

All Hallows' Eve

The Grim Reaper! Ever wondered why the image carries a Scythe for centuries the only method of bringing in a harvest was by cutting the fields of standing crop; Grass, Wheat, Barley, Rye, and Oats, with a Scythe. Ever used one? If the answer is no don't for a Scythe to function properly the long blade 24 to 35 inches long has to be very sharp, held by the right - handed with cutting edge towards the 'Scyther' it is not hard to imagine that even in experienced hands there were accidents mainly injuring the lower limbs.

No first-aid air-ambulance or paramedics, in the middle of a field, pasture or other tract of land, if blood loss didn't get you then sepsis would so 'The Scythe' the cause of much accidental death had to be in the Grim Reapers hand.

A far more somber time All Hallows' the evening prior to All Souls thought by some to be connected to the earlier Celtic/Gaelic Samhain and therefore pagan in origin.

However, it seems to make sense as part of what was an early Christian three-day festival of 'Allhallowtide' the time in the liturgical year dedicated to remembering the dead which include the Saints, Martyrs, and all the faithful departed.

I'm at a point where the activities that will occur on the evening of Hallowe'en 2019 seem to have lost the relevance. No longer celebrating the lives of those who we have known personally or nationally or historically (The Saints).

It's an evening for ghouls and ghosts, carved pumpkin heads, and trick or treating partying the material gain of online or high street business is immense.

Making fun of the devil.

James R. Tizard

All Hallows Eve

It started off with Sister Winifred rummaging around in the pantry trying to find the pickled beetroot and onions to go with the roasted ham, potatoes, coleslaw and salad which was the traditional fare for supper on All Hallows Eve. Sister was in a state and had everyone looking for the pickles when she found them hiding, on purpose, behind the cornflakes and porridge.

Excitement had been building up all day amongst the school. Girls who were normally steady and quiet became quite scatty, hiding up corners, whispering and giggling especially the 5th Form. The 5th Form traditionally provided the entertainment. They planned and executed the whole without recourse to authority or the rest of the school. Secrecy as far as they were concerned was key and on this occasion they wanted things to go with a bang!

At 7 o'clock everyone assembled in the refectory. Grace was said, supper was eaten and coffee served. The 5th form disappeared only to reappear dressed as ghouls and ghosties terrifying in black and silver costumes and splashed with green paint and fake blood. They torched the bonfire in the middle of the orchard, lit candles and hung them on the branches of the apple trees. In one hand they held lighted fireworks and in the other, hockey sticks. The captain of the hockey team flung open the refectory doors and the smell of sulphur candles filled the room. At her signal the cream of the hockey team raised their sticks, threw the fireworks into the air and wacked them into a projected picture of a goal post on the dining room wall.

To say that all hell broke loose would be an understatement. Fortunately the Head, after being struck on the leg by a firework, managed to ring the Fire Brigade who arrived promptly and without fuss. All in all the survivors of that memorable evening agreed that the 5th Form had excelled themselves and that it was the best All Hallows Eve yet!

A.M.Foster-Clarke

Trick or Treat

Trick or treat, running feet.
Plastic masks, moving fast.
We got that stingy one at last.
Forget those smiley pumpkin lights.
Cash or sweets are in our sights.

Trick or treat, in your street.
Children vanished long ago.
Its 'kids' now wrinkly's don't you know?
So wrap your fawning smile round that.
And make way for our jumping rat.

Trick or treat in rain and sleet.
Get wise Grandma. Say yes to us.
We get our treats or make a fuss.
Don't give us apples. We want chocs.
Or poo will fill your letter box.

Trick or treat and kiddy-speak
It's kids we are...like...here to stay.
Like kids...like...in the USA.
Give over man, you know we're cute
A 'Coke' will do. Forget 'Fruit-Shute'.

Trick or treat, we're stuffed with sweets.
The ghosts you made from sheets and sacks.
We get by post in plastic wraps.
Your acted ghouls and ghostly screams.
Come algerised on silver screens.

Halloween, once in your street.
Children making paper masks.
Neighbours cakes.Cocoa in flasks.
Pumpkin smiles with mum and dad.
Fond thoughts of all the fun you had.

Pete Scott

‘Maybe, Prime Minister!’

