

## **Snips Most Horrid; Snips Most Foul**

*By Alexander Saxton, Anthony Botelho, and Jacob Duarte Spiel*

*Guten Abend, meine süßen kleinen eier.*

It is I, the Halloween Kaiser. Better known to some as the Kaiser of Halloween. But you knew that. **You knew it with the sweet pink slop inside the shells of your sugary little heads.**

Tonight we will be reading from the Great Tome of All Hallow's Eve Snippets, Most Horrid and Most Foul, penned by Euryduchos Fauch in the year 1587. A collection of stories in which bad things happen to bad little children. And good ones too.

Our first story is a scrumptious little number that goes by the title of "A Quiet All Saints' Eve Dinner.

So set your ovens to 190 degrees Celsius, and by the time this evening is through you should be ready to pop you Kaiser Bread right in. You **are** making Kaiser Bread... aren't you?

In any case, our story.

(After All Saint's Eve Dinner)

Simply delightful, though I wish he had written about this spartan dinner in more detail. Ach, it makes me think back to eating fish heads with my friend and confidant Bernicus down by the riverbank. But there is no time for reminiscing, for we must **hasten** on to our next story.

(After Halloween Ain't the Same)

*Ach, mein Gott. Keine kleinen kätzchen?* Halloween AIN'T the same. Euryduchos, how prescient you were. In any case, moving on...

(After Best Guy In Town)

What a singularly unpleasant man. And yet... still so **beguiling** in his own way, that M. Bombardier.

(After Homemade)

Well well well... *mutter* has got some explaining to do, hasn't she?

(After House/Castle)

**Brrr. Was für ein chilling yarn. Denim jackets? How terrifying. Still- it just goes to show you, mein schreckliches brats: crime doesn't pay.**

Outro - and so, with another Halloween season passing by, we must take our spooky thread and use it to sew Euryduchos' tome back up for another year. I don't like it any better than you do- the cover is full of nerves, and the *verdamm*t thing screams like the dickens every time I stick it with my halloween needle. Anyway, that's all for now. I have been the Halloween Kaiser, better known to some as Kaiser Halloween The, and this has been: Snips

Snips Most Horrid Foul. Now get out there and enjoy your halloween! Have sex with a ghost or frankenstein!

### Halloween Ain't the Same

Halloween? Peh. Halloween is a crock-of-shit holiday; has been ever since the Tallahassee Treaty of the Second Great North American Reconjunction. Same as all the other bullshit holidays; Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, New-Yugoslavian Thanksgiving. But actually, you know what? Halloween might be the worst.

Halloween, at its roots, at its *core*, was anarchical. Radical. Hey, don't fucking roll your eyes at me; you brought this shit up, and now I'm gonna rant about it. Fuckin'... themster "North A model citizen" over here, too preoccupied with patriotism to learn about history.

Anyway, fuck, *anarchy*. All Hallow's Eve. Started off back in the *old* old days as a pagan harvest celebration, before the Christians co-opted it and made it a day about dead dusty old Saints, before the fighters out there re-co-opted it back to being about pagans and satanism and bad fuckin' witches and shit. Which is great, but THEN the capitalists RE-re-co-opt it... and fuck.

I don't need to tell you what the fas caps have done to this nation state. Look at us, just LOOK AT US. First day off I've had in who knows how long excavating soluble plastics from the under cities of the First Reconjunction Empire; first day you've had off from shuckin' fuckin' corn. But oh yeah, let's thank our benevolent overlords for the mandated and stringently enforced holiday.

Halloween, Hh-h-h-Halloween used to opt in. YOU put up the decorations, YOU went out and bought the candy to give away, YOU did whatever little rituals you wanted to do. Now it's the fuckin' same for everyone.

