

# Humor

## *The Good Halloween Lie*

*By: Peggy Gerber*



**Peggy Gerber**

Peggy Gerber is a poet and short story writer from northern New Jersey who is thrilled beyond words to have been chosen as the winner of the 2021 *Open Contract Challenge*. Her poetry chapbook *Stumbling in CrazyTown* will be published shortly and she is grateful to each and every person who was involved in the process. She is also very proud to have had one of her stories chosen for the anthology, *Natural Instincts: Tales of Witches and Warlocks*. It is a very fun book to read.

Jimmy raced home from school and quickly changed into his Halloween costume. He groaned as he wriggled into his too tight Batman shirt and black pants, flinching at the gap between his trousers and socks. When he risked a peek in the mirror, his face burned with embarrassment, but he had no choice. He would have to pull this costume off for one more year. Jimmy stepped into his sneakers, chugged down a glass of milk and bolted out the door. When he got outside, he turned his head from side to side to make sure none of his friends were watching, then set off towards the more affluent part of town. It was a different school district and he hoped nobody would recognize him. He ran as fast as he could, his breath coming in gulps, in an effort to forget about how his friends would be trick-or-treating later in the day without him. They liked to go when it was just

getting dark and walk through the streets by the light of their glow sticks. Jimmy had made up a lame excuse why he couldn't join them and hoped they'd never figure out the truth; that he had to collect as much candy as he could so when his friends came to his door trick-or-treating, his family would have something to give out. Ever since his dad got sick, they didn't have a penny to spare, and his mom said they weren't going to waste money on silly things like Halloween candy. When Jimmy returned home, he kicked off his shoes and went straight to the kitchen. He rifled through the cabinets until he found his mom's largest bowl, filled it with candy and placed it by the front door. Tears stung his eyes as he looked lovingly at the Hershey Bars and Twizzlers and Milky Ways, his mouth watering as he contemplated eating just a few. In the end though, he decided against it. He wanted to make sure not to run out of candy when his friends stopped by. When Jimmy's mother arrived

home from work and saw the large bowl of candy, she looked at Jimmy and sighed. She embraced her son and murmured, "Honey, the only thing that matters is that dad's getting better. Handing out candy is not important. Besides, Halloween isn't really a holiday anyway."

Jimmy stiffened in his mom's embrace and pulled away. He wandered off to his bedroom mumbling to himself how his mom didn't understand anything about kids. His jaw clenched as he thought about how embarrassed he was wearing a costume from two years ago and having to trick-or-treat with three-year-olds. Just around dinnertime, the doorbell started ringing. One after the other, Jimmy's friends and classmates came to the door, laughing and joking about their costumes. Though his heart felt heavy as a boulder, Jimmy fake laughed along with them, tossing candy into their bags, and pretending to be happy. It wasn't until later in the day, when a teenager came to the door that Jimmy was able to genuinely smile. The kid had a cereal box and a plastic knife glued to his shirt and said he was a cereal killer. Jimmy stored it away in his memory as a cheap costume for next year.

At the end of the evening, just as Jimmy's mom was turning off the lights, the doorbell rang. Jimmy's face fell. He was going to have to give away the last two pieces of candy. He grumbled as he opened the door, but when he saw it was Daisy, his face lit up. They were in sixth grade together and he had a crush on her ever since the first day of school.

Daisy smiled, "Hi Jimmy. Trick-or-treat."

Jimmy blushed, his face turning crimson as he picked up the bowl to give Daisy some candy. He was just about to toss it into her bag when she asked, "Uh, could I use your bathroom?" Jimmy nodded for her to come in and she asked her mom to wait outside. Jimmy's mom joined her and kept her company.

Daisy walked into the living room and immediately pulled Jimmy off to the side. She handed him her bag of candy and said, "Here Jimmy, take it. My sister Violet has diabetes and Mom won't let me bring candy into the house. She says it wouldn't be fair to Violet." She pursed her lips and pleaded, "If you don't take it, my mother is going to throw it out and that would be a tragedy."

Jimmy looked at her and furrowed his brows. He asked, "Why do you even go trick-or-treating if you can't keep it. Isn't it depressing?"

She laughed, "No, Jimmy. I love getting dressed up and it is fun seeing all my friends. Besides, I snuck a few pieces in my jacket pocket for tomorrow."

Jimmy stood like a statue. He didn't know what to do. Then Daisy said, "I'll bet I could fit more candy in my mouth than you can."

They each reached into the bag, opened up a bunch of small Hershey bars and popped them into their mouths. They laughed as the chocolate spittle began running down their faces. When they were done eating, Jimmy took the bag with a shy smile and waved good-bye.

Daisy winked at him and said, "Happy Halloween Jimmy," and walked out of the house.

After closing the door, Jimmy told his mother what happened and asked if it was okay to keep the candy. His mom said, "You might as well. It would be a shame for it to go to waste. "Poor Violet" she added. "It must be rough having a sickness at such a young age." She turned to Jimmy, "Hey, Daisy seems like a nice girl. You should become friends with her."

"That's a good idea," he smirked. Then with a soaring heart, Jimmy skipped off to his room to sort his candy into piles.

Outside, Daisy's mom looked at her empty hands and asked where her bag of candy was. Daisy replied, "Well, when I was at Grandma's house earlier, Jimmy came to the door, and he was wearing a costume that was ratty and much too small. I think Jimmy might have had to give away all his candy, so I gave him mine." Daisy smiled and said, "It's okay, Mom. I'm pretty sure Violet

will share her candy with me  
when I tell her what happened .”  
She took her mother’s hand and  
mumbled, “I told Jimmy a lie so  
he would take the candy. Is that  
okay?”

Momentarily too choked up to  
speak, Daisy’s mother smiled and  
shook her head. She then put her  
arm around her daughter’s  
shoulder and said, “Let’s go  
home.”