal, but at least they’d be married by the end of the day. “I don’t know. Colt doesn’t care for the ghosts there, he’s told me that much.”

Olive pursed her lips. “I know they’re everywhere, but I swear, I don’t want to know about it!” She laughed as she critically scanned the record store. Her eyes narrowed. “What about here?”

Here?

Anna studied the space. Hart’s Vinyl Depot was massive, there was plenty of room, wall to wall.

But it was crowded with record bins and racks of T-shirts, as well as a couple of old wooden depot benches.

Where would people gather to watch? She and Colt could say their vows by the checkout counter, and wedding guests could stand between the bins. “I don’t see it.”

Olive patted her arm. “That’s ok. I do.”

* * *

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A baby. Colt's mind reeled from the news, though he should've expected it to happen. The woman he loved was going to have his baby. He was thrilled. He was terrified. But mostly he was thrilled.

He walked down the stairs from the loft apartment to the main floor.

After going upstairs he'd called his best man, Seawolf Beach Police Chief Joseph Maxwell, Mac to his friends, who'd suggested they have the wedding at The Magnolia.

Colt was pretty sure Anna didn't want to get married under a neon beer sign, and the ghosts in that place...

There were too many sad spirits in the bar, too much negativity no one but Colt felt. He'd rejected that suggestion, at least for now. If nothing else panned out, maybe.

After talking to Mac he'd taken a long shower, hoping the spray of hot water would help his brain function. It had not. At one point Anna had briefly popped in. She'd looked as if she had something to say, but she'd taken one look at him and backed out of the room with an uncertain, "Later."

Maybe this was what she'd come up to tell him about.

There was unexpected activity in the record store.

Olive stood in the middle of the space directing the employees who should be enjoying a day off.

High schoolers Benny and Christopher carefully boxed up records.

Helen, approaching elderly but still full of energy, folded t-shirts and packed them in cardboard boxes.

If he didn't own the property himself, he'd think he was being evicted.

The ghosts were bemused by the activity.

The spirit of a young man who was always looking around as if he'd lost something watched Helen intensely.

A new spirit, that of a young woman who'd been coming and going for the past month, hovered over an unsuspecting Olive.

The ghosts who usually kept their distance had come out of the woodwork, literally, to get a closer look.

Gerald, dour as always, stood alone, a distance from the others, and remained silent.

Some days Colt missed Maude. She'd been an annoying, interfering, chatty old lady ghost, but there had been no darkness in her. She'd livened up the place, during her time here. It was evident Gerald missed her, too, even if he didn't say a word.

Anna caught Colt's eye and scurried forward to meet him at the foot of the stairs.

"I was going to ask you about all this, but Olive just... she just got busy. She made phone calls, she issued orders, and in less than half an hour this was happening."

Olive seemed to have gotten bossier since she'd hooked up with Tuck...

“We’re getting married here ,” he said.

“Is that okay?”

Anna waited for an answer. Was it okay? He’d really wanted to get married in a place where there were no ghosts looking over his shoulder, where he was like everyone else, where he didn’t have to hide anything.

The beach would be perfect, but the weather made that impossible.

At least here he knew the spirits. Gerald and the others would simply be additional guests.

It wasn’t like anyone but him would see them.

“I don’t care if we get married in the middle of the street in the middle of a downpour. All I care about is that at the end of the day you’re my wife.”

Her smile told him that was what she wanted, too.

Olive marched toward them, a determined expression on her face.

“We’ve had to change the time of the ceremony from two to four.

There’s no way I can get everything done before then.

The volunteer fire department and the First Baptist Church prayer tree is getting the word out.

” She looked at Colt. This sweet, normal woman he knew pretty well had turned into a determined general.

“Tuck will be here shortly to pick you up. You’re going to our house.

You’re to be back here at three-thirty, not a minute before. ”

Colt grumbled. His wedding and his business had been taken over. “I’m just supposed to sit at your house with Tuck and wait ?”

Olive gave him a sharp nod of her head. “Yes. If you’re bored you two can work on the repairs at the blue house. Don’t you have a new tenant moving in at the end of the month?”

“I do.”

“There’s plenty to do, but no painting! I won’t have Anna’s groom stand here with paint under his fingernails. A bit of handyman work will keep you occupied until it’s time to head back here. Just... no painting.”

