

DUCK SOUP PRODUCTIONS



HALLOWEEN BAG

Click nose to open.

The Choice is yours,
poor, pathetic human...



TRICK

or

TREAT

Don't just sit there like a gargoyle, click on one of the pumpkins!

You chose
"TRICK"



A Spiritual
Apparition



King Tut's
Coffin

Pick a trick and
make it snappy!

You chose
“TREAT”



“The Pale Boy”

a Spooky Story



Vintage Halloween
Images

Choose a treat and be smart about it,
you ungrateful wretch!

The Pale Boy



Click on the arrows
to turn the page.



*At twelve o'clock on Halloween
Many strange things can be seen*
— Post Card Verse, cir. 1930

For three years running I could not catch him. By the thirtieth I would have the cardboard gravestones spread across the yard, the cardboard skeleton dangling by its neck from a branch of the old maple, and that night I would carve the pumpkins, alone in my kitchen, under the harsh overheads, with Lon Chaney Jr. on the television set, or Boris, or Bela, because they pleased me, and set the mood for the faces that appeared, cut by groove, in the hard smooth skin: bats and ghouls, witches carved with pumpkinskin hair carefully shredded round the crown, with ears hinged from the sides, chiaroscuro highlights veined outward round the shell: fangs, half-moons, saucer eyes. By midnight I would have dumped four or five sodden

newspapers full of pumpkin guts onto the compost heap, and a half dozen new faces would be sitting round my kitchen table, glowing from within, ready for their debut. Then a nightcap; and I would blow them out. By nine-thirty the next morning, they would be sitting along my front step, facing the road, mocking the cars that passed. There were not many of those, nor many Trick-or-Treaters at night; but that was all right. If anyone did chance to come by, at least they would know that I had the Spirit.

The first time that he came, I saw only the consequences. That afternoon I fired up my father's old Studebaker, and went into town to buy the candy; when I returned, my front yard was a mess of shattered pumpkin shells, crushed wax, torn and sodden cardboard. Someone had ripped the skeleton down from the tree and urinated on it; the pumpkins, every one, had been smashed; or so I thought. It was only in cleaning up the mess that I realized one of them must have been taken.

It spoiled the holiday; it spoiled my month. I begged two more pumpkins from my neighbor down the road, and carved them quickly, sulk-

ing like a child, doing a poor job of it, just to have something. No one came by; no one called. I was left with three bags of Smarties to eat by myself. I did not even feel in the mood to watch *Dracula's Daughter*.

For a time I determined to give it up. There was no action that I could take or not take that was not in some measure a response to the vandalism, and so a reward. I would have to do what I felt like doing, and for me, that first year, the fun had been taken out of Halloween. But when a twelvemonth had passed, and the leaves began to turn, I remembered the pleasure of being five years old, of throwing a sheet over one's head, and traveling in the night from house to lighted house, with only your older brother to guide you, no adults; and I remembered the quiet roads freshly tarred, blacker than the night sky, and the bare trees crawling by overhead, the pumpkin faces burning occasionally in the yards and windows. I was far too old to ever again experience that precise pleasure: but I could help set the stage for others.

That year, I actually heard him. It was a



melancholy day of pale sunlight and drifting leaves; I had carved the pumpkins just as usual and set them out with new wooden grave markers (designed to survive vandalism: bearing awful punning memorials gleaned from Ripley's Believe it or Not: *Here Lies the Body of Edward Hyde, We Laid Him Here Because He Died*, that sort of thing); and remembering the year before I determined to hang around and keep an eye on things. Though never much given to outdoor work, I brought a rake down from the barn and started in lackadaisically. I had cleared the front and side yards and had started out back when a sound like distant huffing and sighing drifted around the house. Three sharp exhalations of breath, like the snorting of a wild horse, as if someone had come running a long way: then the sound of stamping feet in long grass. As I turned a gust of wind came from across the road and caught me head on; I dropped the rake and ran full speed into the front. The trees there were chattering. They waved their bare branches above me and pointed in every direction. At their feet the lawn was strewn with the leaves I had cleaned up

moments before; a few still swirling in a circular pattern over the ground, as if caught up in the slightest of cyclones. There was crushed pumpkinshell everywhere, a few remnants of gouged pumpkin faces, broken candles tossed about, pumpkin pulp mashed into the screen of my front door. The "grave markers" were all lying flat. One of them had been smeared with excrement.

