

# Prince of Pumpkinshire

by Robert Burton Robinson

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GENRE: Humor. LENGTH: 1,898 words. SYNOPSIS: Chip's life is changed forever after an encounter with bullies in the woods on Halloween night.

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Today I turned 13. My birthday party was cool. I got a lot of stuff I wanted—and one thing I *didn't* want: a personal journal.

Journals are for girls. But my mother gave me this thing and she said I have to at least give it a try. And that it's the least I can do after she spent money on it.

I wish she had bought me another video game instead. (Are you reading this, Mom? Why are you snooping into my stuff?)

Okay. Might as well get it over with.

Tomorrow is Halloween—and it's going to be the best one ever. Although, it's going to be hard to top last year. It was a game changer. With a little help from my big brother, Dale, I became a man. (Are you freaking out yet, Mom? That's what you get for snooping. Better stop reading now.)

By the way, my name is Chip. Get it? I'm Chip. My older brother is Dale. Very funny, huh? Seems like my parents didn't develop a sense of humor until I was born. Otherwise they would have named their *first* son Chip and their *second* son Dale. Maybe when I popped out they just started laughing for the first time in their lives.

Anyway, back to my story about how I became a man.

It was Halloween night. My best friend Jimmy and I were dressed up like Peanut M&Ms. Why did we choose little kid costumes? (1) We're both short for our age. (2) Little kids get more candy—especially if they're dressed up really cute.

We never even have to leave my neighborhood. By the time we get back to my house our bags are overflowing. We pig-out until we barf. Then we pig-out some more.

My brother, Dale, is sixteen, but he's not much taller than me. We invited him to go with us.

"No thanks, guys," he said. "I'm a solo act. You get more candy that way. If you go to the door in a crowd, each kid gets just one thing. But when you're standing there all

alone—like you have no friends, they usually feel sorry for you and drop a big handful of stuff in your bag.”

Jimmy and I admire Dale’s mastery of the art of trick-or-treatery. And we could see his point. But we liked going together.

We always start at the back of the neighborhood and work our way up to my house—because the bags get pretty heavy toward the end. But last year, things didn’t go so well. When we got back to my house our bags were only half full.

So, we decided to go over to Jimmy’s neighborhood, Forest Ridge. It’s a long walk by road, so we always take the short-cut through the woods.

There was no moon that night, so the woods were completely black. But we had our flashlights. Besides, as many times as we’ve walked that trail, we probably could have done it with our eyes closed.

We were about halfway through the woods when three guys jumped out from the darkness, blocking the trail. They were over six feet tall, dressed like actors from a Robin Hood movie.

Jimmy and I were about to walk around them, when one of them said, “Halt, ye peasants!”

Cool, I thought. These guys are staying in character—even when they’re not begging for candy. But they couldn’t be getting much anyway. They were way too old for trick-or-treating.

Then the two outer guys drew their swords. I knew they had to be plastic, but they looked very real.

“I am the Prince of Pumpkinshire,” said the middle one, “and this is my sheriff,” nodding to the one on his right.

Yes, I could see him as a prince. Very believable costume.

“You will bow down and worship the prince!” said the sheriff.

Jimmy and I looked at each other. It was getting a little weird.

“You will obey...or you shall surely die!”

The sheriff and the deputy stepped toward us, raising their swords.

There was no way we could outrun those big guys. We dropped to our knees.

“There is a tax to be paid to the prince.”

A *tax*? What the heck?

“Ninety-five percent of your wages.”

Ha! Got you there, Buddy. I don’t make any wages. I’m only 12. “But...”

The sheriff and his deputy snatched our bags of candy. The bags were only half-full, but we had worked hard for that candy.

“Go, and sin no more,” said the prince.

Wait, I thought, isn't that from the *Bible*? These guys are fake. What was I thinking—of course they were fake. They were just bullies who steal candy from young little kids. But Jimmy and I aren't little. Well, we're *little*—but we're not young.

All three of them began to laugh as they turned to walk away. Not a modern laugh—it was a *Medieval* laugh. Picture a fat guy, dressed in fancy, heavy clothes, sitting at a table eating a huge turkey leg, drinking wine out of a big metal goblet. Can you hear the laugh?

“Hey, you said ninety-five percent,” I yelled.

The sheriff threw a couple of Snickers over his shoulder, and laughed even harder.

I said we should go after them. Jimmy agreed. Then he got sick and went home.

What a bust. It was supposed to be the greatest night of the year. The candy was free. And your parents let you eat all you wanted—even if it made you sick. But now it was ruined.