We wake up. We all turn on the public network and watch Jason X—and I'll rant about this another time, but I REFUSE to believe the lie that there were not nine other movies that came before it. Anyway, we all watch the movie. State police come to your house and supply you with the state sanctioned sugar treats you will give out that night—the value of which deducted from your monthly allowance, OF COURSE. Then, one of you takes your shit-ass kids out from 7pm to 9pm **exactly** and the other one of you stays home to give out candy to other people's shit-ass kids.

And-and-and-and, before you say it: yes, all the kids are wearing different costumes. BUT, that's because the government ASSIGNS your kids a costume. They tell you what costume they're gonna wear!

And it's all tropey shit from that capitalist age of market store Halloween, with no regard for modern context. Like, I get that black cats used to be a big thing associated with the season. But domestic cats have been extinct for 70 years. Do you think the kids wearing those costumes even know what the fuck they're supposed to be?

Jesus christ, it makes me sick. But... this year, heh, this year I've got plans to shake things up a bit. I was digging a little deeper into these old Halloween stories, and I came across this one old wive's tale that I found pretty interesting. There used to be this rumour that some people would unwrap candies and chocolates, and put razors and needles in them before wrapping them back up and giving them to unsuspecting kids.

Made people worried. Made them uneasy.

Now, that's not exactly what I want to do—that's a little barbaric. No... I was thinking micro-scale, timer set, thermal charges. Give it two days. There's a chance that some might go off before they get eaten or after they're ejected, but it will definitely melt a few children from the inside out. Maybe also burn some bystanders in the process.

That causes some panic, I think. Gets people asking questions, gets 'em mad at the government. That's what we need, you gettin' me? To bring a little *anarchy* back to Halloween.

### **A Quiet All Saints' Eve Dinner**

Norman Matheson poked at the sizable portion of boiled fish that sat on his plate. He prodded at it with his fork, turning it around and flipping it over; looking for even one piece, one *bite* that looked appetizing. And when he exhausted his search, he decided that he'd start with the greens and come back to the fish when it was necessary.

Norman was not happy this evening, and, quite sadly for a boy his age, he rarely was. Though in this case, to speak to this particular evening, it was because just past the archway that divided the dining room and the first floor hallway, through the foyer and then the front door, and out into the world, it was Halloween Night. But inside the Matheson household, and most certainly at the Mathesons' dining room table, it was All Saints' Eve.

You see, the Matheson's didn't much care for Halloween. They didn't much care for most things that a 12 year old boy might find enjoyable. Video games, cable television, even make-believe play out in the street. They had been mildly accepting of organized baseball for a time, but that didn't last very long. Mr. Matheson found the other children to be churlish, a bad influence; Mrs. Matheson didn't like how Norman would come home with dirt on his pants.

No no no... Norman's thus-far short life was one of study, prayer, and solemn reflection. But that doesn't mean he didn't dream of other things. He longed for a time when he could wake up on a Saturday morning and watch all the cartoons that his classmates talked about. Or visit a friend's house, and pretend to be a powerful wizard or a daring thief. Or even once, just once, to go out on Halloween Night.

"You've hardly touched your fish, *boy*."

Norman snapped to attention, stuffing his daydreams into a shameful box in the corner of his mind. The imposing Mr. Matheson loomed over the table from his seat at its other end, a picture of puritanical patriarchy.

“Off in your idle fantasies again?” His question—hardly even a question—made Norman’s skin sear with embarrassment.

“If you’re not hungry, I can put it away for later,” interjected Mrs. Matheson. Her’s was a method more cool and tempered on the surface, with mercurial threat bubbling beneath.

“The boy is plenty hungry, Elizabeth. Just not for the meal so meticulously prepared by you, and put on this table by the grace of God. No. Our son would rather be outside with the pagans, gorging himself with sweets.”

Norman had been dreading this. If it hadn’t been the fish, it would have been something else; each year on this night, his parents would find some reason to castigate him for his desires.

“I see,” said Mrs. Matheson, placing her napkin down and turning aside with a calculated pout. “Then maybe I shouldn’t have made anything for such a spoiled little wretch.”

