Halloween audiobook scripts

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The Lantern on Pell Road

Ghost story · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Every October, somebody new moves onto Pell Road, and every October somebody has to tell them about the lantern. That year it was my turn.

I found Mr. Okafor on his porch, unpacking a box of books. "You'll see a light in the orchard," I said. "Around ten. Swinging, like someone's carrying it. Don't go out to it."

He smiled the way people smile at a neighbor who has turned out to be odd. "And if I do?"

"Nothing happens. That's the trouble. You walk toward it and it stays exactly as far away as it was. Folks have walked till sunrise."

"Then why warn me at all?"

I looked past him, down the rows of bare apple trees, and gave him the answer my own neighbor gave me, twenty years back.

"Because it isn't the walking out that worries us," I said. "It's that one night, the lantern stops. And waits for you to catch up."

Mrs. Abernathy Counts the Candy

Cozy mystery, autumn · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Someone had stolen the entire bowl of caramel apples from the church harvest fair, and Dolores Abernathy intended to know who before the hayride left.

"Forty apples," she said, tapping the empty table. "Forty sticks. Somebody in this hall is very sticky, Walter."

Deputy Walter Greer sighed. He was dressed as a pirate, and the eyepatch was not helping his authority. "Dolores, it's apples. Nobody's filing a report."

"I am filing a report. With you. Now." She pointed across the room. "Look at the Henley boy. Clean hands. Suspicious, on a child of nine."

"You think he washed up?"

"I think someone washed him. Which means a grown-up is involved." Her eyes travelled slowly to the kitchen door, where the pastor's wife stood drying a very large pot, humming, and not looking at anybody at all.

"Oh," said Walter.

"Yes," said Dolores, delighted. "Oh."

The Thirteenth Step

Middle-grade, spooky · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

There are twelve steps down to my grandmother's basement. I know, because I count them every single time. Tonight there are thirteen.

I stand on the last one with the flashlight shaking in my hand and count again in my head. Twelve steps. Then this one. It's colder than the others, and it feels a little bit soft, like a step that's been waiting.

"Milo?" my sister calls from the kitchen. "Did you find the Halloween box?"

"Almost!" I shout, and my voice comes out much higher than I planned.

Here is the thing nobody tells you about being brave. You still have to put your foot down.

So I do. And the thirteenth step says, very politely, "Ow."

What the Scarecrow Kept

Folk horror · Adult (30-45) · Neutral British · 1 minute

Nobody in Hollow Fen would tell me who had made the scarecrow, only that it was older than the church and must not be moved.

I had come to survey the field for the new road. The farmer, a broad, slow man named Tobias Reed, walked me to the boundary and no further.

"You'll want to go round him," he said.

"The line runs straight through, Mr. Reed. It's a post and some straw."

"It is." He turned his cap in his hands. "My grandfather shifted him once. Three yards, for the plough. Next morning he was back where he'd been, and every crow in the parish was sat on our roof, facing the house. Quiet as a congregation."

I laughed. He did not.

I walked out alone with my measuring chain. The straw face was only sacking, two stitched crosses for eyes. But the ground around its post was bare in a perfect ring, and my chain, when I laid it down, would not lie straight.

Rules for Renting a Haunted House

Horror-comedy · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Congratulations on your new lease. The rent is suspiciously low, and by now you have probably worked out why.

First, the woman on the stairs. She appears at eleven, she weeps, she points at the wall. Do not ask what is behind the wall. It is a water pipe. She has been told. She does not accept it.

Second, the piano plays by itself on Thursdays. You may make requests. It will ignore them, but it seems to appreciate being asked.

Third, if a cold hand touches your shoulder while you are doing the dishes, that is Gerald. Gerald would like you to use less soap. He is not wrong.

Finally, and we cannot stress this enough, do not go into the attic. Nothing is up there. Truly. We checked, and it was the most frightening thing in the house. A hundred years of ghosts, and not one of them will go near it.

The Girl at Mile Marker Nine

Campfire tale · Mature (55+) · Southern US · 90 seconds

Now, I'm going to tell you this the way my granddaddy told it to me, and you can believe it or not, but I'd scoot in closer to the fire if I were you.

There's a stretch of county road past the old cotton gin where the pines grow so thick the moon gives up. Mile marker nine. And on the last night of October, long about midnight, folks driving through see a girl in a yellow dress, standing on the shoulder like she's waiting on a ride.

My granddaddy stopped for her. Course he did. He was raised right. He rolled down the window and said, "Miss, you're a long way from anywhere."

"I know it," she said. "I'm trying to get home to my mama's. White house, past the bridge."