My first thought was *why*, and that question filled me with dismay. It wasn't until later, cleaning it up for the second year in a row, that I asked *how*, and that question helped. There was one missing pumpkin, then as before; there would have to have been a lot of them, to have caused that much destruction, so quickly, but such a crowd of kids would have made more noise, and could never have gotten away without a trace. Where would they have come from? Where would they have gone? Across the fields? To what neighborhood? My nearest neighbors more than a mile distant; the one brother had a crooked arm, the other hated my family for some ancient reason. They had pranked fairly seriously in their youth, but



were long past the age of pranks, now. They could have managed it; but not with such speed.

This is someone with the Spirit in them, I thought. This is someone I have to see.

And so I set out the single pumpkin that I had held in reserve, and the following year carved more pumpkins than ever, starting three days in advance, sculpting without so much care, but with good designs: for this was the lure. I did not want to put much effort into something meant to be destroyed; still, the bait had to be good or it would never be taken. With *Mad Love* playing on my television screen, I carved Grand Guignol faces, twisted in pain. The next day I drove the Studebaker to market, and returned with more pumpkins rolling in the back. To *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* I carved howling faces and gaunt, pathetic ones; and on the thirtieth I went back for another load. When I had finished, my yard looked like a Passion Play mounted by goblins: more than thirty heads lining my walkway, perched upon the top step, skulking among the headstones, in the shrubs. Their pop-eyed faces carried an

invitation; they kept watch over the road, the fields and the distant woods. Some had candles; but a third of them were filled with candy, Smarties and peanut butter cups and apples and Hershey bars (with almonds); the bait, if you will, or a bribe; it doesn't matter which. By then I had nearly succeeded in making myself sick of the holiday. Nearly: because I knew just enough to wonder about what was to come, and that was enough to keep the Spirit alive.

All Hallows Eve: I felt that the morning would be safe, and so slept in, fixed a big breakfast of French toast and bacon, then logged on and worked for an hour with the company in New York. Noontime still felt early, but I did not want to take any chances. Both of the attacks had come during full daylight. I opened my front door perhaps a quarter of the way, and set up a chair there in the shadows of the house, well out of sight. The book that I had chosen sat unopened in my lap. I waited.

There was no doubt that it would happen again: but when it happened so suddenly, after hours of the most perfect calm, I started up in



the chair and nearly spoiled it. One moment I was half dozing, the yard was still and empty but for the rows of silent pumpkinheads and the October breeze whispering through their noses and mouths; the next, without any sort of approaching, warning sound, a naked boy was standing on the walk, looking as if he did not know where to begin, but could not wait to start.

His skin was the color of old bones, covered from head to toe in dirt and filth, fingersmears and palmprints, like an Indian painted for war. His head was crowned with curls of dirty blonde. He was not more than seven years old, and wore an expression common to any boy of that age, made more profound by simple wildness. At my sudden move he snapped into a modified crouch; but seeing nothing human or moving inside the house, or in the yard, he raised himself again and set about poking the nearest pumpkinhead with his toe.

His eyes were pale blue. There was something odd about his mouth. He seized the nearest pumpkinhead, raised and dashed it to the stones, and seemed surprised when a wave of

candy splashed out across his feet. He looked 'round the yard for the first time. The candy meant nothing to him. His stomach muscles constricted, and he made the snorting sound again, whether in curiosity or indignance I could not tell. His eyes fell upon another pumpkin, and he immediately stomped it to death; then he seemed to grow confused. Which one to take, the rest to destroy? He could not seem to make up his mind.

He crouched again, cradling the cat-face of still another pumpkin almost lovingly between his two hands. This seemed the best time. He was not more than ten feet from where I sat, but his mind was turned away; what now? I thought.

There was a broom propped against the wall, near to my right side; now I feared to use it. I had hoped that I would recognize the vandals; easier to punish them if I knew their parents, their genesis, if I could say to myself and to everyone that they should know better than to wreck someone else's hard work. I could not put a name to this boy. Yet he was familiar to me, familiar as twilight and gorse-bush, a half-

forgotten song whispered in minor key.

As I rose to the door, the wind began palpably to climb, to bend and curve about the boy's ankles. Dead leaves were siphoned into the updraft, circling up the length of him and over into a degenerate eddy that deposited them some yards distant. I pressed my lips to the screen. "Boy," I said.

