

"Joey Salami's Halloween"

by
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Night is falling, and the bright, shining moon is full. Many kids are trick or treating with their tired parents. The costumes this year are incredibly varied. No princesses and hobos here.

A sign by the cobblestone walk of the dark house reads "The Canbys."

JOEY, eight years old and overweight, is wearing a Superman costume that has seen its better-fitting days. The mask is tight, and breathing through the air hole at the mouth is difficult.

His heavyset MOM, who looks like she would rather be anywhere else, stands beside him gabbing on her cell.

Joey looks up the walk of the Canbys' house and spots the unmistakable yellow wrapper of a Charleston Chew. Full size! He really wants that candy bar, but there is one problem.

At the Canbys' front door, holding a silver platter of candy for trick or treaters, is the latest Halloween animatronic figure - the WITCHIEPOO MAX (the name is seen on her costume).

She is ugly. Her ancient veins puff up and deflate as whatever passes for blood makes its way through them. Her green-tinged face is creased with more wrinkles than there has been time. A large wart on the end of her pointed nose beams a ready-to-pop crimson.

She moves a silver tray about in her withered hands with finely honed, long, purple fingernails, offering brave children sweets. Along with her dark dress, the Max wears a black cloak and a large, pointed hat. A well-worn broom is tucked under one leg, as though prepared for flight.

The motion detectors in her bulbous eyes, pulsing yellow through bloodshot markings, sense approaching children and bring her to "life." A slight buzz sounds with every move she makes. She seems to speak (and occasionally cackle) through her pointy teeth and shriveled lips.

WITCHIEPOO MAX

Take some of my offerings,
kiddies.

(beat)

Halloween is my favorite night of
the year.

(beat)

Come closer. I won't bite you.

Joey watches the Chews vanish from the tray and go into the other kids' bags. He really wants one, but that witch. . .

Mom finishes her call and speaks to her lollygagging son.

MOM

Joey, go or don't go, but make it quick. My legs are starting to hurt.

Joey looks up at her through his mask's eye slits.

JOEY

Will you come with me?

MOM

(sighs)

Joey holds out a sweaty, pudgy hand. Mom rolls her eyes, grabs it, and leads him up the walkway.

He closes his eyes - relying on his mother's guidance - so as not to see the Max. He slips on some wet cobblestones and falls onto the grass. Mom picks him up with a grunt.

MOM

(sotto voce)

Clumsy.

Joey opens his eyes, focusing on his chocolate and marshmallow goal. He and Mom have to occasionally move aside or pause to allow other, braver costumed kids to pass.

To Joey's ears, the Witchiepoo Max's voice seems to echo as he hears it.

WITCHIEPOO MAX

(with a slight echo)

I'll get you, my pretty!

(beat)

What did you bring me this All Hallows' Eve?

(beat)

Aren't you a handsome child?

One more step brings Joey to Witchiepoo, his head level with her nearly empty candy tray. Mom happily lets go of his hand and rubs her boy's sweat away on her hoodie. He looks up at the Max.

JOEY
(nervously)
Trick or. . . or treat.

He reaches for his treat. The Max grins and lets go of the tray. It hits the ground with a *clang*, scattering the few remaining candy bars at the other kids' feet.

Witchiepoo grabs Joey's hand, pulls him to her, and holds him very tight. He struggles in vain to be free.

JOEY
Help! Help me!

Mom screams. The other adults and kids are amazed at what they are seeing. Witchiepoo mounts her broom, still holding on to Joey.

WITCHIEPOO MAX
(cackles first)
I won't need food for a week!

In a flash, the young boy and the Max are soaring into the night sky atop the broom, Witchiepoo's electric cord fluttering behind them like a tail and sometimes catching in Joey's too-small Superman cape.

Joey looks down at the ground and spots the yellow wrapper of his lost treat. He helplessly reaches for it.

FADE OUT.