

Nadia
HUM Div 4
4/3/20
Short Stories

Short Story #1

Thomas stood in front of his parents' full-length mirror and admired his cowboy outfit. He adjusted his fake-leather gambler hat, marveling at how the red jewel in the front seemed to reflect light as if he was a small beacon. He rolled up his sleeves to his elbows and flexed his forearms, imagining how strong they would have to be if he actually rode horses everyday. He stood on his tiptoes, his thrift shop cowboy boots creasing near his toes. Finally, he tied his red bandana around his mouth and squinted his eyes menacingly before strutting out of the room. He grabbed his pillowcase and ran to the door. Thomas was ready for the best day of his life -- halloween.

Thomas said goodbye to his parents and left. He was planning to meet up with one of his friends, but he liked to hit the streets early to get as much candy as possible. He decided he would make the first round by himself, so that he could be most efficient with his candy collection. By the time he met up with Johnny, a 3rd grader to whom Thomas had become friends with, Thomas would already have double the amount of candy Johnny would have by the end of the night. Thomas checked his watch, 5:30. He would move along the streets with the best candy before heading to Johnny's house. Thomas moved stealthily, the words "trick-or-treat" becoming a pattern his mouth came to know well. He moved like a cowboy, or so he believed, with a strut unique to a tall man who knew where he was going. The empty streets were Thomas's vast open landscape. Upon this open landscape, he

carried his pillowcase over his shoulder, above the click, clack of his thrift shop-cowboy boots.

Upon one house, Thomas found there to be a pile of candy and no one sitting out on the porch. Picturing his arm to be a lasso, he grabbed the entire box of candy and emptied it into his pillowcase. "Woo hoo," Thomas quietly cried to himself, "Johnny will be amazed." Thomas noticed as his shadow grew longer and slimmer, the fat pillowcase becoming nearly menacing on his shoulder.

It was nearly 6 o'clock, so with his sack half-full Thomas strutted to Johnny's. Thomas impatiently rang the doorbell three times, and out towered Johnny. Johnny opened his large creaky door and stood in specially hemmed Levi's, authentic leather cowboy boots, and a dark leather jacket. What cowboy wears a leather jacket? thought Thomas. But his doubt was hardly visible on Thomas's face, jaw dropped, eyes gaping in disbelief. Whatever Thomas could do as a cowboy, Johnny could do more. He knew Johnny's mom had spent weeks hemming these vintage pants, and suddenly his slightly ripped baggy pants lost all the power they had before. "Wow," gaped Thomas, "you look great." Oh no, Thomas thought to himself, Johnny must think I'm obsessed with him. But Johnny paid no mind. "Let's go, loser." Johnny's long lanky legs ran down the front porch, Thomas scampering behind.

The two trick-or-treated through all of the streets Thomas was previously on, now packed with other kids. Johnny's casual yet macho words, "trick-or-treat" had a different rhythm than Thomas's, and Thomas suddenly got a creeping feeling that Johnny was a real cowboy, and Thomas was, perhaps, a cow.

After several hours, 9 o' clock came, and Thomas's feet began to ache. His cowboy strut became the walk of an exhausted animal, and letting go of the little dignity he had left, Thomas asked Johnny if the two of them could go back to Johnny's house. "Sure, why not," responded Johnny. The two headed back to Johnny's four story exposed brick house, but Thomas knew he couldn't go in. Not as the cowboy he presented himself as. He knew Johnny's mom would ask his questions about his costume, where he bought his jeans, where he bought his boots, and so on and so forth. "I should go home now," said Thomas. "Alright," said Johnny. "It was nice to go trick-or-treating with you." The two hugged each other goodbye, and as Johnny's arms reached down the back of Thomas's shoulders, Johnny yanked the pillow of halloween candy out of his hands. "That's my pillow!" whispered Thomas in shame. More importantly, that was his candy that he had persevered through the perils of the cowboy lifestyle to get fairly. But Johnny was already inside his house, and the last thing Thomas saw was the red Levi tag on the back pocket of Johnny's perfectly hemmed pants, as Johnny carried the bulging sack of candy into his home.