So he drove her. She sat real still and didn't say another word, and that truck got so cold he could see his own breath.

He pulled up at the white house and turned to tell her they'd made it. The seat was empty. Just a little damp, like dew.

An old woman came out on the porch in her housecoat. She didn't look one bit surprised.

"You brought her again," she said. "Somebody brings her every year." And then she smiled, tired and kind. "She never does come inside. But she likes the ride."

The House We Could Afford

Memoir, haunted house · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

We bought the house on Garnet Street because it was the only one we could afford, and for the first year I told myself that was the only strange thing about it.

I was a practical person then. I had two jobs and a toddler. When the upstairs hall light switched itself on at three in the morning, I called an electrician. He found nothing. When it happened again, I called a different electrician.

My husband, Dev, was the one who finally said it. We were standing in the kitchen eating cereal for dinner. "It only happens when Nina's had a bad dream," he said.

"That's a coincidence."

"Every time. I've been writing it down."

I didn't answer. I went upstairs and stood in that hallway in the dark, feeling foolish, and said out loud, "Thank you. We've got her."

The light went off. Gently, the way you'd turn it off for someone sleeping. I have never called another electrician.

Why We Carve the Lantern

Non-fiction, Halloween traditions · Any · Neutral American · 45 seconds

Before it was candy and costumes, Halloween was a night about the dark, and what people did to feel braver in it.

Most of our customs grew out of old harvest-season gatherings, when the days shortened and families took stock before winter. People lit fires. They told stories. In parts of Ireland and Britain they hollowed out turnips, cut faces into them and set a light inside, long before anyone thought to use a pumpkin.

The details changed as the holiday travelled. The instinct did not. A lit face in a window says the same thing now that it said then. Somebody is home. Somebody is awake. Come to the door, friend, and whatever else is out there tonight, keep walking.

Wexcombe Hall, November

Gothic · Adult (25-40) · Neutral British · 1 minute

I had been governess at Wexcombe Hall for nine days before anyone thought to mention that the east wing was not empty.

It was Mrs. Pruett, the housekeeper, who told me, and only because I asked who played the harp at night.

"There is no harp in this house, Miss Lyle."

"I heard it distinctly. Above my room."

She set down the linen she was folding, each corner squared. "Above your room is the old nursery. It has been locked since before the master was born."

"Then someone has a key."

"I have the key." She drew it from her collar on its ribbon, a small black thing, and let me look. "I have not used it in thirty years. Nor shall I."

"Mrs. Pruett, forgive me, but somebody is playing."

"Yes," she said, quite calmly, and went back to her folding. "She is improving, don't you think? She was dreadful when I first came."

Three Knocks at the Back Door

Ghost story · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

My grandmother had one rule about the back door. If it knocks once, it's the wind. If it knocks twice, it's a neighbor. If it knocks three times, you finish your tea.

I laughed at that for thirty years. Then I inherited the house.

Last night, around midnight, it knocked three times. Slow. Patient. Like someone who had all the time there was.

I'd like to tell you I opened it. I put the kettle on.

The Costume Nobody Rented

Horror-comedy · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

The vampire at our Halloween party was either the most committed guest I have ever had, or an actual vampire, and by ten o'clock I had stopped being sure.

He refused the garlic dip. Fine, lots of people do. He would not come in until I invited him, twice, by name. He complimented my neck.

"Great costume," I said.

He looked down at himself, puzzled, and then, with enormous dignity, said, "Thank you. It is my only one."

Dead Leaves at the Cider Mill

Cozy mystery, autumn · Adult (40-55) · Midwestern US · 1 minute

The cider mill had sold out of doughnuts by noon, which in Larch County counts as an emergency, and that was before anybody noticed the cash box was gone.

I run the mill. I also, since the sheriff retired to Arizona, run most of the investigating.

"Who was on the register?" I asked.

"Me," said Bethany, my niece, sixteen and already crying. "I only left for a minute. Mr. Voss needed help with his jug."

"Did he, now." Gus Voss has carried his own jug for seventy years.

I walked out to the press. Leaves everywhere, red and wet, and a clean track through them where something heavy had been dragged toward the orchard. Not toward the parking lot. Toward the trees.

That was when I stopped being angry and started being curious. A thief heads for a car. Whoever took our money was still here, somewhere among two hundred apple trees, and they had not planned on leaving.

The Night Bus to Ballymore

Ghost story · Mature (55+) · Irish · 1 minute

I drove the last bus out to Ballymore for eleven years, and in all that time only the one passenger ever rode it for free.