The little woman was demanding, definitely bossy. He knew better than to accuse her of either. She and Tuck would be getting married soon, he assumed. Would she plan her own wedding with the same intensity?

Probably.

“My suit is upstairs.”

“Take it with you,” Olive raised one hand, a hand with a bossy finger extended. “No, put it in the back room. You can change there without disturbing Anna while she gets ready, and we won’t have to worry about keeping it out of the rain.”

Olive turned to the bride. “Is your wedding dress at your mom’s?”

“No. It’s upstairs.”

“That works,” Olive said. “Anna, Mac is going to pick you up in a few minutes and take you to your mom’s house. I’ve met your mom. Keep her there and occupied, otherwise she’ll decide to help and this will never get done. You’re to be back here between three and three-fifteen.”

Olive had a plan for everything. She presented him and Anna each with an umbrella. Where the hell had they come from? Didn’t matter. Their rides — their babysitters — were on the way; the rain would not be an impediment.

Several ghosts had been drawn to Olive’s high energy. Even Gerald. He peered over her shoulder and smiled, a wide smile no one but Colt could see.

* * *

Anna’s childhood home was different in many ways, but at the same time it was still home. The shape of the living room hadn’t changed, the floor plan was as it had always been.

After the fire all the furniture had been dumped.

If it hadn’t been singed or burnt to ash, it smelled of smoke.

Very little had survived, but the house wasn’t bare.

A few pieces had been replaced. Not everything, there was no need to fill the place with furnishings, but the real estate agent wanted to place to look homey, lived in, and that made it possible for her mother to stay here when she visited, until the place was officially on the market.

If the house ever made it onto the market at all. Nina Miller had been trying to convince her daughter to live here. With or without Colt.

Nina had never been sure that a record store owner who talked to himself more than most was good enough for her daughter.

If she could tell her mom that Colt didn't talk to himself he talked to the ghosts he saw all the time, would that make things better or worse?

Mac knew, though he didn't quite accept what he'd been told.

Tuck and Olive were aware of the ghosts Colt saw and spoke to.

Her mother would just be one more, but she didn't want to share the news without Colt's permission. It was his secret to tell.

Besides, one big announcement at a time...

Nina kept peering out the window, as if she thought a good stare might make the rain let up.

Her fella, Harlan, had settled himself into a new recliner with a book about some baseball player Anna had never heard of.

The silence was so deep Anna could hear the clock — a new clock that looked very much like the old one — ticking away. Slowly. Too slowly.

The silence was too much, it was too deep and full. She couldn't help herself. "I have news." One thing at a time, right?

Nina Miller spun away from the window. "Have you decided to call off the wedding?"

You have to admit, this weather does seem like a message from the universe.” Was that hope in her mother’s voice? Yes, yes it was.

“No, I’m not calling off the wedding. I’m... pregnant.”

Nina glared at her daughter. She went pale for a moment, then a bloom of color rushed into her face, and then, the smile. A big, wide, happy smile as the news sunk in. “I’m going to be a grandmother?”

Anna nodded.

Oh, the expressions that crossed Nina’s face! Maybe this would be the end of her reservations about Colt. More than once she’d said Colt was squirrely, but giving her a grandchild could mean all was forgiven. Eventually.

“Harlan, what would you think about moving here, to Seawolf Beach? If I have a grandbaby I have to be nearby to help out. There’s just no question. I must be here.”

It was hard to ruffle Harlan’s feathers. Anna liked that about him. “Well if there’s no question, that answers it. I can live anywhere.” He looked at Nina with love. “If you’re here that’s where I’ll be.”

Anna hadn’t wanted to like Harlan, but she did. Unlike her Mom’s first Florida boyfriend. “What about Aunt Sally?”

Nina lifted one hand and gave a dismissive wave.

“Sally will be fine. She’s been talking about moving closer to Emily since Christmas.

She misses the kids, she misses her daughter.

I understand both, all too well. She was refusing to leave her home out of sheer stubbornness, but she's seen the error of her ways.

"She glanced at Harlan. "Besides, we tried, but Sally and I don't live together well.

I love my sister, but we're both set in our ways and we butt heads far too often.

I'd been wondering how long it would last, but this settles it. "

Anna's mom drove her crazy at times, but she had to admit, it would be nice to have her close after the baby came. And before. "I have so many questions. Do you know, the doctor said this is a geriatric pregnancy?"