The room itself is in all essentials peaceful, soul-restoring. Lamps exude the warmth and reassurance of stylish light on and around the elegance of expensive furnishings. Everything is in impeccable taste, all is visibly as it should be. A whisky and a g and t smile up from the polished coffee table, the relevant bottles squat expectantly on the glass-protected top of an eye-catcher of a bar clad in antique print blocks. Marianne crosses her right ankle over her left, and leans back on her well-plumped cushion to survey it, as she recalls the £600 price tag when hand made by a Yorkshire craftsman in the early 90s. ‘How much now?’ she wonders idly. ‘Got to be double. We should get it to auction. Like a lot of stuff round here. Antiquated and mostly redundant.’

A well-modulated, self-assured voice delivers the following statement from the other side of the room:

‘I’ve turned up a few quotes from the inimitable Sir Humphrey Appleby’s Diary to reinvigorate your thinking. So keep your ears and brain open, won’t you? No dozing off – understood? OK. He lists six ‘Basic Ministerial Skills’, namely:

1. Blurring issues
2. Delaying decisions
3. Dodging questions
4. Juggling figures
5. Bending facts
6. Concealing errors

He also makes the comment: ‘the Government is not a team – it’s a loose confederation of warring tribes.’ And yes, I know that’s all funny – you can stop laughing as soon as you like. It’s a satire, yes. But remember the script was written in the mid eighties. Nothing changes except the individuals involved.’

The speaker with the slightly off-putting, peremptory conversational style is a tall, well-built, blond-haired sixty plus year-old male. Marianne, on the receiving end of the bullet-like words, may indeed have been smiling, but is she already looking a touch uncomfortable as she takes not a sip, but a restorative mouthful of her early g and t? Her face and expression are now wooden, rather than receptive and mobile.

‘Does my thinking need reinvigorating, Gareth? When did you last listen to my views?’

‘Marianne, don’t let’s start that again, eh? You know that I think you have a finely tuned brain, it’s just that you don’t make it roar into life often enough.’

‘Oh, for God’s sake, Gareth. Get on with your exposition.’ The words were almost spat out.

A laden, electrified silence is now almost audible. Both brains can be visualised like trams on tracks, sparking. Marianne speaks again, her expression maybe a touch more conciliatory, but only a touch,

‘Promise I’ll both listen and respond, but it might be in my own time. Later rather than sooner. Just remind me what your main concern is – surely you’re not trying to talk us both into buying a box set of ‘Yes, Minister!’ to watch every time we’re pissed off with what we see on the telly, to remind us that it was ever thus?’

‘We absolutely need Brexit. We can never put the Great in front of Britain while we’re subject to . . .’

'Oh, Gareth, please, please, please – don't, I beg you!. It's getting like the Wars of the Roses, splitting families into factions. I know I've got the coffee mug to tell everyone who can read that 'You can take the lass out of Yorkshire, but you can never take Yorkshire out of the lass', but you've waxed lyrical about the county and the tea and the chocolate and the sausages it's produced, and I do not identify myself as a Yorkshire white rose, and you as a Lancaster red one. Let's face it, you're not even from Lancashire, so how could I? So we shouldn't be acting as if we were in a far flung century. The EU was put together to promote cohesion and avoid further wars. I'm even prepared to remind you of the Churchillian 'Jaw, jaw, not war, war.'

Gareth is by now drumming the fingers of his right hand on the table and his eyes could be described as 'bulging'. His hair, unruly at the best of times, is being further massacred by the fingers of his left, while he's jutting his jaw and head forward as if to challenge a threatening foe.

'You're doing your usual, drifting away from the main point and introducing red herrings in the hope of putting me off. You've been banging on about the PM and Ministers and MPs behaving more like kids in the proverbial playground than ever before. I'm telling you Government has been pretty much always adversarial – 'warring tribes' Sir Humphrey said. Give them a huge issue like Brexit and they're absolutely bound to get themselves into a collective lather.'

Marianne speaks again, quite slowly, even rather quietly; her eyes hold Gareth's as she articulates carefully and rather stagily,

'You know what? I think now is the right moment. I have a quote that I've been saving up for you. It's from a letter to the father of a certain BJ, written by an Eton Housemaster in 1982. He criticises the boy's 'disgracefully cavalier attitude' and his tendency to 'seem affronted when criticised'. The master concerned concludes that BJ seems to believe he should be 'free of the network of obligation that binds everyone else.' Marianne allows herself a consolidating pause, then

'My concluding words on the subject are, 'maybe one day he'll grow out of it.'

Judith Osborne