Day 4: prompt 73: Write a story about Trick or Treating

The Biggest Haul of Them All

By Adam Dombrow

Thirteen year old Baxter Chapman chomps down a bowl of cereal, then yells “goodbye” to his household, grabbing a spare pillow case, and his red, skull mask, as he begins to leave the house. It is 3:00 PM on Halloween, which gives Baxter roughly two-and-a-half more hours before sundown. *I'm going to take as much candy as I can—the biggest haul of them all!* He places the mask over his face, staring at himself in the mirror: the mask makes him feel powerful, scary, and indestructible. The mask hides his mischievous grin as he exits his house with his sights set on all of Bellingswood.

He surveys his own street– Radner Dr, and waits for a group of young Trick-or-Treaters to come by. He sees one– a group of three: a little witch, a goblin, and a boy wearing a pumpkin mask, approaching. He gets into position, crouching behind a fence in one of his neighbor's yards, and waits until he can hear the group's footsteps and giggles grow closer. Finally, he lunges out at the group, eliciting a small scream from the witch, and sighs of shock from the goblin and the pumpkin. “GIVE ME YOUR BAGS,” he growls at them, doing his best to make his voice sound menacing. The goblin drops his candy bag, as the trio turn and run away. Baxter greedily snatches up the bag, flinging the entire thing into his pillow case. *So it begins*!

For the next two hours, Baxter runs roughshod throughout his neighborhood, making sure to never take off his mask. He seizes upon numerous other unsuspecting groups of kids, yanking candy out of their bags as he goes. He feels giddy upon finding a few houses which have left

their bowls of candy out on their porches unsupervised with “take one piece” signs: he stares into their Ring doorbell cams, smiling at them mockingly behind his mask, and then quickly empties their full bowls into his candy sack. A few times, he gets yelled at by homeowners when he rushes ahead of little groups, butting in, scooping up a quick handful of treats, and then dashing off like a thief in the night fleeing from the scene of a crime. By the time the sun has almost set, the menace Baxter has almost filled up his entire pillow case. *Gotta be the biggest haul of them all* he reminds himself, before continuing on his chaotic candy campaign.

All is almost lost near the Bellingswood Cinema when, at the opposite end of the street, Baxter encounters a group of three older, stronger guys all running the same game as him–vying for the biggest haul. They lock onto him right away. Realizing that he is now presented with an unforeseen opportunity to gamble his candy while possibly picking up some from the group, Baxter continues towards them. Once they are close enough to each other, the largest of the three guys, who is dressed up like a football player, lunges at Baxter. “Come here red face,” one of the other guys, dressed up as a member of Cobra Kai, yells. Baxter dodges underneath the large football player’s grasp, and then launches himself at the Cobra Kai guy, punching him in his groin, instantly dropping him to the floor, leaving the final member stunned. He quickly scoops up Cobra Kai guy’s bag in his free hand, then runs forward a few feet before slowing down to shuffle the new bag into the hand that already clutches his own bag. Baxter turns around, having put the smallest bit of distance between him and the posse, two of whom have stopped to tend to their friend, and he flips them all the middle finger. One of them begins to give chase, but Baxter is too fast, and he easily escapes.

After making sure he has eluded the group, he ducks around the corner of a random house, and removes the mask, taking in deep, stinging breaths to try and steady his pounding heart. He throws the mask into a recycling bin near the side of the house, as if discarding evidence which would implicate him in a crime. Sweaty, and with his adrenaline through the roof following the encounter, Baxter decides it is time to call it a night. Hoping not to run into the trio again, and praying that he has collected enough candy, he begins making the journey back to his house.

Once he's made it home, he crisscrosses the kitchen where his mother, Annie, sits. Her eyes are heavy, and she is still dressed in her scrubs from work. She lowers the cup of coffee from her lips, trying to talk to her firstborn son. He quickly raises his index finger to his lips, shushing her. “We will talk later,” he whispers, as he mosies on through the kitchen and down the hall, pausing at the first door. He takes a deep breath, and tries to calm his nerves before he slowly opens the door. He tiptowing past the threshold ever so softly, and closes it behind him. He does his best to silently glide across the room, stopping once he reaches the tiny wooden desk with the small lamp. He clicks the lamp on, then gently slides the child-sized wooden chair out from the desk, inching it up against the tiny bed in the corner of the room. The small, weakened body laying in the bed begins to stir to life. “Bax…” the frail boy whispers in his wheezy, little voice, before raising his thin, black, blue, and pale hands to rub the cobwebs from his sickly, sunken eyesockets, making sure not to knock loose the small oxygen cannula from his nose. “Shhh, don't talk Sam,” Baxter whispers to his younger brother, placing his hand on the boy's head, ruffling what remains of the boy's thinning brown hair. He smiles at his little brother, doing his best to hold back the tears that are fighting to escape from his eyes. Sam struggles to sit up in

his bed, but his fragile little arms finally achieve the task, with only a little help from his big brother. Sam wheezes for a second, and coughs a few times, before turning his little head towards his brother, with a look of total admiration written across his face. Baxter lays the pillow case stuffed with candy onto Sam's lap. “I told you I would get you the biggest haul of them all!”