

Trick or Horse Treat?

By Noelani Sprecher

One of my fondest memories is from the Halloween of my sophomore year at Grover High School, which is located in a little town in southern Wisconsin. It was a cold, crisp morning on October 31st, when my friends, Beth, Rachel, and I were in the stable discussing the important topic of what costumes to wear. There was going to be a contest at our school and awards were given for the best costumes.

Rachel plopped herself down on a bale of hay and attempted to get some of the loose hay out of her long gold hair. "If Charlie dresses up as Jack Sparrow one more time, I'll be furious!"

(Charlie had won the contest the last two years with his wonderful impersonation of Jack Sparrow.)

Beth said, "We could dress up as skeletons and kidnap him."

I chewed on a piece of hay and thought about the problem. My thoughts were interrupted when I felt something tickle my neck. I reached up to touch the teacup nose of my little Arabian named Strafford. "Not now, buddy," I said, pushing him away, "this is important. All you ever have to worry about is what to eat next!" I glared at him.

He blinked his big dark eyes at me and reached as far as he could over the stall to sniff my hair.

Rachel suddenly had a brainstorm. "I know, Lucy!" she said, looking at me, "Why don't we use our horses as part of our costumes this year? It would be great!"

"How would we use our horses? Besides, they would probably be too skittish with the neighborhood crawling with ghosts and goblins," Beth said, getting up and going over to pet Buttercup, her adorable gray Arabian.

Benny, Beth's little brother, popped up from behind a bale of hay. "Why don't we dress up as the Shadow Riders? They were so cool!"

"Aren't you supposed to be in the house helping mom to bake something?" Beth inquired.

"Wait- what is that you have hidden under your shirt? Are you smuggling something to Muffins again?"

Muffins was the little Welsh pony that we didn't own, but Benny was still allowed to ride sometimes. Benny looked down at the floor and scuffed his feet, finally guiltily bringing out two large pieces of banana bread.

"Hey, that's a good idea," Rachel said.

We all looked at her. "What? Feeding our horses banana bread?" Beth said.

"About the Shadow Riders. It would be fun! Not a lot of work, either. We would just need some black cloaks and a lot of rags for our horses," Rachel explained.

Two ours later, found us all converging on the barn with assorted rags and blankets that we had each gathered from our prospective homes. Our Arabians watched with interest as we spread everything over some hay bales to take inventory. Benny came in the last minute dragging a bright red cloak.

“What is that?” said Beth.

Benny looked grumpy. “It’s your Red Riding Hood cloak from the costume you wore in 1st grade. I couldn’t find a black cloak.”

It was a motley assortment. We experimented with painting the rags black, but that didn’t help much. Then we tacked up our Arabs and the little Welsh pony and set about decorating them. It was like decorating very jumpy Christmas trees.

Once we had smeared black over every visible part of our skin (a part that Benny really loved), we then covered the rest of ourselves with black robes and capes.

It was around 7 pm when we were finally ready. We stepped back to survey our work. Our horses didn’t look very scary. In fact, they looked like exactly what they were- three very adorable little Arabs and one grumpy Welsh pony dressed up in black blankets and rags. Tuppence, Rachel’s horse, still had her white nose and ears showing. Luckily, Strafford was already black, so he blended in well. Beth had smeared some black on Buttercup’s nose, so she looked all right. It took a very large black blanket to cover Muffins’ rather big belly. He looked like the cutest Shadow Horse ever.

My mom came over and took pictures of us before we left. “Even if you don’t win the contest, have fun, okay? And be *safe!*”

With that, we mounted our trusty steeds. Rachel waved her mock sword in the air, “One ring to rule them all, one ring to find them, one ring to bring them all, and in the darkness—WAHHH!” Tuppence took off, having been startled by Benny accidentally hitting her on the nose with his toy sword.

That was one of the most fun nights of my life. We galloped through the darkening woods as our horses danced around the scary shadows. Muffins trundled after us with Benny kicking him fiercely to keep up. Everywhere we went other kids dressed up in costumes wanted to pet our horses. When we rang the doorbells, the owners always scurried back into the house to find something to feed our horses.

Mrs. Appleford couldn’t find anything in her house to feed the horses except a bag of caramel corn. But they were fine with that. Our horses liked caramel corn. We found that our horses were also very fond of any kind of candy, actually.

We had a blast, even though we didn’t win the contest. It became a tradition after that to use our horses as part of our Halloween costumes and I’m happy to say that our neighbors learned to keep plenty of apples and carrots on hand for the night of October 31st.