Nina pursed her lips. "How dare he?"

Now, that was the response she'd been looking for...

* * *

Olive Carson must be a witch, or a magician. She was definitely some kind of miracle worker. Colt stood just inside the depot front entrance studying the sight before him in awe.

Tuck, already properly dressed in a gray suit, circled around and went straight to Olive. He knew, everyone knew, she'd have jobs lined up for him.

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Colt hardly recognized Hart's Vinyl Depot.

If Olive had had the time to paint the green walls a more acceptable color, which she surely would've done given the chance, the space would've been entirely unrecognizable.

An arch that looked as if it might've come out of someone's formal garden had been placed in front of the checkout.

Gauzy white fabric and silk flowers in pale colors disguised the plain counter.

Rows of folding chairs had been placed on either side of the space that had been cleared earlier in the day, leaving an actual aisle.

Up against one wall was the small cake they'd ordered weeks ago, as well as a number of bakery boxes with who knew what in them.

The wedding wasn't set to start for half an hour, but several guests already milled about. Only a few of them were damp from making the trek in the rain. A coat tree near the front door held several raincoats. Two umbrella bins — he had no idea where they'd come from — were already half full.

Colt's reservations melted away. He felt himself let go of the stress he'd been carrying all day. Why had he wasted time worrying about the where? This wasn't the beach he loved, and there were a few familiar ghosts hanging around, but all in all, it was perfect. He was getting married. Today.

Perfect didn't last. He should know that. His cell rang. He should've silenced it, but he hadn't.

The minister from his mother's old church had agreed to perform the ceremony.

Judd Simms was long retired, but Colt had decided his mother would approve and Anna had been a quick and easy yes to the suggestion.

A simple phone call took care of that plan.

The old guy's driveway had been washed out, there was a tree down across his road, and at eighty years old he wasn't about to hike, swim, or whatever it took to get to downtown Seawolf Beach.

Judd sounded truly sorry, and suggested a delay of a week, or maybe two.

Olive had made the place look great, but there was no minister. Colt looked toward the stairs. Anna was up there, ready to get married, ready to have a baby, ready to take him for better or for worse. He didn't want to think that today's problems were a message from above, but what if they were?

There wasn't much time to take care of this newest problem. Wasn't solving problems what best men were for? Colt made his way to the far side of the room and snagged Mac. For this special day the big guy wore a suit instead of his Police Chief uniform. "Know any preachers?"

"A few," Mac answered. "Why?"

"Judd is stranded. I need someone fast."

The news didn't seem to alarm Mac at all. He remained cool, as always. "What about

Tuck?” He pointed to the front of the room.

“Tuck isn’t...”

Mac shook his head. “People want to get married at The Magnolia all the time, believe it or not, so a few years back he got one of those online ordinations from some ministry of whatever. I can never remember the name. The short news is, he’s legal. I’ll tell him what’s going on.”

He shouldn’t be surprised. Married. By Tuck. In the depot. Man plans, God laughs...

Colt told himself again it didn’t matter who performed the ceremony or where it took place, as long as he could call Anna his wife.

He wanted to see her now, this very minute, to tell her about the change in the ceremony, but Olive wouldn’t allow him to go upstairs.

She directed him to the back room where he’d stashed his suit earlier in the day, and said she’d tell Anna what was going on.

He’d have to make do with the dingy space, which thanks to the reorganization of the front half of the depot was more cluttered than usual. Boxes, bins, t-shirt racks.

And ghosts. He was accustomed to seeing the spirits here, in his space — and theirs. But this afternoon there were more than a few unfamiliar ghosts present, and the regulars seemed agitated. Gerald in particular was wound up, brighter than usual, not his usual gray, sour self.

He couldn’t say when Gerald had lived. His ratty gray suit could’ve been from the mid 19th century to the 1930s. He was clean-shaven, needed a haircut, and had more than his share of wrinkles even though in other ways he didn’t appear to be all that

old. Those were wrinkles of pain and hardship.

Gerald didn't speak; he rarely made a noise.

Colt did what he did best. He ignored them all and went about his business. He donned the new suit, combed his hair, stepped into shiny shoes. When he turned around Gerald stood too close, watching, waiting for something.

