The Halloween Special

October 27, 2006

Halloween is a big deal at our school. Every year there's a haunted house in the gym, and when you get to the end you're greeted with tables full of punch and candy, carnival games, and the same CD of Halloween music they've been playing since the last decade. All the elementary schools in town take some of the kids there on field trips, and it's kind of fun to see what they dress up as. But it's not very fun when they get all upset because you guessed their costume wrong (Like when Jamie and I were Mario and Luigi in second grade and Jamie got offended on my behalf because the girl running the beanbag toss called me "green Mario.")

This year, everyone in charge of the haunted house is going all out. They bought pumpkins for guests to carve and paint, and I heard the kids from the drama department have been practicing to be scare actors since September. I think someone's mom is setting up a candy apple booth as well. They've put up Halloween and fall decorations all over the school too. I bet a lot of it is to distract from a REAL LIVE ALIEN being discovered infiltrating the school. My school newspaper partner and possible friend Ivy and I were the ones who blew his cover. He probably got fired back on his planet and is likely drowning his sorrows in

space juice. I think the distraction worked, because not a day has gone by this month where I didn't hear the words "haunted house".

Our journalism teacher assigned me and Ivy to write an article about the haunted house for the paper, which means we will need costumes. All my friends have costumes already picked out, and I still have no idea what to be. Ivy has this awesome witch costume, Jamie is going to be a Wii remote, and a few of the kids from our lunch table are doing a group costume from some show I didn't watch. Even my sister Mila has a costume ready. Her friends are all going as their *Animal Crossing* characters and she's going to be one too. Last year she was a Neopet. Maybe I should go over the costumes I've worn in the last three years…

8th grade: Ness from the game *EarthBound*. The stripes on my shirt were actually yellow tape and nobody knew who I was. An old lady I met while trick-or-treating called me "baseball boy." At least some people online thought it was cool.

9th grade: Agent Fox Mulder. I even printed out and laminated my own FBI badge. The suit jacket was borrowed from my dad and was kind of big on me.

10th grade: Homestar Runner. I didn't tape a paper star to my shirt like some people I saw online or cover myself in white face paint. I did get recognized by a few different people though.

If only I had watched whatever show everyone was into so I could join their group costume.

5:00 P.M.

My mom just walked into my room with a basket of laundry from around the house.

"I washed your green shirt and some of Mila's stuff." she said while handing it to me.

My green shirt… What costume could I make with a green shirt? Looking down at the handheld game I was playing gave me the answer. With that shirt and some other clothes I have, I could put together an easy Link costume! Now I wouldn't be the only one at the haunted house without any Halloween spirit! This year was going to be good.

October 30, 2006

Everyone seemed worried about something when I walked into my first class. The teacher wasn't there yet. As I sat down at my desk, the guy next to me turned and said "Did you hear about the haunted house?"

The girl behind me said "Someone's going to sabotage it! Who would do this to us?"

A photocopied piece of paper was handed to me. In letters cut out from magazines and newspapers, it said "One night remains... Don't expect only fake scares at your little 'Haunted House.'"

"Everyone on the haunted house committee got one in their locker. We showed the teacher but he just brushed it off as a prank." the girl said.

A look of recognition then appeared on her face. "You found that alien, do you think you and your partner could get to the bottom of this? I'll pay you both in my allowance."

I didn't know how much her allowance was, but I wasn't going to pass up a chance to get closer to buying a Wii. I just hope Ivy would also agree to investigate.

I kept thinking about who could really be behind that note on my way to journalism class. Part of me was wondering if the aliens were back and looking for revenge on our school, or on Town City as a whole! Or someone could have planted a giant bomb somewhere. I don't know how to defuse a bomb!

When I got to class, Ivy was waiting for me and holding another copy of the note.

"You got one too?" she asked after seeing the identical paper in my hand.

I told her about what the kids from first period said while trying to restrain myself from blurting out theories in front of everyone.

Ivy's face brightened. "Maybe we could make this part of our Halloween article!" she suggested. It turns out Ivy had found a clue last week without knowing it yet.

"I went to the art room after school to pick up this project I made, and I saw a bunch of old catalogs in the back that were all cut up. We weren't doing collages or anything, so I don't know who did it." she explained.