Short Story #2

It was Halloween, but as Timothy stood in front of his parents' full-length mirror at his Dollar Tree skeleton onesie, the only thing that frightened him was his parents' fighting downstairs. Timothy found it almost amusing how they pretended to be happy when he was around. It gave him a sort of power that he wasn't sure he liked. A lot had changed in the past year. There had been a lot more yelling and a lot more blame, but traditions were traditions, and Timothy was looking forward to going to the haunted house with his mom and dad in a couple hours. Timothy headed downstairs, zipping his onesie as he ran loudly, so as to give his parents warning. For a moment, as they admired his costume, Timothy felt as if the three of them were in their own strange version of a haunted house, one that replayed over and over year round.

At the haunted house, Timothy stood his ground at the entrance, chest proud and ready for battle. He stood up and down on his tiptoes in his checkered sneakers, imagining the different monsters he would have to face once he entered the church which had been converted into an intricate haunted house. Last year he was young, he was naive, and he didn't fully understand it wasn't real. But this year, Timothy promised himself he wouldn't flinch at any of the monsters. They are just like mom and dad, he told himself. "Next group!" Timothy heard, and he handed his small red ticket to a man with horns before heading in through those creaky church doors.

He led his parents bravely through a winding hallway full of spiders and spider webs. They're just plastic, he told himself. But before he knew it, things started to change. Lights began to flash, and more noises than Timothy could comprehend began to fill the small space. He grabbed his father tightly, but quickly he realized what he thought was his father was Frankenstein. Was his father playing Frankenstein? No, don't be silly Timothy, he told himself. He dashed backward for his mother, but he clung to a spider web instead, and what he once had told himself was fake, suddenly became very real. "Timothy?!" He heard a voice yell out for him, but it was too late. Timothy was on the run. He wasn't going to cry like he did last year. This year he was going to be brave. Eyes shut, Timothy ran through the halls taking lefts and rights and crashing into walls as he yanked the spider web from his eyes, pushing it into his muppy bowl cut. Breathing heavily, he decided he would find a room, any room, and duck for cover.

Up ahead, Timothy saw a closet. He ran, his little legs pounding on the creaky wooden floor, until he reached the door knob. He entered and locked it behind him before flicking on the light. Looking around, Timothy saw stacks and stacks of Bibles. Timothy decided there was something much more ominous about all of these texts being stored in one room. He picked one up and dusted it off. He suddenly felt very sad for the Bible.

Just as Timothy was getting ready to place the Bible back where he found it, Frankenstein turned the door knob and entered. Losing all feeling for the Bible, Timothy whipped his whole body around and chucked the Bible at Frankenstein. "Hey, hey, I'm a friend!"

“No you’re not!” screamed Timothy.

Frankenstein slowly drew two fingers along his solid green face, smudging the face paint with sweat. He softly held his fingers up to Timothy, as Timothy examined the wet, green paint.

“Why are you pretending?” inquired Timothy.

“It’s just a gig, little man,” responded Frankenstein gently.

“What’s a gig?” Frankenstein laughed.

“It means I’m not really Frankenstein.”

“Oh, I’m Timothy.”

Frankenstein took a seat among the bibles.

“Shouldn’t you be out playing your gig?” prompted Timothy.

“Yeah, I should. But I’m just going to take a minute and rest. It’s not easy pretending to be Frankenstein.”

The two sat among the Bibles, across from one another, as Frankenstein took off his black wig, and wiped painted scars off his face. Finally, Frankenstein took off his jacket, and took the piece of metal which was previously protruding out of his shoulder from the jacket out. He held it in the palm of his hand and carefully instructed Timothy to open his hands. Timothy had to open both his small hands to hold the piece of metal, as Frankenstein placed it in the palms of his hands.