She got on at the crossroads, always the thirty-first of October, always the same grey coat. An old woman, small. She'd take the seat behind me and say, "Is it far now, driver?"

"Twenty minutes, missus."

"Ah, that's grand. My son will be waiting."

And she'd be gone before the village. No bell rung, no door opened. Just the seat, and the cold coming off it.

I told Father Deasy about her once. He was quiet a long while. "There was a Nora Shiel at that crossroads," he said. "Her lad went to America. She met that bus every evening for forty years."

"Did he ever come?"

"He did not."

So the next October, when she asked was it far now, I said what I should have said from the start. "Not far at all, Nora. He's just ahead of us."

I never saw her after.

Something in the Corn Maze

Middle-grade, spooky · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The corn maze closed at nine, and at nine-fifteen Priya and Dash were still inside it, which was entirely Dash's fault.

"We're not lost," he said. "I'm just exploring thoroughly."

"We've passed that same broken pumpkin four times."

"Different pumpkin."

"It has my gum on it, Dash."

Something rustled in the stalks to their left. Both of them stopped. The rustling stopped too, a half second late, the way an echo does. Or the way something does when it is trying to walk only when you walk.

"Raccoon," Dash whispered.

"Raccoons don't wait."

Priya took one step. Rustle. Another. Rustle. She grabbed her brother's sleeve, took a deep breath, and did the bravest and silliest thing she could think of. "Excuse me," she said to the corn. "Do you know the way out?"

There was a long pause. Then, about three rows over, a very small voice said, "I was hoping you did."

The Seance Went Fine

Horror-comedy · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

For the record, the seance went fine. It was the two hours afterwards that got out of hand.

We only wanted to reach Aunt Lorraine and ask where she'd hidden the good silver. Madame Odette lit the candles, rolled her eyes back and said, "Is anyone there?"

"Yes," said a voice from the ceiling. "Hello! Oh, this is wonderful. Nobody's called in ages."

"Lorraine?"

"No, dear. Kenneth. I lived here in the twenties. Do you have a minute?"

We did not have a minute. Kenneth had opinions on the wallpaper, the neighbors and something he called the incident with the goat. By midnight Madame Odette had her coat on.

"Can you make him stop?" I whispered.

"Honey," she said, "I only know how to start them."

The Keeper of Dunmore Light

Gothic · Mature (55+) · Scottish · 90 seconds

They sent me out to Dunmore Light in the autumn of that year to relieve a keeper who, the Board assured me, had simply grown tired of the work.

I found his logbook on the table, open, the ink long dry. He had been a careful man. Every entry the same. Lamp lit. Weather. Oil. And then, on the last three pages, one new line beneath the rest, in the same steady hand.

Someone on the rocks again tonight.

I read it aloud to the boatman, Callum Fraser, who was carrying up my stores. "What does he mean by that?"

"I couldn't say, sir."

"You brought him his provisions for six years, man. You must have an opinion."

Callum set down the crate. He was not a fanciful sort. He looked at the window, where the sea was going from grey to black. "He asked me once did I see her. A woman, below the tower, at the turn of the tide. Looking up at the lamp."

"And did you?"

"I told him no." He picked up his cap. "I'd best be away before the dark, sir."

"That is not an answer, Fraser."

"No, sir. It isn't."

I watched his boat until I lost it in the swell. Then I climbed the stair, trimmed the wick and lit the great lamp, as the regulations require. And because I am a careful man too, I took up the pen, turned to a clean page, and wrote the date.

The Harvest Supper

Folk horror · Adult (40–55) · Neutral British · 30 seconds

We were made very welcome in the village. That is what I keep coming back to. Nobody was unkind.

They gave us the best seats at the harvest supper, nearest the fire. They filled our glasses. They asked, so politely, whether we had family who would miss us if the roads closed.

My wife laughed and said no, not a soul.

And every face along that long table turned, and smiled, and somebody at the far end quietly got up and locked the door.

The Last House on the Route

Suspense, trick-or-treat · Any · Neutral American · 30 seconds

Every neighborhood has one house you save for last, and you know exactly which one is yours.

The porch light is on. It is always on. The walk is longer than it looks from the street, and the leaves do not crunch the way leaves should.

You climb the steps. Your pillowcase is heavy. Your friends are waiting at the gate, and not one of them came with you.

You lift your hand to knock. The door is already opening.

The Widow's Walk

Gothic romance · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The first thing Captain Thorne's house ever said to me was my own name, and I had not yet given it to anyone.

I had come to catalogue the library. Three weeks, the solicitor's letter said, room and board provided. A man met me at the door with a lamp, tall, unsmiling, salt in his dark hair.

