

Hallow's Evening (Version 2)

By Jeff **Blechle**

Spacing and font size is author's own. Version 1 appears above this in the TOC. Eds.

Hallows' Evening

“Who do you think you are, man?” Grasping a fistful of Mike’s golden locks, Lucy yanked until his Adam’s apple bulged. “Groping ape. Your wife will hear about this.”

Mike pulled free and dragged a thick janitorial catalog off the coffee table and slammed it across Lucy’s damp red head and watched her sprawl face down onto the living room floor. He grabbed the mallet he had come over to borrow from Mr. Montelli, turned it in his hand, then respectfully set it back against the wall. Propping her up in a recliner, he reclined it, fixed her clothing and hair, closed her legs. Construing her smirk, he cataloged her head again. Then— “Shit.”

Mr. Montelli threw open the front door and clamored in lamenting false alarms and idiot employees. When he saw Lucy in the recliner, his cigar tapped his chin.

“What’s up her ass?”

Mike relaxed his shrug and returned the catalog to its exact spot before explaining.

Mr. Montelli expressed disgust, but not surprise, that Lucy had gone shot crazy and ricocheted off an end table. He lightly slapped her cheek and admitted that last night he had caught her painting a pentagram on his attic floor. His picture, surrounded by green candles, smiled up at him from its center.

The men crossed the room and sat on octagon stools at the bar, watching the woman’s pale damp head protruding into the beveled edge of the mirror. Mr. Montelli poured two double vodkas on the rocks and slid one to his right.

“Never get involved with your cleaning lady, Mike. Christ, look how big her nose is when her hair’s slicked back.”

Mike couldn’t look at her reflection with his own holding his attention. He positively glowed, albeit with a negative charge. “Yeah, as soon as you left, she started in. I couldn’t tell if she was on the level—at first.”

“She’s ignor’nt. What’d she say?”

Mike claimed that what Lucy said was too humiliating to repeat.

Mr. Montelli turned around and glared at her as if the expansive mirror might be hiding something from him. “What’d that lying beak-nosed numskull say?”

“Well, um, she said you have an *eensy little dick*—emphasis hers—

that you couldn't use right even if it came with directions, and that you're a nobody pretending not to be, but not very well." Mike shook his grave expression. "Said she lost her ass bartering with you."

"I hear she has two sisters in prison," Mr. Montelli mumbled faintly and brokenly, a balding gargoyle crouching lower on his stool. He downed more vodka and stared into the mirror where a golden idol modeled to his right. "I'm just sorry I had to leave you with the sunken-eyed gold digger for ten minutes."

Lucy hiccupped and a stream of blood trickled out of her ear and blended with her hair.

"You're so lucky to have a beautiful perfect wife like Crystal and not some dick-nosed goofy clown that bleeds you white. Let me see her picture again." Mr. Montelli poured, admiring the picture Mike held up. "All Lucy does is sit around all day and call those psychic hotlines for tips on ruining me. What else'd she say?"

"Nothing."

"Bullshit."

"All right. She said she's been filming you cooking your books. And, oh yeah, you can't do anything else right either, and she can prove that without actual footage."

Mr. Montelli fell off his stool, then sheepishly monkeyed back on.

"Then she— I tried to stop her but—"

Mr. Montelli's bald spot beamed in a new layer of sweat. "But what? What'd she do? Well? What'd the cackling, pink-faced bullshitter do?"

"Look, I don't know you guys that well. I'm just here to borrow a mallet. And I've got a long walk home, so."

Mr. Montelli slurped and poured, then insisted that Mike shut up and dish.

Mike spun a triangular coaster on the bar while staring at his host's reflection.

“She jumped my bones right after you left, man. No shit. Moaning and slobbering about how she sells baked goods out of the back of your store while you're up front kneading dough, and how she'd gank you if I would drive the getaway car while she cleans you out, home and business. And as if any of *that* wouldn't get me horny, she proposed a threesome with me and some voodoo priest she met at a yard sale. Next thing I know she's chanting and hissing and breaking acrobatic.” He sipped his vodka. “She must really love you.”

Mr. Montelli's skin rivaled the color of a last drink of strawberry milk. He left his stool and rattled into another room, then returned with a leather belt folded in half and stood over Lucy, snapping it. Mike joined him.

They looked at each other, at Lucy, at each other.

“Let's fuck her.” *Snap!*

“Really?”

“Really.”

“Okay.” Mike cleared his throat. “I mean— Right here?”

“Right here.”

They undressed.

“But first I'm giving her a goodly taste of leather.” Mr. Montelli, down to his black dress socks and glasses, lifted the looped belt under her chin. “Witch doctor at a rummage sale, huh?” He reared back. “You dirty miserable wart-nosed conniving pink-orange—”

Lucy's eyes blasted him like black holes puking stars. She hiked back her knee and slammed the brakes on his bare crotch. He doubled hard, mouth, nostrils, and eyes big O's. She bloodied his nose with an ashtray. "Let's fuck her? I'll eat you douchers raw!" She fisticuffed Mr. Montelli into a loveseat, thrashed him with the belt. Wheezing, she charged Mike, who was hopping into his chinos.

"Hey, it was your old man's idea! He's anti-witch!"

"Whose old man?" She wrapped the belt around his neck and with his head twice slammed the couch arm. She bridled his open mouth, whipping him up and down and to and fro. "Whose idea was it to smash my head in? Talking shit about me!" She dragged his crown into a faux marble pillar, and he was out. She rifled his wallet, scanned his driver's license. "Oliver M. Quackenbush? Eleven sixty-four Morning Glory Circle. Figures."

She seized the mallet. Positioning herself in front of Mr. Montelli as if he were a goof ball on a tee, she reared back in a three-quarter twist. He writhed just enough. She sank his birdie.

Lucy showered her throbbing neck, donned a flowing sable cowl, and then strolled toward Mike's house with the mallet swinging in and out of dark folds, sidestepping frightful children and dried leaves that scratched along blackening sidewalks and streets, stopping occasionally to smile up at illuminating streetlights and first stars and, remembering her catechism, arrange them into ruthless and opportunistic portents. Standing in the warm glow of Mike's porch lights, imagining his perfectly beautiful wife going pulpy, she pushed the doorbell button.

The door opened and a bent gray-haired woman holding a poodle appeared in light from another room.

Lucy leaned back and rechecked the house number. “Um, are you Oliver’s wife?”

“Oliver who? Ain’t nobody’s wife. You must have the wrong address.” The poodle barked. “Oh.” The woman reached into a corner of shadows and pulled out a glittering fistful of gold chocolate coins. “Well, where’s your bag?”