His head snapped back and for the smallest moment he pinned me in a spotlight gaze; then he was gone. I pushed through the door, following his wake into the underbrush across the road, then up and through facecutting branches to the field on the far side. At first I thought he had vanished; then a boyshape leapt with gazelle grace at the distant edge of tall grass, against the orange sky. His passing had left a narrow, slowly vanishing path through the unnown grass. I ran on.

At the bordering woods I heard the violent thrashing and snapping of someone running carelessly up ahead, bare feet cracking pine boughs, and the leaves billowing up, whispering behind. He led me through a thick barrier of trees and down into a rocky, scrubby patch of

country populated only by brambles and stinkweed, thistles and Queen Anne Lace. I no longer knew if I was still on my own land.

At some point I realized that I had been running for some time without hearing or seeing anything; that I had not only lost the boy but the road back, myself, chasing only — what? — something in my own head.

The thief, whoever he was, had long gone, probably cut across the fields to a neighboring farm. Now with night coming on and no knowledge of how far I had gone, I paused in the woods, feeling a fool. I was in no great danger; in any direction but north I was bound to strike road before very long. I got my bearings on the setting sun, and began to follow it towards home.

By then the strangeness had been forgotten: all that mattered was that I'd had my face-off with the pumpkin smasher, and had got the worst of it; for all I knew, the boy had already doubled back and was finishing the job he had started in my yard. Why not? I would have done the same.

Not far from where I thought home should



be, I caught the smell of distant smoke. Grey fumes were rising up ahead, out of a grass-covered lump of earth. An alderwood curled its branches through fingers of smoke; as I came round its base, I saw a thick cluster of weeds draped unconvincingly over the mouth of a black hole.

It looked like the den of an animal; it was not much bigger than that. But there was a yellow fire burning inside, and the smell of roasted meat. The opening was not big enough for me to walk through. I could have crawled in, on all fours. Instead, I sat on the damp grass, and slid through feet first.

The smoke in there was so thick that my eyes filled with tears. Nothing moved. The boy was squatting before the fire, his back to me, edgelit orange and green and brown. He was blackening something in the flame. In front of him and on both sides the earth had been cleared round the roots of the tree, forming uneven tiers of dirt, shelves set into the walls of the cave.

They were lined with heads. At first, in the firelight and shadow, I thought them all pumpkin-faces, ancient orange, their mouths caved

in, teeth curling with rot, grinning out of decayed mirth. I recognized some that I had carved years before. Then I could not be sure. Some seemed fresher than others. Some had beaks. Some had darkly matted fur. Flies milled at the corners of their glistening, pooldark eyes.

The boy rose and turned. Two heads fell out of his hands. They hit the dirt with a mushy thud and rolled towards me with candleflame lapping round the eye sockets. His eyes glittered wide and white at the sight of me: he let out a wild sound like a wail and a laugh and a roar and a growl: “Haaaaaaah!,” and I saw then that his teeth had been sharpened to points.

He attacked with his mouth and all four limbs, finger and toenails, shrieking birdcries so that struggling under him I had the illusive feeling of black wings beating all around me. His mouth seemed to engulf the rest of his head. Pumpkin heads rolled between my legs. I flipped onto my stomach; still the boy snapped sharklike at my fingers, wrists, at the back of my neck, at my ankles.



Then I was out in the open. There was still smoke in my face. The sun had nearly set. I followed it across the length of a yellow field, and found the Studebaker somehow, parked against the indistinct bulk of the barn. My fingers would not turn the key; blood leaked out of them onto the seats and carpeting. Only by gripping between my thumb and hand could I start the car.