"Miss Avery. You're early."

"I'm exactly on time, Mr. Thorne."

"Are you?" He glanced up the stairs, as if someone there might disagree. "The house had you arriving tomorrow."

"The house."

"You'll get used to it. Or you won't, and you'll leave. The last three left." He said it flatly, but he held the lamp so that the light fell on my step and not on his own. I noticed that. I notice it still.

"I don't frighten easily," I said.

"No," he said, and for the first time almost smiled. "It told me that as well."

The Pumpkin That Would Not Light

Children's, picture book · Any · Neutral American · 45 seconds

On the last night of October, every pumpkin on Maple Lane was glowing. Every pumpkin except one.

His name was Bartholomew, and he had the crookedest smile on the whole street. His candle had gone out, and no matter how hard he wished, he could not make it burn.

"Poor old thing," said the wind, and blew right past.

"Too dark to bother with," said the moths, and flew to the lamp next door.

Then along came a very small ghost, the kind that is only a little bit scary. She was looking for somewhere to rest.

"Is anybody using this pumpkin?" she asked.

"Nobody at all," sighed Bartholomew.

So she climbed inside. And do you know, a ghost glows much brighter than a candle.

The Photograph on the Landing

Ghost story · Adult (30-45) · Neutral British · 30 seconds

There is a photograph on my aunt's landing of the family on the lawn, taken in the summer of 1911. Nine people. I have counted them since I was a child.

This October I counted ten.

She stands at the back, a little apart, in a dark dress. She is not looking at the camera. She is looking, as far as I can judge the angle, at whoever happens to be standing on the stairs.

Notes from a Reluctant Werewolf

Horror-comedy · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

Nobody warns you how inconvenient it is, being a werewolf. Everyone talks about the howling. No one mentions the laundry.

Once a month I wake up in a stranger's hedge with no shoes and a mouthful of somebody's garden gnome. I have replaced eleven gnomes. I leave them on the porch with a note.

The note says, "Sorry. Raccoons." I think the neighbors know. Last month, somebody left out a bowl of water and a pair of slippers.

The Librarian Who Stayed Late

Ghost story, cozy · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

The Fenwick Library closes at six, and at five past, every evening, somebody reshelves the returns. It isn't me.

I've worked the desk for nineteen years. I leave the cart by the stairs, full. In the morning it is empty, and every book is exactly where it belongs, which is more than I can say for the volunteers.

"You should tell someone," said the new assistant, Tomas, when I showed him.

"Tell them what? That we have help?"

"That the building's haunted, Mrs. Abel."

"By a person who alphabetizes." I buttoned my coat. "Tomas, I've had worse colleagues. Leave the lamp on. She doesn't like the overheads."

Miss Finch and the Midnight Bell

Middle-grade, spooky · Any · Neutral British · 45 seconds

The school bell at Thornbury Primary rang at midnight on Halloween, and the only person who went to see why was the caretaker's daughter.

Ivy was eleven and not supposed to have the keys. She let herself in by the boiler room and stood in the dark corridor, listening.

Chalk. Somebody was writing on a blackboard.

In classroom four, a thin grey lady in an old-fashioned collar was halfway through the seven times table. She turned round. She looked just as startled as Ivy.

"You're late," said Miss Finch, recovering. "Sit down."

"I don't think I'm in your class, miss."

"Nobody is, dear. Not for sixty years." She held out the chalk, almost shyly. "Would you mind terribly? Just the sevens."

The Dinosaur in the Hall Closet

Comic essay · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

At nine o'clock the night before Halloween, my son informed me that he no longer wished to be a dinosaur. He wished to be a traffic light.

I had spent three weekends on the dinosaur. It had a tail with wire in it. It had individually cut felt spikes.

"A traffic light," I said.

"A working one."

"Define working, Henry."

"It changes."

My husband looked up from the couch. "We've got that box from the dishwasher," he said, and I gave him a look I normally save for people who talk in movie theaters.

We finished at one in the morning. Three paper plates, a flashlight and a great deal of tape. It did not change. Henry changed it by hand, shouting the colors.

He won the costume parade. The dinosaur, I should tell you, is still in the hall closet, fully assembled, staring at me every time I reach for a coat. I've started to think it knows.

The Ferryman of Blackwater Reach

Gothic · Mature (55+) · Neutral British · 1 minute

The ferryman at Blackwater Reach would take any passenger across but one, and on the last night of October he told me which.

I was the only fare. The fog had come down so thick that the lantern at the bow lit nothing but itself.

