

JOHNNY AND THE BOOGERMAN

another ridiculous story by:

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Johnny lay. He lay back on his pine framed bed, comfortably ensconced within the safe warm folds of his winter quilt. The plump, goose-down pillow enveloped his tiny head as he stared at the ceiling, all the while exploring the interior of his proboscis with the tip of his right index finger. The edge of his fingernail providing fulcrum, he prized loose an ample boogersnott, encrusted and dried on one side, moist and gooey on the other.

He held the booger aloft to examine it for color, weight and texture. He then deftly wiped it on the underside of the pine rails of his bed frame. He blindly felt along the rails for previous night's boogers. They were, all intact and just where he had deposited them before. He probed the other nostril.

Without warning, a shadow intervened in the dim light cast by the kerosene lantern on his desk. There stood his mother, crossly, hands balled into fists tucked at her waist.

"Johnny! How many times have your father and I told you not to pick your nose and wipe the boogers on the bed? How many? You just keep up that nasty habit

young man--are you listening to me? You keep that up and sure enough, you just wait, one of these nights The Boogerman will crawl into your room and hide under the bed! He'll eat the boogersnotts and then, when they're all gone, he'll eat you alive!"

Johnny's father, overhearing his wife scolding their son, entered the lamplit doorway to the boy's room.

"Oh Johnny! Don't tell me you're wiping boogers on the bed again! Oh Johnny! Dontcha remember the song I taught ya?

'Don't stick your finger up your nose!

Cause your nose isn't where your finger goes!

You can itch it

You can lick it

But you never ought to pick it

Don't stick your finger up your nose! "

Johnny laughed out loud at the song.

"This is not a laughing matter young man!" his father scolded. "Your mother and I have warned you about The Boogerman! Do you want him to crawl in here some night and eat those boogersnotts and then eat you? Do you?"

"No Dad." Johnny said, insincerely stifling a chortle.

"Well lets have no more nose picking and a lot more serious attitude about this, son!"

"Okay Dad. I promise. No more nose picking."

"We only tell you these things out of concern for you son. Your mother and I understand that the air in the house during the winter gets dry and makes boogers that harden inside your nose. We understand this. This is a problem that has plagued man throughout the ages. But there are sensible methods of extracting and disposing of boogers, Johnny. Ways and methods that do not incur the risk of drawing out The Boogerman from his secret lair."

Johnny laughed.

"You won't be laughin' when The Boogerman crawls up through the floor from a mousehole! Once he's in, you've had it! He swallow those boogers for an appetizer and then he'll eat you- alive!

That's the ways of The Boogerman.

Now the responsible method of extracting boogers is to get up out of bed and get a pitcher of water. Then walk out back to the outhouse, sniff water up your nose, and blow out the boogers into the potty hole."

"But Dad! Its cold outside! Who wants to go outside in the snow and put cold water up their nose in the middle of the night?"

"You best heed my warning boy! If you don't stop wipin' boogers on your bed- The Boogerman'll get ya fer sure! Beware! Beware! The Boogerman! Now

its time for bed. Go to sleep. Good night!"

And Johnny's father lifted the glass chimney from the lantern and snuffed the flame. His two parents stepped out of the room and closed the door.

In the darkened room, Johnny stared at the ceiling in the dim blue starlight reflected from the snow outside his tiny window. He muttered softly.

"The Boogerman! They must think I'm stupid! Howz he supposed to come in here? If there was a Boogerman, he's probably snug and warm in his own boogerman castle on a freezing cold night like this. Mom and Dad must think I'm really stupid. None of the other kids believe in The Boogerman. Just look at Willy! He wipes boogers under his desk at school every day! Did The Boogerman come and eat him? No!"

Johnny chuckled to himself as he poked his finger up his nostril, extracting a medium sized booger. He wiped it on the underside of his bed frame next to the others. Johnny drifted off to sleep.

The moon rose and slowly climbed the sky, bathing the snowy hills and icy roofs with silvery light. A jingling of tiny sleigh bells sounded through the crisp night wind. Johnny awoke and sprang out of bed to his window.

"Santa?"

He strained his eyes against the difficult light, scanning the frozen world until he discerned a tiny sleigh flying over the rooftops being pulled by tiny animals. What were they? As the sleigh flew closer, they appeared to be eight flying squirrels. A high pitched sing song crackled faintly over the wind.

"On Chimpy

On Bizmol

On Skippy and Flipper!

On Skimpy

On Zagnon

On Bippy and Whipper!"

The tiny sleigh floated among the houses and hovered over Johnny's roof. It lightly settled its rails on top of the house with a thump. A loud sound of someone clearing their throat and then spitting out the phlegm, echoed throughout the neighborhood. Tiny footsteps and scuffling buzzed into the wooden ceiling.

"Santa?" Johnny asked timidly.

Scraping sounds and groans and creaks of wood being pried and bent struck fear in his heart. Tiny voices with thumping and scuffling were then inside the wall. Johnny struck a match and lit the kerosene lantern on his desk.