“Now look what you’ve done!” Mr. Matheson slammed the table with a closed fist. “You’ll be the death of your mother, a vile shame upon our house.” Mr. Matheson rose from his seat, and began to slowly stalk over to Norman until he stood over the child. “But maybe that’s what you want. To be rid of us, have Satan pluck us from the Earth and leave you to the life of hedonism you so desperately want. Leave you to your *Halloween*.”

Norman considered these words for a moment as the heat made him sweat; heat from his shame, sadness, and anger, and from his father’s hot breath. And considering the alternative as well, a thought came to his mind almost involuntarily.

“Yes, I do want that.”

In an instant, glass shattered and a howling wind entered the house as the dining room window was blasted open from the outside. All three of the Matheson’s turned with surprise, and then horror, as the cause of this destruction wasted no time making itself known. Two *creatures* entered the home, stepping over the window frame with long, lithe, hairy, limbs. They were dark of fur, winged, horned, clawed and razor fanged. And with gleeful little “ke-KE-KE-KE-KE-KE’s” they stepped forward and snatched the screaming Mister and Missus Matheson, before flying off with them. Out of the window, into the night sky, and off to places unknown.

And now, altogether quite quickly and unexpectedly, Norman was alone. Alone for one moment, before he heard a rustling from the bushes outside that same window and one more of those dark imps poked its head in from outside.

“Still lots of good candy out there. Best hurry before it’s gone!”

And with that, it too flew off.

And perhaps Norman should have asked some questions. And perhaps he should have felt a pang of guilt. But that could always come later. For this night, now, was a happy one.

### **The Best Guy In Town**

[PROD. ‘Bombardier’ here is the English ‘Bombadeer’, not the French ‘Bombardiyey’]

When I was a kid, the best guy in town was M. Bombardier McDonagh. He was one of those guys who was always fit and healthy and full of pep, even in his old age. He had nicknames for all the kids in town, and when he saw you coming down the street, he’d shout something like, ‘Hey Big-Time’, how’s it goin’, and then he’d give you a serious, grown-up handshake and say ‘M. Bombardier McDonagh, it’s a pleasure to meetcha,’ even though you’d met him a hundred times before. And then he’d say something cheeky like, ‘hey, who’s your pretty sister’, and then your momma would blush and say something like ‘Oh, M. Bombardier, I don’t look THAT young’, and he’d say something like, ‘Hey, what do I know, at my age, I can’t even see the wrinkles anymore’. And everyone would laugh and he’d tousle your hair and say ‘Shoot ‘em dead, Big Time’, and then swagger on down to wherever he was going.

M. Bombardier McDonagh. M for Michael, because his mother was Catholic, and Bombardier, after Bombardier Billy Wells, the world heavyweight champion boxer in the 19-teens. But he’d always gone by M. Bombardier, because, as he put it ‘Sheesh, there was no fair shake for an Irish guy back when I was growin’ up’, and because ‘Heck, I always thought an American should have an initial in his name.’

As kids, we’d loved him. He’d been a US marine once, and swaggered around our small Ontario town in a green bomber jacket with aviators and a silver crew-cut. When we were learning about World War II in school, our teacher (Charmed, no doubt, on her way to the grocery store), brought him in to talk about it, and he spent the whole afternoon holding us rapt with stories about Midway and Guadalcanal, about heroics on the high sea, and desperate actions in the jungle. It was like listening to a comic book; all bright colours and clear morals and sound-effects like ‘Whap!’ And ‘Pow!’

But the best thing about M. Bombardier McDonagh, at least for a young kid, was that on Halloween, he was the guy who handed out full-sized chocolate bars. And not just full-sized, but two for every kid. He’d made a fortune in business after the war, and he always said, ‘Hey, what’s the point of having cash if ya can’t give out good halloween candy. What am I gonna do: eat it all myself?’ Then he’d mime how big his belly would get if he did that and say, ‘I wanna be the Halloween Guy not Sandy Claws Ho ho ho.’ You’d get home and sort out the candy and your mom would say: ‘full sized bars? Who gave you \*these\*? And you’d say ‘M. Bombardier McDonagh’, and she’d sigh and get a faraway look and say ‘Ah, that M. Bombardier McDonagh, he must have been some man back in his day.’