"Maybe if we get to the haunted house early, we can catch them in the act!" I said. To my surprise, Ivy said that was a good idea and that she wanted to make sure no elementary kids get traumatized by whatever could happen. If the aliens are back, they could do anything to those kids! They're completely defenseless. I'm kind of glad seventh graders don't go there on field trips, because at least Mila won't get abducted. She's really annoying, but I don't want her to become a test subject. Our parents would miss her too.

<u>After School</u>

My best friend is an idiot. I went to his house after school to watch Halloween specials on TV and help him work on his costume, and when he showed what he made so far, I was dumbfounded. Jamie didn't put arm holes in his

costume. His excuse was "Wii remotes don't have arms." Then I said that they don't have holes for a face where the A button is but he put one there anyway. Then he threw the bowl of candy we were eating at me and I had to throw it back at him and we kept throwing candy at each other until his mom came in and made us put it back in the bowl. I was tempted to add arm holes to Jamie's costume when he went to the bathroom so he wouldn't fall down and break his face open but I didn't do it. I hope he at least falls on something soft.

When I got home that night, Mom was telling Mila that she couldn't have any of the candy in the Halloween bowl after dinner because it was for the trick or treaters. At dinner Mila talked constantly about how she was "sooooo excited" for Halloween tomorrow because one of her friends lives near a neighborhood that gives out full size candy bars. I'm glad I don't have to take her around this year. When she was younger she was so scared of Halloween decorations that we would have to leave the house through the garage.

Later that night, when I was on my computer, I heard the phone ring. Everyone else had gone to bed, so I guess it was up to me to answer it. Maybe it was just a telemarketer or some kid trying to be scary by doing prank calls. Last year one of Mila's classmates kept calling the house to tell Halloween knock-knock

jokes he was obviously reading out of a book. When I picked up the phone, I was greeted by an odd-sounding deep voice.

"Our plans are greater than anyone can imagine. You don't want to know what we do to people who mess with us." the voice growled. Then whoever it was hung up before I could say anything in response.

That threat alone was scarier than any Halloween special I watched that day. As I lay in bed trying to get some sleep, it was all I could think about. Could it be that some aliens want revenge on me, specifically? Or what if it's a gang of criminals who want to beat me up? I hate my life.

Later, I had a nightmare where aliens in Halloween masks were chasing me with syringes and weird tools. I woke up just as they caught me.

October 31, 2006

Halloween was here. I am doomed. I thought about pretending to be sick so I could stay home and potentially stay alive, but I didn't want Ivy to think I was a total coward. And I kind of wanted to see if Jamie would manage to do anything in his costume. When I got out of the shower, I received a text message from Ivy.

"The haunted house committee set up a night watch yesterday and they didn't find anything. I think they're probably going to sneak in." it read.

Whoever was behind this must want to ruin the event while it's happening. I tried to psych myself up by putting on my costume. When I looked at myself in the mirror, I felt like it was missing something. I dug through my room until I found a green knit hat from last winter. Perfect. My finishing touch: A plastic replica sword I got for Christmas 6 years ago.

Mom wanted to take our pictures before the bus came (It finally got fixed!). I'm not a big fan of *Animal Crossing*, but I had to admit Mila's costume was pretty good. Mom helped her make the pointy hat and dress and she put face paint on by herself.

"So Jessica wanted to carry all her candy in a butterfly net, but we want to hit EVERY house on the block, so I told her that was no good." Mila said to Dad, who was just nodding along. Then she saw me.

"What are you supposed to be?" she asked.

"I'm Link, from *Zelda*?"

"More like a loser from the bargain bin!" she said while laughing.

I reluctantly posed next to her while Mom took a bunch of pictures of us. My eyes always end up closed in family photos.

Dad stopped me before I could make my way to the bus stop. I have to leave the (*plastic video game replica*) sword at home in case someone thinks I brought a real weapon. I can't tell if I look more or less like a huge dork without it.

Almost everyone on the bus was in a costume. Even the driver was wearing a witch hat. I quickly noticed a familiar white box sitting behind a vampire and a skeleton. His face was now painted white and had a huge A drawn on it.

