BOO! (Best of)

Sometime in the not-so-distant future ...

“Daddy, is there really such a thing as Halloween?”

“There used to be, son. Sit up here on my lap and I’ll tell you the real meaning of Halloween. A long, long time ago, before you were even born, we lived out in the country and our house was at the end of a long, dark, dirt road.

One Halloween evening we heard a knock on the door and dressed as usual in her ragged nightgown and her hair in curlers, your mother went to the door to answer it. In the spirit of Halloween she swung the door wide and shrieked “BOOOO!”

“Your mother frightened that poor trick or treater so badly he gave his gunny sack of candy to your mom. Left it right there on the front porch, he did. Left his Snickers and everything.

Your mom didn’t have to cook dinner that night and we had the best meal in many a moon. That poor kid ran down the lane like he’d seen a ghost. Then the word got around that our house was haunted and that a witch lived here. We kept our front porch light on for 12 years after that, but no little kids ever came again. The only people that ever came “trick or treating” at our door were the politicians running for re-election about this time of year. Some of them were pretty frightening, I’ll tell you!”

“”Daddy, did they have such a thing as Halloween way back when you were a kid?”

“Oh sure. When I was just a little boy like yourself, we played harmless pranks on the neighbors at Halloween. It was great fun. I’ll never forget the time we put a fresh cow pie in a paper sack and set it on Old Man Cooter’s front porch.

We lit it on fire and screamed, “FIRE!” at the top of our lungs. Old Man Cooter came out of the house in his bare feet and stomped that sucker out. Halloween was great when I was a kid.”

“What’s a cow pie Daddy?”

“Some day I’ll explain that, but right now you’re way too young for that.”

“Did Grandma buy you a costume at Wal-Mart to go trick or treating?”

“Oh no. I dressed up in mom’s old clothes.”

“But why didn’t you wear your father’s old clothes instead?”

“Because he was still wearing them.”

“Did you wear a monster mask?”

“No that wasn’t really necessary,” chimed in mom from the kitchen. “He was plenty scary enough without one.”

“That sounds like a lot of fun. What else did you do on Halloween?”

“We’d all gather down at the Grange for a Halloween party. We did brain surgery on Jack-O-Lantern and bobbed for apples. But then we couldn’t keep our heads above water and had to move into the city where they don’t celebrate Halloween. They used to.

I can remember when kids would go house to house filling up their Safeway sacks. But then some real life ghouls and witches started putting poison in the candy and razor blades in apples. One by one people turned off their lights and the kids stayed home.”

“But why did they do that?”

“That’s a great question. I suppose it’s because there are some really sick people in the world nowadays.”

“Daddy, Daddy, somebody rang the doorbell. Maybe it’s a trick or treater!”

Daddy jumped off the couch and ran to the door. He glared through the peephole, unhooked the chain, slid back two dead-bolts and fumbled open three locks. He yelled for his wife to disconnect the burglar alarm and to unleash the Dobermans, but by the time he got the door open it was time for Christmas. And so daddy’s little monster never did come to know the real meaning of Halloween.

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