

# Halloween's Not Only For Children

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*"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken..."*

*Oscar Wilde*

"Why can't we go out with you and Dad this Halloween?" Jacob stood before his parents with his arms folded across his small chest, his determined expression full of defiance. "You always go out by yourselves. You have never taken us with you. I'm ten and I think we're all big enough to keep up."

Mary and Cathleen, his twin sisters kept to the background, watching closely. They were wise enough to allow their big brother to take the lead and state their case.

"I'm sorry if you've been feeling left out," Vincent said with concern. "We didn't know."

"It's just that you get to have fun without us," Jacob challenged. "We love doing things with you."

"Don't you enjoy going out trick or treating with the other tunnel children?" Catherine asked gently, sinking to her knees before her young son and taking

him by the shoulders. "You always come home with lots of goodies. And you know Mouse finds the best treats."

"Yes, but..." Jacob shuffled the toe of one boot across the carpet. "Some of the other kids get to go out with their mums and dads. So, why can't we? Just this once..."

"I didn't know you felt that strongly about it," his mother commented.

"We all want to go." Jacob turned to indicate his sisters. "Vincent's still just a baby, he's too young. Mary can look after him for us."

"You must remember that Halloween is the one night when I can walk among the Topsiders and not be challenged," Vincent reminded him quietly. "They all think my face is just a mask. There is a wonderful freedom in that."

"We know - Grandpa Jacob told us. He said you liked to walk the streets together, the one night of the year when you got to do it by yourselves." Jacob nodded quickly. "He reckons the Topsiders are just scared of what they don't understand. They don't know you like we know you."

"You're our Dad," Mary added brightly. "And we love you just the way you are."

"Thank you, Mary. But your mother and I go out into the city to look at everything. To breathe the air and see the sights of Above. Our kind of fun would be boring for you."

"But you're also gonna buy hotdogs and pretzels." Jacob considered him closely. "We like hotdogs and pretzels."

"Yeah, and sweets. And we like carriage rides in the park," Cathleen chipped in in her serious little voice. "Last night we heard you talking about what you're gonna to do for Halloween tomorrow night. You thought we were asleep." She grinned. "But we weren't!"

"Now there speaks the children of a very good lawyer," Vincent chuckled. "They are making an excellent case..."

Catherine stood up before reaching to ruffle her son's blond curls. "I will admit we've had several years of walking the streets by ourselves. I guess we have seen everything..."

"We promise we won't get in the way, or get bored," Jacob declared brightly, seeing his parents were weakening. "And I won't ask to be carried even if I get tired."

"We won't either," the two girls chimed in. "*Promise!*"

"We can walk for miles without getting tired," Mary added for good measure.

"What do you think, Dad?" Catherine turned to her husband, a gentle smile curving her mouth.

"I suppose it's time. You did say we've had some good years going Above by ourselves."

"And we get a carriage ride and hotdogs," Jacob watched his parents suspiciously. "That's a promise?"

"As if we could get away with not giving you such longed-for treats," Vincent laughed, reaching to hug his son close.

"Thanks, Dad!" Jacob returned his father's embrace. "I win the bet. Grandpa Jacob reckoned you'd both say no. I said I figured I could talk you round."

"You get more like your mother every day," Vincent chuckled. "I don't know if I could cope with three lawyers in the family."

"Grandad Charles *is* a good lawyer," Jacob nodded seriously. "He said so. And he said he taught Mum everything she knows."

"We'll go on letting him think that," Catherine replied. "He likes to think he's still the top lawyer in this family."

"Okay...," Jacob grinned. "I'm gonna go dressed as a pirate."

"And we want to be fairies," his sisters clamoured. "With wings and all!"

"Then I suggest we go and find Mary." Catherine reached out her hands to her daughters. "We don't have a lot of time to make such costumes."

Vincent watched the four of them leave his chamber, heading for Mary's sewing workshop. He turned to sit at his desk, opening his diary to the relevant page. He began to write his reflections on the day his young son advanced another step closer to becoming the brilliant young man his father always knew he was destined to be...



*“In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on...”*

*Robert Frost*