"Where's your stuff?" I asked, since Jamie was missing his backpack.

"In my locker? Nice Shaggy costume, by the way. But since when did he have a hat?"

"Do you see me walking around with a big brown dog? I'm Link!"

"Well you should have brought a sword… Or bought a better costume."

I need better friends.

<u>At School</u>

Something crazy happened. Ivy and I were at the haunted house before first period, and everything looked fine. Nothing was turned on yet but it didn't look like any of the outlets or wires were tampered with. But before I could write anything down in my journalism notebook, a pumpkin went up in the air and *flew towards me!* Ivy pulled me out of the way and it smashed against the wall. Pumpkin guts went everywhere!

"Show yourselves!" Ivy shouted, holding out a can of pepper spray.

But nobody came. Instead, we saw some writing appear on the floor…

Ivy and I did what it said. We escaped to the stairs near where I have my first class.

"Don't worry, that was just fake blood. My friend Mara used the same stuff for a gig last weekend." Ivy reassured me. She didn't seem that freaked out about what we just saw at all.

"Do you think it's a ghost? I love ghosts." she asked.

I don't usually seek out ghost stuff, mainly because dead things creep me out. Maybe Ivy is right. Ghosts are well-known for both making things float and being invisible…

"It could be. But why would a ghost want to ruin Halloween for a bunch of kids?" I replied.

"Maybe some evil teacher died and wants revenge." suggested Ivy.

"But if someone who worked for the school died, we'd hear about it…"

If it wasn't a ghost, then what kind of things enjoyed destroying stuff and could also turn invisible?

Gray aliens. It had to be gray aliens! Ivy was going to think I was insane, but I had to tell her. There's reports of them using cloaking technology, and they're also known to love causing problems. But how could we stop them? At least gray aliens don't kill people.

Ivy said that she could pepper spray them, but that would just make them even more angry. And they might be immune to it! Just then, the bell rang and some campus supervisor told us to get to class.

The Haunted House

Ivy and I were doing our assigned duty of observing today's festivities (We got to wear laminated Press badges). The house itself was fine. It had its usual family-friendly scares, like a guy dressed as a wolf-man doing his best howl at a cardboard moon. The kids seemed to get a kick out of the actors talking to them.

It was when that first group of kids made their way to the party area that things got weird.

A group of third graders were about to bob for apples when a gray alien popped out of the water. Somehow, I was able to snap a picture (with a camera on loan from the classroom) right when the kids saw him. A boy dressed as a dog was running away crying, two matching fairy princesses were holding onto each other for dear life, and the teacher looked like she didn't get paid enough for this crap.

More screams soon filled the gym. Behind me, some kid and an alien were having a tug-of-war over a candy bag. The kid was losing. These other kids had just made it out of the haunted house and were talking and laughing until three grays dropped down from the ceiling in front of them. Candy spilled everywhere.

Ivy pulled me aside.

"Ew, those things are ugly!"

She wasn't completely wrong. They were about the size of a toddler, and had weirdly smooth skin and no visible nose. Their eyes were also huge like a Baikal seal's and they had longish, thin fingers.

"They're going after all the kids with candy." noted Ivy.

Right after she said that, the candy apple booth got mobbed by a pack of aliens. I think one of them might have actually been a really short kid dressed up

like an alien. The lady running the booth grabbed a witch's broom and tried to shoo them away, but one of them just kept pouring a bag of M&Ms into its mouth.

"Get away from my apples, you little freaks!" she shouted.

The girl who offered to pay me in her allowance ran over to us and grabbed me by the shoulders with fear in her eyes.

"You've got to stop them! I'll give you next month's allowance too, just get rid of these… things!" she asked me.

Then a gray alien tugged on the skirt of her angel costume and said some gibberish that sounded like a question. Her eyes got so big it was kind of funny. Then she screamed and ran back through the haunted house.

I asked Ivy for suggestions on how we could get rid of them.

"Look at what they're doing! They're eating all the candy they can get their weird little hands on. Maybe we could find some and lure them somewhere."

"Maybe we could lock them in the janitor's closet?" I suggested.