Which was fine for me, because I had a single mom. But for my friends who had dads... it was a little awkward.

I remember one Halloween very clearly. We'd gone down the street trick-or-treating, and when we got to M. Bombardier's house, he was waiting with the usual goods. But before we could go, he narrowed his eyes at us and said, 'Say, you kids are getting' awful big. I reckon you're probably old enough now... you wanna see something cool?'

We shrugged and followed him inside, and from the top of a bookcase, he pulled down a Japanese officer's sword in a dull grey sheath.

'Wooooow,' we all said.

'Got it off a guy who tried to pot me,' he said. He drew it shimmering into the bright electric light. 'Came at me outta the dark, yellin' and howlin like a demon with ten or twelve of his other buddies.' He winked at us. 'But what they didn't know was that your ol pal M Bombardier was named after the greatest boxer of all time. Baf! Pam! Kaplow! Laid 'em all out flat quick as you can talk about it. An' I said to 'em. I said, let that be a lesson to ya, kamikaze. Never tussle with an American!' and then, remembering his audience, he added '...or Canadian.' Well, we all loved that story, except for Jake Fujiwara from down the block, who seemed to have... conflicted feelings.

'It's still sharp,' said M. Bombardier. 'You kids wanna use it to cut pumbpkins in half out back?'

It was the best Halloween ever.

When we were leaving that night, he called out from the porch. 'Come back in a few years and I'll show you kids the REAL cool stuff we brought back from the war.'

But... The next few years turned out to be not so kind to M. Bombardier McDonagh. He'd always looked at least ten years younger than he was, but those years were getting long, and they finally started catching up with him. At first, he'd just get your nickname wrong, but gradually... well, you've probably known some folks with cognitive decline, and... you get the idea. Eventually he said something truly unforgivable to Jake Fujiwara's mom, and after that, well... he stopped being quite such a fixture of the community.

'Look kids,' my mom said to us a few falls later. 'I'm sorry to say it, but this halloween, I don't think you should go to M. Bombardier McDonagh's house. He's getting a little confused, you know, and halloween... well, it might just be... not good for him, you know?'

And we'd seen the same thing happen to our grandma, so we nodded our heads and said okay.

Now that was the year I turned thirteen, so I wasn't really out trick-or-treating anyway. While my sister was going from door-to-door, me and Jake and the others were out smoking cigarettes on the school roof, and then throwing eggs at the rich houses in town. My curfew

was technically 10, but it was already 10:30 by the time I arrived at the bottom of the street where I lived.

Like I mentioned, it was a quiet town. By 10:30, the streets were empty, and I was the only one out. And so I nearly jumped out of my skin when a voice called out to me out of the darkness in a Stage Whisper.

'Hey! Hey Big Time!'

I turned around, and there, smoking a cigar on his front porch, all lit up silver in the moonlight, was M. Bombardier McDonagh. He beckoned me, and I was a little hesitant, but he'd remembered my nickname, and seemed lucid enough. Besides, I was big for my age, and M. Bombardier wasn't the physical presence he'd been even two years earlier.

'Big Time! Remember a few years ago when I showed you guys that sword?'

'Well sure,'

He winked at me, and it reminded me of the old M. Bombardier I'd grown up knowing. It was a good feeling, comforting.

'You wanna see what else we brought back?'

I followed him into his house, and the place, which had once been neat and tidy as a Marine sergeant's haircut, had become cluttered and musty. The sour, powdery smell of senility had oozed into the carpet and bookshelves.

'Here we are,' said M. Bombardier. He had opened a wooden cabinet to reveal a small safe--the kind with a key, not a combination lock. The key, along with his old dogtags, was hanging from a ballchain around his neck.

