

Halloween

"Mommy, Daddy, there's someone at the door! It's Halloween, I know it's 'cause of Halloween! Mommy, I want to go trick-or-treating!" The little girl had been asking for hours about trick-or-treating that night. But every time she asked, her parents told her that "Halloween is not until tomorrow night". The little girl was four years old, and her parents were the only authority she could go to for verification of this enormously important question: when was Halloween? Tonight? Or tomorrow night?

For whatever reason, the little girl was pretty sure that it was tonight. She kept visualizing going up to the door of the neighbor's house and gleefully calling out, "Trick or Treat!" But in her vision, which was sanded away at the edges with fear, the neighbor would say to her, "Oh honey, I'm so sorry, I don't have any more candy, Halloween was last night!"

If that happened she would turn to her parents with accusation lighting her eyes like lamps, and those lamps would light the way to an answer to this mystery. If indeed there was a mystery. To find out if there WAS even a mystery, she would have to wait 'till tomorrow night, and go trick-or-treating, and come face to face with the truth. The thought that the truth might be crushing was something that she had to live with until then.

The fear that she would miss out on what, to a 4-year-old, was one of the highlights of the year, made each minute seem to last a long time. But there was another fear, too. She didn't really think about that worse fear very much, because it meant admitting something that made her afraid. That worse fear was the suspicion that her parents were lying to her.

The next night, she got all dressed up in her Halloween costume and her father drove a couple of blocks from home, parked the car, and the little girl ran up to the porch ahead of her, lights on and welcoming. Her father came up behind her and seemed to be mulling over some private joke. The little girl pressed the doorbell and waited with anticipation as she heard someone inside coming to answer the door. It opened! And there stood a nice-looking lady about her grandmother's age. "Trick or Treat!" the little girl almost shouted. "Oh, dear, well I'm very sorry, little girl, I don't have anything to give you, Halloween was last night."

The little girl turned to her father and whispered, "She says trick or treat was last night!" Her father said thank you to the lady at the door and said to his little girl, "Don't worry, we'll try another house." But the same thing happened at the next house. And the next house. Finally, the little girl was accepting of her fate. It must be true. She had missed Halloween. And there wouldn't be an opportunity to dress up again and have access to CANDY, which was normally forbidden in her health-conscious home, for a whole YEAR. She began to cry and walk back

toward the car to drive home, her father consoling her, "I'm sorry honey, we must have just missed it this year, but don't be sad, Halloween will come again, and we won't miss it next year."

Well that statement was partly true and partly false. The next year I was FIVE, and no way did I miss Halloween that year. The false part was the "we must have just missed it this year". My parents didn't want me exposed to all that forbidden CANDY. And besides, it's bad for your teeth.

So lying to your children (which in retrospect it becomes clear that that is exactly what you did), lying to your children is less important than a couple of days exposure to candy bars? No, it's more important. The memory of someone's willful duplicity, undertaken in order to accomplish their agenda, especially when it's your own parents, whom you want to trust, who are doing the lying, that memory lasts lifetime, or at least 66 years of those four-year-old's memories are remembered. And are remembered with a sense of loss.

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8/18/19