

Halloween Party 1962

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Every fall, on a late October weekend, our neighbourhood had a Halloween party in the community building at the park. For days before, we planned our costumes carefully, knowing we would wear the same one again on the actual night. I borrowed an old housedress from my mom, added a long fringed shawl, and tied a kerchief around my head. In the basement I found some old brass curtain rings and sewed them to the scarf for earrings. The end result was a perfect cartoon gypsy.

My ten year old brother wasn't having any luck finding a costume and was getting discouraged. Our mom made some suggestions, but nothing was appealing. It was almost time to leave when I had an idea. "Hey Marty, how would you like to be a mummy?"

"Sure," he said looking more cheerful. I found some rolls of toilet paper and wrapped him from his legs up to his head, with a little slit for him to peer out. We added an old hat, and some fake glasses, nose and mustache. He was delighted with his image in the mirror, so we headed to the park.

Tables of candy, donated cupcakes, cookies and fruit punch lined the back wall which was decorated with orange and black balloons and grotesque jack o'lanterns. After everyone had had something to eat and drink, the costume judging took place. We all stood in a line around the room and three of the parents conducted an inspection. To my astonishment Marty the mummy won first prize, an orange flashlight to use on his Halloween rounds.

I found Karen and Dave in the crowd and Marty met his gang of buddies. The party naturally included a dance. Everyone did the Twist along with Chubby Checker. Elvis sang "Good Luck Charm", the Four Seasons sang "Sherry" followed by Gene Pitney, Bobby Rydell, Brenda Lee and Sue Thompson. Bobby Boris Picket finished off the dancing with our favourite new song "Monster Mash". We loved it so much, nobody danced to that one; we just sang along. It was a graveyard smash.

When we got tired of dancing, it was time to tell horror stories. We sat in a huge circle, and a few people had scary tales to share. Our friend Dave told one we had heard since we were little kids. He embellished the story, adding creepy details and changing his voice to suit each character. It was about a girl who always wore a kerchief and refused to tell anyone why. After being bullied about it, she yanked it off and her head fell off. Even though we had heard it a thousand times, we were still horrified but at the same time we all launched into hysterical laughter. Some of the other stories were about the killer with the hook that came off on the handle of the lovers' car door, and the monster in the basement coming up the stairs one at a time, suspense building with every step.

On that note, the party ended. As Marty and I headed into the spooky dark night, I noticed he was wearing his plain clothes again. "What happened to your costume?" I asked.

"I spilled some juice on it, and it just disintegrated," he laughed.

"Good thing the judging happened at the beginning of the party. Never mind, we'll do it again for Halloween night."

"OK," he grinned and shining his new orange flashlight on the sidewalk ahead, he got us safely home before any monsters could catch us.