“Here, take this, Timothy. So you remember that adults play pretend too. And it’s not always fun. It’s actually really exhausting and scary.”

“It’s a cool piece of metal! Thanks, Frankenstein!”

Story #3:

Louisa and Maxine stood in front of their parents' full length mirror in princess costumes. The two were dressed as Elsa and Anna from *Frozen*, as they had been last year. Although they put lots of energy into trying to find another paired costume idea, the two really were like Elsa and Anna - Maxine bounding with energy, and Louisa wise and reserved. The two struggled to get a full view of themselves in their costumes in front of the mirror, pushing the other aside to see themselves fully. The two were not allowed to go trick-or-treating this year, because their uncle was dying, and their parents were headed out to the hospital to see him. They didn't know their uncle well, but they were bothered by the fact that they were going to have to sit on the porch and hand out candy instead of getting candy for themselves.

As they sat out on the porch, the night felt just like a normal October night, full of crisp yet soft air. They handed out small candies to kids going trick-or-treating, some younger with parents, others much older. Some of their friends dropped by, which frustrated the two of them, because it reminded them of how they couldn't go trick-or-treating. Inside, they heard the murmurs of hospice and urgent care, words that were still unknown to them.

At around 8 pm, their parents, along with their aunt, came out onto the porch to announce to the two of them that they were going to drive to the hospital, and they were going to join them. "What!" Maxine protested, "We can't even enjoy Halloween from our porch!" The two headed to the car, pockets full of candy.

When they entered the hospital, they knew right away they were out of place in their intricate Amazon-purchased costumes, full of sparkles and small intricate plastic decor. There was no place for magic and fairy tales in this sterile, cold building, and suddenly the crisp, soft air that once filled their Halloween night was sucked away, and they were left with the sound of beeps and movable beds being rolled and people crying. They wished at once they were not here. They wished to one another in quiet secrecy in the waiting room of the hospital that their night was full of candy and magic and not what was yet to come.

The two were brought in to see their uncle, who was in a much less pleasant costume than Maxine and Louisa were dressed in. Dressed in tubes and tapes, the two stared in awe at the intricacy of the state of their uncle. They were ushered closer and closer to their uncle. As their clammy hands shook in fear, they pushed back on their dad's large hand.

"What are you dressed as?" asked their uncle, almost begging.

Louisa wondered why this would be what someone was wondering at the end of their life.

"Anna and Elsa," answered Maxine, curtly.

"Now, what kinds of powers do Anna and Elsa have?" he further interrogated.

Louisa was shocked by how interested her uncle was in made up characters at the end of his life.

"Anna doesn't have power. She's just cool. Elsa can turn things to snow."

"Oh, can she? That is clever, isn't it!" encouraged the uncle.

Louisa knew once her sister was asked about *Frozen*, she would be willing to discuss it, no matter the circumstance. But still, Louisa stood, awestruck by this interaction.

“Uh huh,” said Maxine. “But sometimes she can’t control it, like she turns things to ice without meaning to, so she has to wear gloves and learn to control it.”

Louisa held her gloved fingers in a fist and wished she had the ability to control what was happening around her. She knew her sister didn’t fully understand what was happening, as Maxine explained the ending of *Frozen*, but Louisa wished she could take off her gloves and freeze time. She felt a sudden urge to freeze this moment: her sister’s arms rested eagerly on the bed, her uncle barely breathing, and her family staring at the scene from the outskirts of the room. She had never spoken a word to her uncle, and yet, she wished she didn’t have to witness her uncle’s passing. Still staring, she took off her blue satin gloves which held Elsa’s powers back, and placed them atop her uncle.

“These are Elsa’s gloves. At the end of the movie she takes them off and finally learns how to use her powers. Here.”

Maxine stared back at her older sister, as Louisa watched the blue satin gloves which held her cold fingers just a few minutes ago rise and fall atop her uncle, until they remained completely still.