'Ah heck'

He hissed from the pain in arthritic knuckles as his blue-veined fingers fumbled a few moments with the lock. At last, there was a click and the safe door swung open, revealing darkness within.

He hummed softly to himself as he reached inside. Ever the showman, he paused before withdrawing his hands, to wink at me. His eyes were very bright; blue as the south-pacific sky, but hazed with the distant cirrus-clouds of age. When he spoke, I wasn't sure if... he didn't know what was going on... or if it was the first time in years that he *did*.

'Hey Big-Time: get a load of this. Brought back some pretty cool stuff, huh?'

What he passed into my hands was dry and surprisingly light. It carried a faint smell; faint enough that you might almost miss it. Grey and mottled; it was a necklace of human ears.

...

I passed the artefact back into his frail hands, and walked back out into the night. An October wind rippled the moon and maple-shrouded streetlights of my small Ontario town. It was well past curfew. I wandered home alone.

### **A Man's House is his Castle**

Halloween: 1987, and Johnny, Roop, and Taz were all out smashing pumpkins with a baseball bat.

There was one house left on the block, and Roop was wiping pumpkin goop off of the bat with a rag. Mrs McCready always carved her jack o lantern in the middle of October, so by Halloween night, it was already collapsing and mottled.

'Gross.' Said Roop. 'One more house and then we head home?'

'Sure,' said Johnny. 'Whose place is that down at the end?'

'I dunno,' said Taz. 'They just moved in.'

There was a light flickering under the awning of that darkened porch, set back from the street out at the end of the block, under the trees.

'Well, looks like they got a pumpkin for us, anyways' said Roop. 'Creepy place though; who'd move in there?'

'I know who,' said Johnny with a smile. 'A family who's about to get their pumpkin smashed.'

Nigh-invisible in their dark clothes, they crept down the front walk and creaked up the half-rotten steps of the last house. The pumpkin was a real classic. Big'n'meaty, bright orange: with triangular eyes and a broad, toothy smile.

'Oh baby,' said Johnny, winding up with the baseball bat. 'This is gonna be a good one.'

*'Oh... is it?'*

Johnny froze at the sound of a heavy metallic click. The front screen door of the house swung open, and moonlight glimmered from the silvery double-bore of a sawn-off shotgun.

Johnny dropped the baseball bat and backed away with his hands up.

'Whoa, I'm sorry man, I didn't mean—'

*'You kids picked the wrong house to fuck around with.'*

'Please, really, we weren't trying to—'



*'...Punks with your leather jackets and your cigarettes, trying to terrify ordinary homeowners? Well you can only push a man so far.'*

'Please,' said Taz, as he and Roop backed down the creaking front steps. 'Please sir, the jackets, they're only denim—'

He fell silent as the man with the shotgun stepped into the moonlight illuminating the porch. He was built like a pickup truck, dressed in plaid, and had the sleeves rolled up over hairy forearms. And his head... well, his head was a pumpkin.

*'A man's home is his castle,'* said the man.

And then two deafening gunshots opened up the night. Somebody screamed, and footsteps thudded on the packed-dirt of the front walk. A moment later, a third gunshot went off. And after that, all was silent on Halloween night.

The next morning, a pair of cop cars were drawn up in front of the porch at the end of the road. The officer was taking notes on a small, spiral-ringed pad with a blunt golf pencil.

'Well,' he said, finishing his notes and tucking the pad into his front chest-pocket. 'It all sounds pretty cut-and-dried to me, Mr. McPumpkinhead. You had no choice but to protect your property. After all; a man's home is his castle.'

The two men shook hands, and the officer climbed into the front seat of his cruiser, adjusting the mirror so he could look at himself. A pair of black, triangular eyes stared back. Satisfied with his appearance, the officer grunted, adjusted the mirror again, and settled a peaked cap on top of his big pumpkiny head.