In the corner of his room, he watched with horror

as an iron nail holding one of the wooden planks of the wall wiggled and shook, inching out slowly, then dropped to the floor. The nail below it shook loose as well then dropped to the floor, where it rolled in a semi circle. A small iron hook thrust through the end of the plank and then the noises of wood groaning and bending. A strange, tiny man squeezed himself into the room around the plank and lowered himself to the floor.

He was less than three feet tall, with long pointed ears and a big, beak-like nose. He was slender, and clothed in a red suit with pointed red slippers, each with a tiny silver bell at the toe. Atop his head was a pointed red felt hat, also with a silver bell at the tip. He strode about boldly into the room, the tiny bells jingling as he walked. He sang in a soft whiney voice:

"HooHo Ho

Ha Ha Ha

And a merry little Hee Hee Hee.

I've got a pot

Of Boiling snott

And I live in a hollow tree!"

The tiny man cleared his throat and spat out the phlegm on the bedroom wall.

"Are, are, are you The Boogerman?"

"Yup. Thats me. The Boogerman. Boohooohooohoo harrharrharr!"

"What are those things on your hands?"

"Oh these? These are my claws. I don't have fingers. The bones and blood vessels are within them, so I can't trim them."

"Are, are, you, um, are you gonna eat me?"

"Might, might. Have to wait and see. First lemme see your booger collection."

"I'm gonna call Mom and Dad!"

"Oh I wouldn't do that if I were you. Then I'd have to tell them that you've been picking your nose and wiping the boogers again."

Johnny muffled a sob and stepped aside to allow the tiny man access to his bed. The creature began scraping dried boogers with his claws and nibbling them.

"Hmmm. Not bad. Not bad."

Then he began scraping the remaining boogers into a tiny leather pouch.

"Hey, I thought you were gonna eat all the boogers, then decide if you were full and maybe you won't have to eat me. Why are you putting the boogers in a bag?"

"Oh, I eat some now and save some for later. Standard procedure:"

'In a barrel

You're a pickle.

"In a goldmine
You're a nickel."

"What does that mean? How can I be a pickle? How
could I be a nickel?"

"It doesn't mean anything. You know, you ask a lot
of annoying questions, and yes, I am going to eat you."

"Oh please Mr. Boogerman. Please don't eat me. I'm
only six years old and my friend Willy over on Prescott
Street wipes far more boogers than I do. Plus he's a
lot fatter than I, so he would be a lot more nutritious.
Isn't there any way that I can get out of this?"

The Boogerman stroked his dark pointed beard and
begin to pace back and forth, his tiny silver bells tinkling.

"Well, there is one way, according to the rules.
You see, I have these horribly sharp claws and such a
big nose. The irony is that The Boogerman cannot pick
the boogers out of his own nose. If I did, I would cut
my face to pieces. So- if you pick my nose I'll give
ya two wishes."

Johnny swallowed hard.

"Dontcha mean three wishes? Like the tooth fairy?"

The Boogerman stamped his little foot angrily and
bared his sharp little teeth.

"Of all the arrogance! I give you a chance and you
want to question it?! You're six years old and you still
believe in the tooth fairy?!!!"

'And even if there were a real tooth fairy, she would not give out wishes, three or otherwise! The tooth fairy, if real, would only leave nickels under your pillow in exchange for teeth that have fallen out. I really think I should eat you for being so arrogant."

"Oh please Mr. Boogerman! I'm sorry! Two wishes are just fine. C'mer. I'll pick the boogers out of your nose." and Johnny began scooping out The Boogerman's ample schnozz. He had been busy a ~~short~~ while when a thought occurred to him.

"Hey, wait a minute. How could you possibly eat me when you are smaller than I am?"

"Alright. My patience with you is wearing very thin "little" Johnny! My metabolism is very different from yours. I digest my food in just a couple of minutes. Then I poop it all out. So a nice plump boy like you would be about seven or eight meals. It would take me about three hours, but hey, I got all night. In the morning all your parents would find is a big pile of doo doo. I usually leave it on the pillow. Now are you gonna finish picking my nose or are you gonna ask stupid questions all night?"

Johnny whimpered softly and busied himself scooping out each nostril thoroughly.

Johnny watched from his window as the tiny man in the tiny sleigh pulled by eight flying squirrels looped around the treetops and onward towards Prescott Street. He tried to sleep, but sleep wouldn't come. After tossing and turning the rest of the night, he finally fell asleep just as the rest of the household was waking up. His father shook him gently awake.

"C'mon Johnny! Wake up! I gotta surprise for ya after breakfast!"

He sleepily dressed himself and stumbled to the kitchen where he numbly swallowed a bowlful of corn pone. His father rested his head on his shoulder when he finished.

"Johnny, you know we don't have a lot of money and things are bad. We need a new water pump and just this morning I found a few shingles from the roof fell off, so that's going to cost some money to fix. I've decided to hire you out to the coal mines in Ludenville.

They're payin' two dollars a day for 'tunnel rats'. We need the money Johnny, so you won't be goin' to school anymore."

And Johnny never went to school, nor did he ever pick his nose again. Once, he almost did, but he stopped himself when he remembered just how serious a thing like that is.

THE END

(or is it?)