"That's too small, there's barely enough room to make out in there. What about the bathrooms?"

"That might work!"

Our plan had been hatched. Ivy was going to get one of the bathroom keys off of Rob the janitor, and I had to make a candy trail. I wish I still had that

plastic sword so I had something to fight off the Grays with if they tried to block my way or decided that they wanted me dead. All the adults in the room were distracted and/or trying to protect the kids from grievous bodily harm, so I was able to quickly grab a bag of candy from the pumpkin carving station. It wasn't *great* candy (It had a lot of those chalk-flavored Smarties) but it would do.

The doors near the bleachers weren't obstructed, so I thought that it would be a good spot for my trail. I felt like Hansel and Gretel. It went fine until a group of popular kids who thought they were too cool for haunted houses saw me and started snickering.

"Look, it's Alien Boy!"

"Where'd you get your costume, the lost and found?"

I hope their houses get egged tonight.

Eventually I made my way to the bathroom. I wasn't sure if the gray aliens were boys, girls, or something else entirely, so I had to think on what bathroom to send them to. I ended up going with the men's room because it's what I'm used to. I dumped out what was left in the bag on its floor. Hope you like graffiti of certain body parts, aliens.

Ivy texted me.

"Got the key. Where r u?"

I told her I was in front of the first floor bathroom. She came over quickly.

"Rob the janitor was passed out in his closet and he left the door open. I think he had too much to drink last night." Ivy said, brandishing the bathroom key.

If I had to get the key, I'd probably trip or knock something over and wake him up. Ivy must have cat-like reflexes, probably because she owns a cat.

We heard some small footsteps and high-pitched language. They were coming.

"Hurry!" Ivy said as she pulled me to the nearby stairwell. We'd be out of their sight there. I heard shouts of disgust coming from those cool kids as the aliens advanced toward us. Then, little gray bodies entered view. One of them stopped, picked up a fun-size 3 Musketeers, and showed it to another one (a friend?). They excitedly made their way to the bathroom. When they were all in there, Ivy ran down, slammed the door shut, and locked it tight.

The aliens realized what was happening and started banging on the door. I almost felt bad for them.

"What do we do now?" I asked Ivy.

She started to reply, but was cut off by sirens in the distance. Someone at the haunted house must have already called emergency services.

Later

The gray aliens were captured and placed in the trunk of a huge black van. Almost everyone was watching as some of the cops surveyed the grounds. I got pulled aside by two of them, but they were wearing suits and had sunglasses and earpieces. Real life men in black! Was I going to have my memory wiped? Or would I be sent off to some top secret base in Nevada?

"Son, I'm Agent T and this is my partner Agent M. Your classmates told us about how you and your friend have seen… certain things."

I was too shocked to speak.

"We've had our eye on this town for a long time. You're doing good work." said Agent M. She was really tall.

The only words I could squeeze out were "What's going to happen?"

Agent T chuckled. "Don't worry, kid. Soon they won't remember anything."

"You're a smart guy. Maybe you'll work for us one day." Agent M said as she patted my shoulder.

Before I could ask any more questions, they were gone.

Jamie came running towards me, and I witnessed exactly what I expected to happen. He tripped and fell but thankfully he landed on his side. Some guy shouted "Man down!"

"Did you hear? The haunted house got terrorized by creepy little kids from the next town over!" he said while I looked down at him. I wasn't in the mood to correct him right now. I guess he can have this one.

"Hey, you got any plans tonight?" he asked me.

"I was just going to hand out candy at home. We're too old for trick-or-treating, remember?"

"Well, I scored two invites to Dylan Donovan's Halloween party. It sure would be a shame if I had to give one to someone else instead…"

Dylan Donovan was one of us geeks, but he was the coolest one. His parents are super rich, so he has all the latest tech and doesn't mind sharing it. I bet he'd have some great food, too.

"Take me with you." I said.

"Your *secret admirer's* going to be there too. Maybe we'll play spin the bottle!"

He means Meagan Phillips, this girl who eats lunch with us. I don't think any girl would kiss me even if I was the last guy on Earth.

I had a party to go to, and material for a hit new article. Maybe Halloween 2006 won't be so awful after all.