

October's Very Own

I worked security at a pumpkin patch this past October. I had never worked security before but this tubby Jew offered me the job and I accepted on account of his gold cufflinks—the way I see it, you don't wear gold cufflinks if you're not important. I was sure he was peddling something under the rug and the pumpkins were just a cover up. I figured if I proved to be loyal muscle he'd throw me a bone and I'd pocket some nontaxable dough on the down low.

Turns out I was wrong though, at least partially. Like I thought, the whole thing was a sham, but the Jew was a real a sourpuss. Never gave me so much as a dime off the clock.

First day was real quiet. Boss said it was no surprise, that it takes time for word to hit the street. Guaranteed we'd be raking it in by the middle of the month.

"Closer we get to Halloween, the more they'll come out of the woodwork," he told me, reclining heavily in the lot's sole chair. "Jack-o'-lanterns are irresistible."

When I told him I'd never carved a jack-o'-lantern he huffed and said that attitude belonged nowhere near his pumpkin patch. Then he insulted my parents.

"What sick fuck denies a child the simple pleasure of carving up a jack-o'-lantern?"

I tried to defend my upbringing, but he wouldn't hear it. Instead, he rolled up his right pant leg and retrieved a switchblade sheathed by his argyle sock.

"Go on," he said, handing me the blade. "Live a little."

I arrived early every day. Sometimes he'd beat me and other times I'd beat him. Usually if I was there first he'd chastise me for brownnosing. However, if I caught him on a good day he'd thank me for my diligence and flip me a chocolate coin. He had a duffel bag full of them. He carried it with him everywhere he went. During that slow first week he must have consumed two dozen a day. He'd just sit there, all sweaty and bulbous, fanning himself with a Japanese hand-fan, tossing chocolate coins into his mouth.

He stole them from delis. He explained it to me during a lunch break as he downed a Mason jar full of butternut squash soup. Not Italian delis though—strictly Jewish ones. He said he felt guilty stealing from other ethnic groups, but no had qualms fucking other Jews over.

"It's a dog-eat-dog world," he said. "I'm a dog, I stick to other dogs. Cats? They get off scot-free. Same with birds and vermin and whatever else you can think of. But dogs? Not while I'm in charge."

"That's one way of looking at it," I replied.

"That's the *only* way of looking at it," he said, tearing off the gold foil of another coin. Then, after a short pause, he added, "You know what this place needs? A fucking moon bounce."

He had the moon bounce installed the same day he had the porta-potty installed. The moon bounce was to attract kids and their families, pretty obvious stuff. The porta-potty on the other hand, while functioning as a serviceable bathroom when you couldn't hold it in, was ordered for far more dubious reasons.

"A man needs to relieve himself every once in a while," he stated one day. "It's not healthy keeping it all bottled up."

"Just to be clear," I asked, "you're talking about jerking it?"

"You bet your sweet bippy I am! Come on, we were both thinking it."

"You can't prove that," I responded.

“Look, I know you,” he said sternly. “Yeah, you’ve been on the job for like a week and sometimes I forget your name, but I know you. And if I’m right, as I usually am, you’ve wanted to masturbate on the job. Don’t lie to me.”

“Was it that obvious?” I confessed.

“When you’re me, it’s always obvious,” he said. “Always.”

I tried the porta-potty once and knew it wasn’t for me almost immediately. It wasn’t the smell or the cramped space that turned me off; truth be told, I had jerked it in smaller and far smellier locations before. The fact of the matter was, business was on the rise and I couldn’t stay hard with all the children’s laughter going around. I felt so guilty cooped up in that porta-potty I wanted to throw up. I just couldn’t be that guy, you know?

Boss was fine with it though. When the mood hit him, which happened more frequently than with any other man I’ve known, he’d excuse himself and place me in charge of the cash register. As he walked to the john, he’d make a scene to trick the customers into thinking he had stomach problems.

One day while I was manning the cash register, this disgruntled man came up to me and plopped a pumpkin on the table. I recognized him from earlier in the day. He had been to the patch with his kids, a twin boy and girl.

“How can I help you sir?” I asked.

“Don’t ‘sir’ me,” he said. “You think you can swindle a guy and then act all cordial?”

“Swindle? How do you mean?” I asked.

“I bought this pumpkin here not two hours ago,” he started. “After that I went home, relaxed with my wife and kids, and took a short nap. Then the missus woke me up and asked if I could run to the supermarket. We’re having roast duck tonight and she needed some coriander and orange zest. Guess what I saw lined up outside when I got to the market.”

“Pumpkins,” I answered.

“Correct! And they were selling for half the price. Half!”

“And what would you like me to do about it?” I asked.

“Well obviously I want a refund.”

“We don’t do refunds sir,” I said.

“This is preposterous!” he shouted. “Do you know who I am? I’m having *duck* for dinner. I could bury this place.”

“I’m sorry sir, there’s nothing I can do. I’m just the security guard.”

“And where is your boss?” he asked furiously. “I demand to see your boss.”

“Unfortunately, he is inconvenienced at this time,” I explained. “He ate some disagreeable pad Thai and is in no state to conduct business.”

“That slimy kike!” he whispered. Then, without a second’s hesitation, he gasped and covered his mouth with both hands.

“Sir,” I said, “that kind of language is not tolerated on these grounds. This is a kid-friendly zone.”

“You’re right,” he apologized. Then he slapped himself really hard, like really, really hard. “That was completely uncalled for—I don’t know what came over me.”

“You were just angry, it happens to the best of us.”

“No!” he said as he slapped himself again. “Don’t make excuses for me. Anger isn’t justification for racial name-calling. It’s low-hanging fruit. I’m no better than a common racist.”

At this he burst into tears and groaned.

“Oh who am I kidding, *I am a common racist.*”