"You'll hear a bell from the far bank," he said, leaning on the pole. "Ringing for the boat. You'll say, there's someone waiting, Mr. Cray. And I'll say, there is not."

"How do you know?"

"Because the landing on that side fell into the river in my father's time. There's nothing there to stand on."

We went on in silence. Then, sure enough, it came across the water. A handbell, patient, unhurried.

"There's someone waiting, Mr. Cray," I said, before I could stop myself.

"There is not," he said. He did not turn his head. But I saw that he had begun to pole a little faster, and that he kept his eyes, the whole way over, on his own two hands.

Trouble at the Giant Pumpkin Weigh-Off

Cozy mystery, autumn · Adult (40-55) · Midwestern US · 1 minute

Earl Dobbs's pumpkin weighed nine hundred and four pounds on Friday night, and eight hundred and sixty on Saturday morning, and pumpkins do not go on diets.

"Somebody tampered with it," Earl said. He was nearly in tears. "Forty-four pounds, Ruby. That's the difference between first and third."

I've judged the Harvest Fair weigh-off for twelve years. I walked around the thing twice. No cuts, no holes, no soft spots.

"Earl, who watered it last night?"

"Nobody. It's off the vine."

"Then why is the straw under it wet?"

He looked. So did I. And then I looked at the pumpkin in the next stall, which belonged to his brother-in-law, Lyle, and which was sitting on straw as dry as a cracker.

"It didn't lose weight this morning," I said slowly. "It was carrying extra last night. Somebody soaked it for the Friday weigh-in." I straightened up. "Earl. Look me in the eye. Who exactly are we accusing here?"

Aunt Vesper's Guest Room

Ghost story · Adult (40-55) · Southern US · 1 minute

My Aunt Vesper kept a guest room made up for forty years, and in all that time she never once let a living soul sleep in it.

I was nineteen the October I stayed with her. She put me on the sofa.

"Aunt Vesper, there's a whole bed upstairs."

"That bed is spoken for, sugar."

"By who?"

"By Mr. Carroway. He had the house before us. He's no trouble. He likes the window cracked and the quilt turned down, and he does not care for whistling."

I laughed. I thought she was lonely, and a little gone. So that night, when she was asleep, I crept up and lay down on that bed, just to prove something.

I wasn't frightened. I want that understood. Nothing touched me. It was only that, after a minute, the mattress beside me dipped, real slow, the way it does when somebody tired sits down on the edge. And sighed.

I said, "Excuse me, sir," and went back to the sofa.

The Ghost Tour Starts at Eight

Horror-comedy · Adult (30-45) · Scottish · 1 minute

I have led the ghost tour of the old town for six years, and I had never seen a ghost until the night one of them joined the group to correct me.

I was doing the bit at the close. "And here," I said, lantern under my chin, "the wicked Bailie MacAllister walled up his own brother for a bag of silver."

"He did not," said a voice at the back.

A wee man in a long coat. Very pale. I took him for a history teacher.

"It's the traditional account, sir."

"It's slander. It was a dispute about a fence. Nobody was walled up. We didnae speak for a year and then he died of a cold."

"We?"

"And it was never a bag. It was eleven shillings."

The tourists were filming. I thought, fine, he's good, somebody's hired him. I held out my hand to bring him forward, and my fingers went through his sleeve like it was smoke.

"Now," he said, not unkindly. "Shall we do the next stop properly?"

The Night Clerk at the Larkspur Inn

Ghost story · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

I worked the night desk at the Larkspur Inn for one autumn, and I would have stayed longer if it had not been for the gentleman in room nine.

He checked in at two in the morning on the thirtieth of October. Tall, grey hat, a suitcase with brass corners. He signed the register in ink, with a pen he took from his own pocket.

"Room nine, if it's free," he said. "I always have nine."

"Of course, Mr. Aldous." I gave him the key. He thanked me, very courteous, and went up.

It was only when the stairs stopped creaking that I looked at the board behind me. We had eight rooms. We had always had eight rooms. There was no hook for nine, and I could not have told you what I had put in his hand.

I called the owner. Mrs. Teague answered on the fifth ring, not pleased.

"A man in a grey hat," she said. "Brass corners on the case?"

"You know him?"

"He comes every year. My mother checked him in, and hers." A pause. "Did he pay?"

"He left this." I turned over the coin on the desk. It was heavy, and the date on it was 1898.

"Then he's a better guest than most. Listen to me, Dana. In the morning there'll be a key on the desk. Don't look for the door it fits. I did, once."

"What did you find?"

"The door," said Mrs. Teague, and hung up.

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