As I walked home with my head held low, I unwrapped the Snicker bar and started to eat it. But it only reminded me of how those bullies had laughed at us. I took it out of my mouth and threw it as hard as I could. Then I thought, what if a dog eats it? The chocolate might kill him. So what? I was mad. I should have stood up to those bullies.

When I got back home I went to Dale's room and knocked on the door.

"Come in, Butthead."

Dale was sprawled out across his bed watching TV. He tossed a handful of Skittles at his open mouth. A few of them fell on the floor. He didn't seem to notice or care. Why should he? His trick or treat bag was filled to the top.

"Where did you get all that?"

"Right here in the neighborhood," he mumbled and chewed.

"We only got half a bag."

"So did I—the first time around."

"The *first* time around?"

"Yeah. Then I came back and changed into my other costume."

"Where did you get another costume?"

"I saved the one from last year."

I told him what had happened to me and Jimmy.

He got mad. "Chip! You've got to learn to stand up to bullies."

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On my way into the woods, I wondered how Jimmy was doing. Maybe his mom felt sorry for him and gave him all the leftover trick-or-treat candy in the house. Or maybe he had cried himself to sleep. I hoped not. Come on, Jimbo, we're twelve—not five.

I was halfway through the woods when I heard, "Halt!"

I shined my flashlight up at the three towering Medievals.

"I am the Prince of Pumpkinshire, and this is *my* forest."

The sheriff and his deputy drew their swords. "You will bow down and worship the prince!" said the sheriff.

Here we go again. I got down on my knees.

"You must pay taxes to the kingdom. You will give up your belongings...or your head!" They raised their swords.

"Please, Sire, I pray thee. Accept my humble offering." I placed my bag on the ground in front of me.

"Let us see if your offering be worthy of the prince," said the sheriff, nodding for the deputy to pick up the bag.

The deputy returned his sword to its scabbard, stepped forward and retrieved my bag. He moved back and seemed to be trying to evaluate it based on weight. Then he got a whiff. "This candy stinks! It smells like—"

"—dog poop?" I said, rising to my feet. "Not just *any* dog poop. That's fresh, Grade-A stuff."

The sheriff spat on the ground and said, “You have insulted the prince!”

“Off with his head,” said the prince.

The deputy tossed the bag into the woods. He and the prince drew their swords. All three were poised to attack.

“Wait,” I said. “Am I not entitled to last words?”

The prince seemed amused. “Yes. Say your final words, peasant.”

“Thank you, Sire. These are my final words: the place you *are* is the place you’re *in*.”

“What does *that* mean?” For the first time, the prince sounded like a high school senior instead of a Medieval prince.

“I believe the meaning is quite clear, Your Majesty,” I said. “The place you *are* is the place you’re *in*. *You’re in*—get it? *Urine*.”

“What?” said the sheriff.

I reached for the Super Soaker water gun that was strapped to my back. “You can’t imagine how much Coke I had to drink to get this much pee, Your Majesty.”

Before they could decide whether to attack or retreat, I blasted all three of them in the face with my warm, liquid ammo.

They screamed like little girls, dropping their plastic swords and fleeing into the darkness. I think one of them ran into a tree.

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The next morning I was sitting on the back seat of the school bus when Kyle got on. The six-foot-five quarterback bypassed five or six empty seats on his way to my seat.

What was Kyle doing on the bus? He was a senior. His dad must have taken his driver's license away again.

He plopped down next to me, elbowing my ribs in the process. "So, how's it hanging, Chippy?" He reached for my left nipple.

I blocked his hand. No nipple twisting today, I assured myself.

He was about to go for the other one, when I said, "You were great in the movie."

"What movie?"

"The one my brother shot last night. I can't wait to upload it to the web."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do, Your Majesty."

He looked confused, then angry. "How did you know it was me?"

“I didn’t know for sure—until now.”

Clearly, he wanted to rip my head off.

I went on. “The mighty Prince of Pumpkinshire—slain in battle.”

“Shut up!” He checked to see if anybody was looking or listening. Then he whispered, “I’ll kill you.”

“No, you won’t. You’ll never touch me again—unless you want to see your little movie on YouTube. And the next time I run into you and your friends at the mall I’ll command you to bark like a dog. And you *will*.”

Kyle was speechless.

“Now get out of my sight. You make me sick.” I said it loud enough for everybody to hear.

He got up and moved to a seat near the front of the bus.

Kyle’s been avoiding me ever since that day.

And that is how I, with the help of my brother, dethroned the evil Prince of Pumpkinshire...and became a man.

(Did my story scare you, Mom? Good. Then I think we can agree that I don’t need to write in this stupid thing anymore. Journals are for girls, Mom.)

THE END

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