



OCTOBER 30, 2022 | BY LUCIE FROST · PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Memories of a Halloween Geek: Why My Costumes Sucked

As a lame trick-or-treater in the 70s, Lucie Frost learned hard lessons about cuteness, marketing, knowing your audience, and chocolate.

As a kid growing up in Guadalajara in the 70s, I learned this important lesson about trick-or-treating in Mexico: Halloween is a simple sales transaction. Kid offers up cuteness; adult pays for it with candy. The better the costume, the better the candy. The cuter the kid, the more likely the currency is Hershey's and not Smarties. I

was always a Smarties kid, never quite mastering this type of spooky sales process.

The first year I was allowed to trick-or-treat on my own—I'm thinking I was probably eight or nine, which seems unthinkable now, but this was the 70s, when kids were still feral, especially on Halloween—the product I decided to sell generated no excitement. The girls who scored big sold themselves as princesses, ballerinas, even puppies—all cute. Me? I went as a bookworm. A literal bookworm. Not the “person devoted to reading” kind, but the “larva of a wood-boring beetle that feeds on the paper and glue of books” kind.

I made my costume by covering a balloon with strips of newspaper and glue, painting the papier-mâché globe with my Tempera paint, then adding pipe-cleaner antennae. I wore it on my head like a helmet. Do beetle larvae have antennae? I doubt it, but I was a kid, not an entomologist. I dressed in a stink-bug-green turtleneck, cockroach-brown corduroy pants, and june-bug-tan Chukkas. I carried a

“

The girls who scored big sold themselves as princesses, ballerinas, even puppies—all cute. Me? I went as a bookworm. A literal bookworm.

Britannica, upon whose glue I, the bookworm, purported to feast. But it wasn't just any Britannica. It was a volume from the *venerable 11th edition*, signaling to homeowners that the insect larva

before them knew quality. I went home with a bagful of hard candy, none chocolate.

My post-transaction analysis taught me this: a kid wanting a good Halloween haul should never: (1) dress as any kind of bug, (2) hide their dimples under a papier-mâché orb, or (3) expect homeowners to appreciate the distinction amongst Britannica editions.

I vowed to do better the next year.

I did not do better the next year.

Read More: Mother-Daughter Nose-Piercing: How It Bonded Us and Liberated Me

Can You Say “Pee Pee”?

Yes, I did make sure my round face and deep dimples were prominently displayed, but here’s where I went wrong. Again, I went literary—this time, as Pippi Longstocking. While the bumble bees, cheerleaders, and I Dream of Jeannies quickly gathered their chocolate spoils, I was stuck on front doorsteps, explaining myself. “Who am I dressed as? Pippi Longstocking. No, not pee-pee. Pippi.” Remember that I was trick-or-treating in Guadalajara? To the extent any adults knew about Pippi Longstocking, they weren’t the ones handing out candy in the state of Jalisco.

But with each year came new possibility. The next year, I decided to follow the masses. I went as a witch. Everyone loves a witch, right? Witches grab their candy and run. Hell, they get

““

That year, I found out that not *all*

chocolate kisses practically
thrown at them. They get
“Go ahead and grab yourself
another little handful” offers.


witches get good
booty.

But that year, I found out that not *all* witches get good booty. Black hatted witches score big, but if you decide instead to dress as the cauldron-stirring kind of witch, except you don't have a cauldron, so you just wear a kitchen apron over your brown cords, and you saw off a broom to use as your cauldron stirrer—well, then you don't look at all like a witch. You look like a person with a stick and an apron. Aproned stick-bearers do not get the good candy. They get looks of confusion.

You would think things could not get worse for me on the All Hallows front, but they did. My mother, who already had a fair amount of hippie in her, decided to go full-on humanitarian. I would not be allowed to ask for candy. Instead, my mother made me carry a construction paper box with a coin slot and “Trick or Treat for UNICEF!” To the extent that the Mexican nationals did not appreciate Britannica 11th munching larvae or characters named Pee-Pee, they certainly didn't understand why I was un-costumed, begging for coin instead of candy. I made eight pesos for UNICEF that year.

So what's the lesson here? When you open your door this Halloween, yes, hand a candy or two to those of smart disguise, those who do a successful job of selling their cute to you. But also look to the back of the pack. Find the girl whose costume barely seems a costume. Go ahead and ask her who she is dressed as. The weirder her answer, the more of the good stuff you should throw her way. Life's hard enough as a bookworm. Give the poor gal some chocolate.

[Read More: Selling Your Childhood Home: Does a House Make a Family?](#)

 About the author: *Lucie Frost*

Tell us something about yourself.

CATEGORIES: PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

TAGS: *protected*

RECENT ARTICLES

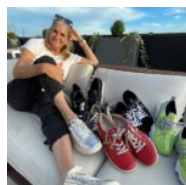
What a Mess: My Fiance’s Kids Don’t Approve of Our Marriage



What to do if you find The One very (and we mean VERY) soon after the death of his wife? Listen up as Answer Queen, our advice guru, weighs in.

[> READ MORE](#)

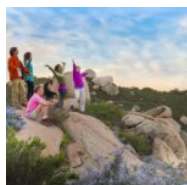
The 39 Best Shoes for Travel: Handpicked by an Expert



NextTribe Founder Jeannie Ralston has led trips all over the world. Here, her 39 picks for footwear that will keep you pain-free from Paris to Peru.

[> READ MORE](#)

What Happens at the Best Spa in the World: A Peek and an Offer



Someone had to go to Rancho La Puerta to find out the secrets of this

A New Film Puts Firebrand Bella Abzug Back in the Spotlight



Bella Abzug was 50 when she was first elected to Congress. A PBS