



# October Story

October 1965

Signs of Fall were everywhere. The breezes were cool now and the leaves were floating across the sky as Darcy walked home from school with her younger sister Dawn. Darcy held her stack of books tight, arms wrapped around them, thinking of the day ahead. She was planning her Halloween birthday party.

“I can’t wait to have my friends over and we will carve pumpkins out on the back porch. Planning is almost the best part of any party. Mom is baking a German Chocolate Cake; my favorite.” The older sister said every sentence, one right after the other, as they walked past all the businesses and turned the corner on to their street. Dawn walk faster just to keep up.

“We are carving our pumpkins early so you and your friend can have the back porch all to yourselves.” Dawn said reaching for the front door of their small home.

Darcy walked in behind Dawn, dumped her books on the table next to her little sister, and pulled out her homework.

“What are you working on?” Dawn asked while carefully arranging her books on the table.

“We have to write a story that begins with the words: ‘There once was a new...’

“Our pumpkins are new,” suggested Dawn, “At least new to us.”

“Dawn, you are brilliant!” Darcy began to write.

(see her story below)

# Jolly Jack

by Darcy Ann Chase

There once was a new little jack-o-lantern, created by Darcy on her Halloween birthday. He came to life on the back porch of a regular city house in a regular city. He was very excited to see he had instant company all around as Darcy had invited her friends to create jack-o-lanterns for themselves from the pumpkins on the porch. Some jack-o-lanterns had big triangle noses, and others had frightening smiles, and they were new, just like him. When they came to life, they too looked around at their new surroundings.

“So, this is the next chapter of my life. No farmland, no forest, no leaves changing color. I don’t get it,” he said aloud. His fellow pumpkins looked at him and turned away to talk to only each other. They peeked back at him, laughed a little and turned back to their little group.

“What are they laughing about. And why am I left out,” he wondered looking about. Just then he caught a glimpse of himself in the window. The jack-o-lantern he saw in the reflection had a huge, smile. Not only that but it was a happy, laughing kind of smile. And the mouth on a jack-o-lantern is there for life.

“Ahh,” he gasped. “Who would play such an awful trick on me,” he said to his reflection. “How can I be scary on Halloween night looking like this?”

The girls who had carved these many characters set them in a line on the rail of the porch with all the faces looking toward the back yard. Then the creators ran around to the yard taking pictures of their art projects with their brownie cameras to remember the day.

“Cake,” Mom called opening the screen door. The girls of all shapes and sizes crammed through the door talking and giggling. Once in, the screen door slammed.

“Oh, the shame of it all,” the odd jack-o-lantern moaned. He looked across the backyard to a gnarly old Fig tree standing in the back corner. It seemed to be waving his plate size leaves in a friendly way.

Sitting in the tree was another pumpkin, with a little grin carved under round eyes.

All of the pumpkins on the rail started laughing wonderful, horrible laughs as they practiced for the big night. The odd pumpkin tried to do the same, but his laugh came out as a loud sound of merriment from his happy smile. The others turned toward him with shocked faces. He was mortified.

Just then, all of the artists came scurrying onto the porch. They grabbed their own creation, wished Darcy well and were gone. Just like that, the back yard was quiet. Hardly a thing moved; the jack-o-lantern was all by himself.

He tried to moan again; and it came out like a chuckle. He puffed up with a stern face and tried again. This time it sounded like a happy grandfather.

Settling down to his regular size, his eyes drooped, and he looked deflated. He failed as a scary jack-o-lantern.

The wind passed through the backyard and the leaves of the old tree waved again. A happy sigh was heard coming from the branches.

“Who’s there?” the single pumpkin asked into the wind. He squinted his eyes looking into the branches.

“The little sister calls me Jane,” answered this high, sweet voice floating across the backyard.

“You are not very scary,” whispered the lone jack-o-lantern. Then turned partially away as he too, was not very scary.

“I am not,” she sighed, “but little sister says she likes me like this. I make her happy when she looks at me, she says.”

“I am sorry for us both,” the pumpkin on the rail whispered looking down and dejected.

The screen door opened and out came the two sisters. Darcy picked up her creation and looked at him straight on.

“The proper name for you is Joseph Jonathon Jasper Jack,” she said and the little sister passing behind her laughed.

“Ok, so... you are a happy orange guy,” Darcy said looking him over. “I will call you Jolly for short. Jolly Jack.”

“Ugh,” thought the pumpkin in her hands. “What will the others think?”

Holding the pumpkin gently in her hands, she brought him through the house and out to the front porch. Jane appeared right next to him as little sister put her down in a row with the other three. Now they were all looking out across the front lawn as night was approaching.

“They will light us soon and everyone will see how happy I look,” he said ashamed.

“There must be a reason they made us this way. I don’t know what it is, but I am looking forward to finding out.” Jane smiled at Jolly Jack and all he could do was cringe.

“Here they come,” he said.

Darcy and her sibling came out of the house, each dressed as something scary. Darcy wore a witch costume with striped socks and pointy shoes. She leaned over and lifted the lid of her jack-o-lantern.

“Here you go Jolly Jack,” she said placing a small candle inside of him. With a long wooden match, she created a flame and gently lowered it into his belly lighting the wick. A warm glow started to spread within him.

“You look charming,” said Jane who was also aglow. Her round eyes flickered happily next to his.

“How do you blow this thing out,” said Jack looking around for a way to hide his face.

A rustle of clothes on the sidewalk in front brought his attention back to the first Halloween moment. A dad approached with a little girl and boy in his arms. They were all dressed up in costumes; one as a princess, one as a knight and the big man as a pirate. As they came up to the porch, the little girl saw the jack-o-lanterns lined up and the evil grin of the one on the far end threw his flickering shadow across the front lawn.

The little princess screamed and hid her face over the shoulder of the pirate. The knight pretended to fight but held close to his dad’s chest. The dad continued to the front steps and stopped.

“See, little ones,” he said softly. “Just because these jack-o-lanterns look scary doesn’t mean that they are. They were all just pumpkins once. And look at these two.”

He set the children down on the grass in front of all the jack-o-lanterns and the children looked at each of them.

“I like that one. She is so pretty,” said the little girl wiping away her tears and pointing to Jane.

“That one isn’t scary at all,” the little knight said. “He must be brave to carry that smile when there are so many mean faces around him.” The little boy put his arm across his belly and bowed to Jolly Jack. “I like him the best.”

The dad smiled and took the children by the hand going up the front steps.

“Trick or Treat,” the two kids called out. The pumpkins could hear the rustle of the children reaching into the pot of candy offered at the front door. The three hurried down the steps and off to the next house.

“That was great! Did you see that? He liked me best.” Jolly Jack said with his smile even larger than it was originally carved. “Brave. He called me brave.”

Jane’s eyes were more round and soft as she replayed what the little princess had said about her.

“We helped make Halloween a good one for those two little ones,” she said smiling.

“We did,” said Jolly proudly.

For the rest of the night Jolly Jack boldly smiled out into the night of scary things, knowing he had a job to do. And he did it well.

The end.