"I never thought this day would come," Colt said, his eyes on the sad spirit. "After Lizzie died..." He didn't have to say more. He had no secrets, not from them. "Maude saw it before I did, she knew I'd find love again."

A ghostly Gerald glanced away and shrugged his shoulders.

"What about you?" Colt asked. "Is it love that keeps you here?" Love, fear, hate, unfinished business.

Gerald looked Colt in the eye for one long second, then he vanished in a flash. Odd. Normally the old fella just turned his back and rambled away, fading with every step.

Ready to be married, Colt returned to the public area of the depot. Rain or not, more guests had arrived. Some were soggy; others had been well-shielded from the downpour. All of them were dressed to the nines, here to help the bride and groom celebrate.

He lied to all of them. Well, almost all. Very few people knew what he could do. They thought he was odd, that he talked to himself, that he was no better than a weird hermit. He had been, until Anna had saved him from himself.

Olive, pretty in her blue bridesmaid's dress and her dark hair piled atop her head, greeted newcomers and directed them to their seats.

Tuck helped, until she shooed him away, pointing to his place at the altar.

Colt's soon-to-be mother-in-law and her guy sat in the back row, for now.

Others milled about, sat, talked, looked at him and smiled.

They all seemed happy to be here. They cared, more than he'd imagined they would.

He didn't often think of himself as a lucky man, but today he felt like the luckiest man alive.

At the appropriate time Olive nodded to Benny, who dropped the record player needle onto a classical album appropriate for the bride's mother to begin her walk down the aisle.

That was the extent of family in attendance.

Anna's cousin and her family hadn't been able to make the trip thanks to a virus that was making its way through their kids. And them.

Colt didn't have anyone other than a handful of cousins he hadn't talked to in a while. He hadn't even told them he was getting married, but now he wondered if he should've. Family was important. So were friends.

He was about to have family again, thanks to Anna, the woman who'd claimed him heart, body, and soul.

The new boyfriend, Florida Man, escorted Nina to the front row. She glared at Colt a little as she took her seat, but then her expression softened. That was unexpected. She didn't think he was good enough for her daughter.

He'd spend a lifetime proving her wrong.

Best man Mac walked Maid of Honor Olive to the checkout desk, which was now kind of an altar where Tuck stood, looking not at all nervous.

How could he smile so easily? Colt fidgeted a little, anxious to get this done, ready for the ceremony to be over.

He wanted to be married, but this wedding had gotten out of hand.

The classical music stopped, and Benny smoothly replaced the album with another.

Anna, gorgeous as ever in a frothy white wedding gown, appeared at the top of the stairs as their song began.

"It Had To Be You," sung flawlessly by Frank Sinatra, filled the room as his bride walked slowly down the stairs.

Maude would approve.

Everyone else in the place faded away, everyone but Anna.

Rain wouldn't stop this. Her mother's glares wouldn't slow him down.

They didn't need the beach or his mother's minister.

So what if a few ghosts watched. Secrets?

Everyone had them. Anna knew who he was and what he could do, and she loved him anyway.

When Anna reached the altar she handed her bouquet to Olive, and then she reached for him. Colt smiled as he took her hands in his. While it stormed outside, all was right in his world.

Tuck's grin remained wide as he performed the simple ceremony without a hitch, and finally declared Colt and Anna husband and wife.

The newly married couple kissed and turned to face the crowd.

The guests all stood. Their smiles were real.

They'd put on their Sunday best and braved the storm to see this wedding happen.

Before him stood a nice, well-dressed crowd — some damp, others dry — made up of family and friends, new and old. The living and the dead.

Colt's eyes were drawn to the spirit who stood alone at the back of the room. Gerald seemed more solid than usual. His suit fit a bit better. Maybe there were fewer wrinkles on his slightly-less-haggard face.

The ghost took a deep breath...

Shit. The last time Gerald had made a sound it had been a scream that shook the walls and rattled the windows.

That's not what happened this time.

Gerald was a tenor, a very good one. He sang "Ave Maria" flawlessly, as if he were on stage in a 19th century opera house, as if he were performing for a rapt audience. Too bad only Colt could hear.

But...

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Heads turned toward Gerald; there were a few audible gasps.

Nina placed a hand over her heart. A couple of women dropped back into their chairs as if their legs had given out from under them.