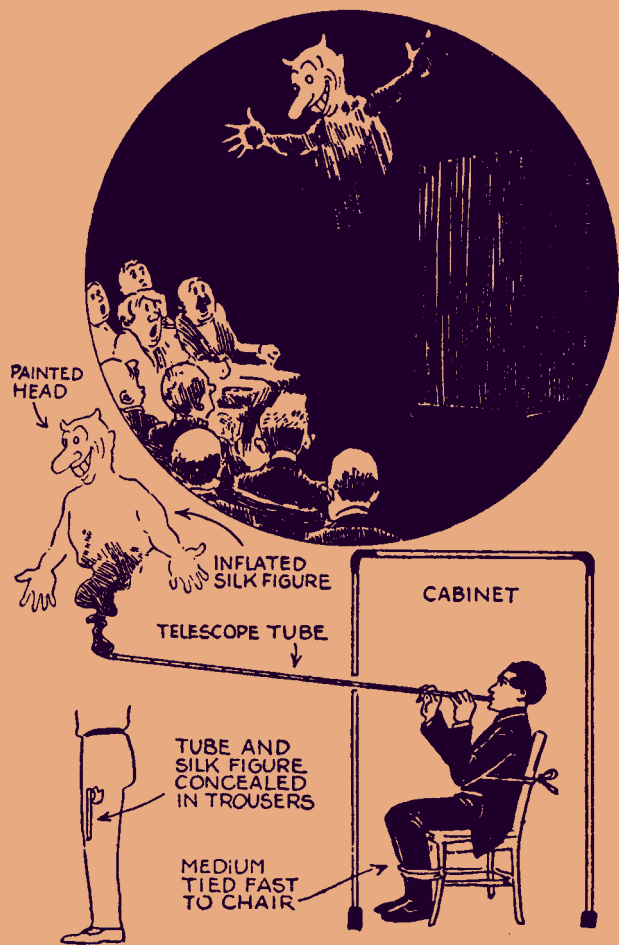
I told the doctor that I had been attacked by a wild dog. That was a mistake. It meant rabies shots, and a fuss with the sheriff's department that I'd wanted to avoid. What good would come of it? They would find nothing. That was the way of the season.

I still carve pumpkins in the solstice; but not so many. Nor do I ever put them out: instead, they sit on my windowsills and stare glowing into the Halloween night. From time to time I see the boy's face pressed against the glass, teeth bared like some awful Ubangi. I have the marks on my fingers and ankles to show that he is not a dream.



Good-bye

A Spiritual Apparition



Those who haven't attended a seance of a spiritual mystic medium should, whether believers or otherwise. It is well to know the things that are going on, if only from standard of scientific interest. It is not the writer's intention to ridicule spiritualism from a religious nor a scientific standpoint; nor is it his desire to state that all of the many phenomenal things that have been seen by learned men have been produced by the aid of trickery. It is not probable, however, if there is an existence after death, that the "astral force," which leaves the natural lifeless substance behind it, has any power of communication with this natural sphere.

In simpler words, the writer does not think it possible for any medium to be capable of bringing to earth the spirit of any of those in the tombs of

Click on the arrow
to turn the page.



the past, for an accepted fee.

The effect herewith described is one employed by a present-day European medium. He has attained phenomenal reputation, both here and abroad, through his successful seances, where ectoplasm is produced as frequently as dessert follows the average American meal. In a room with no light predominating, and atmosphere that makes one feel as if surrounded by the walls of a mausoleum, this clever so-called demonstrator of the occult exhibits his phenomenal power. Tightly bound to a chair, he quickly enters a trance, which, his lecturer explains, associates him with the spirit world. In this position he is placed in his cabinet, the curtains of which are closed, and hymns are sung in a low tone to the harmony of an old-fashioned foot-power organ.

Slowly, there seems to enter a glow of uncanny light, forming its materialization three or four feet away from the cabinet, and but a few feet in front of the sitters. The substance slowly becomes larger and the glow more prominent. In a short space of time the vapor-like form assumes the likeness of a child; and there, in the belief of the majority present, is the ghost of a baby, its slender infant fingers and outstretched arms moving about slowly and mystically as the figure floats about the room.