Moments later, his cruiser was peeling out of the driveway. It was just another day on the thin orange line.

## **HOMEMADE**

"Ugh, mommy that's gross," said Terese, pointing to the fake blood in the polaroid.

"Yeah hon, your mom's costumes were, uh, pretty wild," laughed Eric.

Amaranth, Amie to her friends, laughed right back. It was Halloween and the three of them were flipping through one of the old photo albums Amie's mother had bequeathed to her in her will. While the rest of the albums were labelled as "weddings" or "birthdays", this one had been left blank, but it was obvious when these pictures had been taken. It was filled with polaroids, all red-eyes and ugly lighting, each of which depicted a young Amie wearing a homemade Halloween costume.

Amie didn't remember many of the costumes, children rarely do, but looking at them brought back the sweet smell of clove cigarettes. Her mother would smoke them by the handful while

she carefully attached each part of the costume. Her heels would click and clack against the hardwood floor as she circled the chair where Amie sat, trying not to fidget.

“Old homemade costumes always look freaky,” said Amie. “We didn’t have cheap molded plastic and polyester when I was your age. Grandma had to improvise.”

“But what are you dressed as?” asked Terese.

Amie took a closer look. In this photo, she looked to be about 6. She was wearing an old burlap sack with holes cut for eyes. She had a bizarre wicker charm around her neck and her hands were covered in fake blood.

“You know honey, I don’t know,” said Amie. “Grandma probably just threw it together. She was so busy with work, PTA, she even did neighbourhood watch.”

“Neighbourhood watch?” said Eric.

“Yeah, she pulled the night shift every week for years. I had a lot of babysitters growing up.”

Eric furrowed his brow for a moment.

“Did she ever mention that to me?”

But before she could answer, Terese cut him off with a shriek of laughter.

“Look at this one, mommy!”

Amie followed Terese’s finger to another photograph. In this one, Amie seemed to be about seven, wearing what looked like a spider costume, albeit one with far too many legs. The legs appeared to be made from woven wicker and each one ended in a sharp point. Her actual hands held a lit candle. Amie’s mother was in the background, her hands busy with something just out of frame, a clove cigarette clenched between her teeth.

Amie wracked her brain, but couldn’t remember any of this. Why was she the only one in these photos? What about the friends she trick-or-treated with? She flipped ahead.

Terese clutched at her mother, no longer laughing.

Amie, eight years old, her arms painted with cryptic designs drawn in black ink. She felt queasy looking at them. In this photo she wore a glazed expression, her palms outstretched toward the camera. From the centre of each gazed a detailed, void-black eye. Amie’s mother was standing in the background, next to a small pile of dead birds.

Amie didn’t even realize that Terese had started crying, or notice when she ran upstairs and slammed her door, or when Eric chased after her, briefly shooting a confused look over at Amie.

Amie sat alone on the couch, just staring at the final photograph in the album.

Amie stood in the foreground wearing a blood-stained nightgown, holding the skinned carcass of some unidentifiable creature. Her face was obscured by a lamb's skull, which she wore as a mask. She was staring at the camera, seemingly totally unaware of her surroundings. Behind her, Amie's mother lay on the ground in the middle of a large circle of runes. She was completely nude, as were the five other people standing around the circle.

But none of these disturbing images are what drew Amie's eye. She was too focused on something in the background. The camera flash had cast a long shadow behind young Amie but, half-hidden in the shadows, she could just make out a figure. Hunched, skeletal, and with arms that ended in filthy claws. It was ignoring everything in the photo except her mother. A single, putrid hand was reaching from the darkness and into the light, outstretched towards her mother in a gesture of offering. Offering... offering what? The hand was empty. Or... perhaps it was a gesture of taking.

Amie inhaled deeply, trying to calm herself. As she did, her nose suddenly filled with the familiar scent of clove cigarettes.

The smell grew stronger as she heard the click-clacking of heels on the porch steps. The doorbell rang.