The rain stopped; a sliver of sun broke through the clouds, and then other spirits began to appear, one after another.

Some flickered in and out, came and went in a matter of seconds.

Others remained a minute, maybe two. The visiting ghosts came and went, a few as solid as the living guests, others misty, as if they fought to be here.

Maude appeared, standing close by a man who looked very much like Tuck. Anna's brother and father stood against one wall, at peace with one another at last.

Nina Miller sat down hard, then stood again. "Jack? Donnie? How is this..."

Colt's own parents appeared, together, not far from Maude and her Phillip.

Tuck gasped. "Is that my... grandmother? My grandfather ? Wow. He does look like me."

Gerald's voice filled the room not just with music but with magic. Magic that allowed more than one person present to see not just him but their own lost loved ones, come to Colt's wedding to wish him well, to celebrate, and to get a glimpse of those they'd left behind.

Mac uttered a curse word that had a few disapproving heads turning in his direction.

Colt turned his head to see the ghost of a beautiful, dark-haired woman looking up at Mac, reaching toward him with a ghostly hand. Mac went completely white. The unshakeable man was shaken.

The other ghostly visitors were silent, but this one whispered, "Find our girl, Joe. Find her. She needs..." Before that sentence was finished, the ghost who'd appeared to Mac vanished.

Mac swiped at the empty space where the spirit had been for a few seconds, and said, "She needs what ? Dammit, Kylie! Where is she?"

Anna grabbed Colt's hand and squeezed hard. "Holy cow, is this what it's like all the time?"

He looked down at her. "Kinda, but usually not so much all at once."

Everyone in the place saw a ghost, a lost loved one, a friend, lover, parent, spouse. You'd think they might move toward the spirits, but they did not. Shock ruled. They gasped, whispered, and listened to Gerald sing with the voice of an angel.

As the last of the ghosts began to fade away many of the wedding guests turned their attention to Colt, not in judgement but with surprise and maybe even a new understanding.

In a matter of seconds they knew his secret.

They all knew. They understood why he stayed close to home and talked to people who weren't there. Ghosts. The lost ones. The trapped.

"Ave Maria" came to an end, and on the final notes of the song the few ghosts who

remained, including Gerald, faded away. Some of them would be back, he assumed, but maybe Gerald had moved on at last. Time would tell.

He didn't realize he'd been squeezing his bride's hand too hard until she leaned into him and whispered, "I love holding your hand, but maybe not so tight."

He looked down at her as he loosened his grip. "Sorry. You saw..."

"Yes."

He knew the answer, and still he asked, "Everyone saw?"

"I'm pretty sure they did."

Behind them and slightly to the side, Mac whispered, "You were telling the truth."

His secret was out. There was no longer any reason to hide his ability.

Maybe his new mother-in-law would stop calling him squirrely.

Maybe. Having his gift, or curse, public knowledge would come with its own challenges.

He had no desire to be the town ghost whisperer.

But with the word out, with his secret let loose, he felt a new sense of release. Of freedom.

Maybe he could make this work. As if he had a choice.

Somehow Olive had managed to wrangle up enough cake for everyone, even though the wedding and the guest list had grown in a matter of hours.

The small fancy cake they'd ordered was surrounded by cupcakes with fluffy white icing, as well as cinnamon rolls from the good bakery.

The rain had stopped, the March sun shone down on a wet street beyond the front windows of Hart's Vinyl Depot.

Colt was the center of attention. People had stared at him before, but not so many at once, and not quite so hard.

At the moment, not a single ghost whispered in his ear.

They'd be back, sooner rather than later, but for now he was nothing more than a groom, a soon-to-be father, and a friend.

His mother-in-law raised her hand. "I have questions!"

Of course she did. Judging by the way the crowd nodded their heads in agreement, she wasn't the only one. Colt smiled as he lifted the hand that still grasped Anna's. "There will be time for questions later. First, cake for everyone!"

To his surprise, Maude appeared before him once more. This time she was visible to him alone. She smiled, then reached up and touched his cheek. He felt it, like a gentle breeze, as she whispered,

"I told you so..."

* * *

If you missed Colt and Anna's story, you can find it in *Ghost Town Boogie* .

Olive and Tuck find Christmas and each other in *Sugar Plum Serenade* .

Coming soon, Mac's story, Jasmine Street Blues .