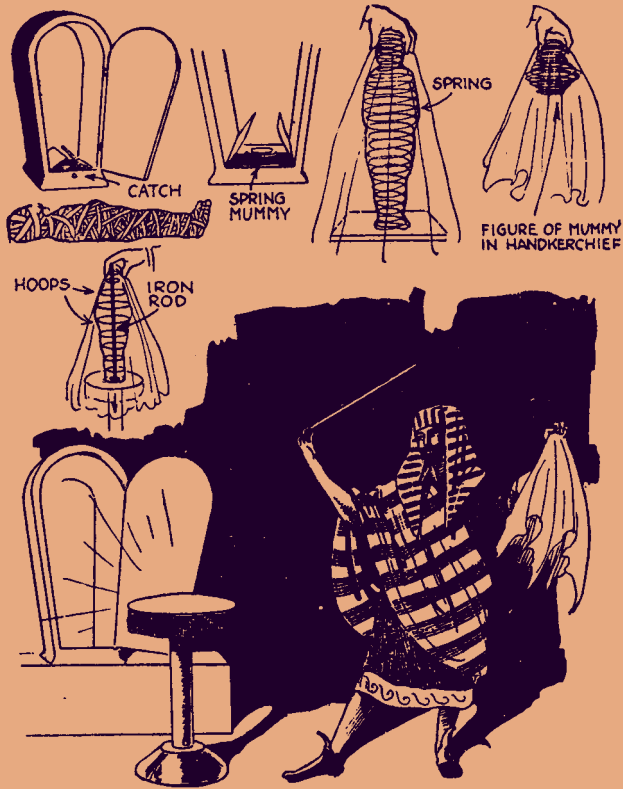
Little does one know, however, that the medium had beforehand prepared himself with a long telescope-fashioned tube, which had been hidden in his trouser leg. To the end of this collapsible contrivance was attached a cup arrangement which held a silk figure, of balloon fashion, air-tight structure. The miracle man in the cabinet had but to open the tube to its full extent, and by blowing into the end of it slowly inflated the spirit baby. By moving this rod about the ghost-child to all appearances floated over the heads of the believers. The mystic withdrew this substance of apparent ectoplasm back into the cabinet and re-concealed it in his trouser leg.

— *from Dunninger's Complete Encyclopedia of Magic*



Good-bye

King Tut's Coffin



The uncanny, creepy stories from the land of ancient Egypt is reflected in this unique trick.

The magician exhibits a small coffin or sarcophagus about two feet high. This has been painted in stone-like fashion, with many striking Egyptian hieroglyphics, colored in high lights, upon its surface. The conjurer relates some interesting story or lecture, of a nature such as his fancy might dictate, and then proceeds to present the trick.

As the small mummy is removed from the coffin, the cover of the box is immediately closed. The sarcophagus, in an upright position, is placed upon a small, undraped side-stand, standing innocently at one side, upon the magician's platform. The bandaged figure of King Tut is covered with a large silk handkerchief. The magician, holding the figure by the head, proceeds to stand it erect upon another

Click on the arrow
to turn the page.



undraped side-stand. An unusual effect now takes place. A pistol shot is fired, to startle the audience. The handkerchief is immediately rolled into a small ball and tossed aside. The mummy has apparently disappeared. The magician walks across the stage to the coffin, and upon opening the cover of the box the mummy is discovered, completely filling the casket which a moment previous had been entirely unoccupied.

Two mummies, similar in appearance, are necessary. They are, however, different in construction. The one is composed of a cloth figure, which has been drawn over a series of rings, forming its ribs. The figure will therefore fall quite flat of its own accord unless held in an upright position. It is held from collapsing by a steel rod which runs up inside the figure to its complete length.

This figure is the one originally sown. The handkerchief which covers the figure is ordinary, but sufficiently large to completely conceal the mummy mummy from view.

In the act of placing “King Tut” upon the table, the steel rod is permitted to slide secretly from the inside of the doll and into the table leg. The figure can no be easily crushed within the folds of the handkerchief. The figure that reappears in the coffin is the duplicate dummy. This has a spiral spring likewise

covered with the outer cloth. The spring reaches from the head to the foot. The figure may be pressed perfectly flat, but will jump up again and stand erect of its own accord when pressure is released. This mummy has been concealed in the foot of the sarcophagus beforehand. Occupying but an inch or so of space in its flattened condition, its presence there will not be suspected. As the cover of the coffin is closed, a push-button spring arrangement, upon the outside, releases the trap-door bottom of the case, as indicated. The figure now extends to its complete height, completely filling the casket.

— *from Dunninger's Complete Encyclopedia of Magic*



Good-bye

Vintage Halloween Images



Next



Halloween is not about Death. It is about Change. It is about Life.



Next



It is about acknowledging
the many different people,
good and not so good, who
live inside each one of us.



Next

Here at Duck Soup, we say “Merry Halloween”
and “Happy Christmas” -- because Halloween
should be a Merry time, and Christmas should
be Happy -- not the other way around!



Merry Halloween!

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