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HALLOWEEN

Am I a Halloween Grinch?



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When is the last time you enjoyed a Halloween party? If your answer is “just this past weekend,” that’s so awesome and I’m happy for you, really. But if your answer is “never, not once,” then I suggest that you join me in choosing not to attend them anymore. I am a Halloween grinch, and I’m not afraid to say it.

Don’t get me wrong: I think the enthusiasm, creativity, and verve with which some of my friends and loved ones approach Halloween is genuinely beautiful. I can appreciate their

clever costumes from afar. But I have come to understand that it's simply not for me.

Let's start with the decor. Reese's orange, blood red, and slime green are some of the most common shades in the Halloween color palette. To put it bluntly, those are colors I simply don't ever want to look at. I don't want them in my home or on my clothing, and as much as I can appreciate the hard work that goes into Halloween decorating, fake cobwebs are wasteful and forever getting stuck in my clothing, hair, and face. And can we put some respect on pumpkins, please? As someone who greatly enjoys pumpkin in the form of pie, bisque, and roasted seeds, I hate to see that marvelous vegetable rotting by someone's front door.

Then, there's the gore and the general promotion of fear. I have enough anxiety from this year's election cycle. I can't stomach the comically bad special effects in the 2014 film *What We Do in the Shadows*, and I certainly won't be watching *Midsommar* or *Longlegs* anytime soon. I don't think it's fun to be surprised by a jump scare or psychologically damaged by a true-crime documentary. And I'm sorry to the Tim Burton obsessives, but even watching a man marry a corpse feels uninteresting to me at best.

But the mild distaste I have for the aesthetic of Halloween pales in comparison to the misery of attending a Halloween party. It started in college, when "Halloweekend" was supposed to be the most debaucherous and exciting three to four days of the semester. Each year, I'd venture out with my friends into the biting chill of Boston in October, shivering as we waited on the porch of a house occupied by a group of improv comedians or a cappella singers (I went to art school) to find out if we would be allowed in or not. Once inside, sipping on a warm PBR and swaying along to "Hotline Bling" was even worse than usual because there were three times as many students crammed into every nook and cranny, and most of them were wearing the most sweat-inducing variety of polyester in existence.

That's another bone I'd like to pick, by the way. Halloween costumes you buy in the store are generally ill-fitting, unreasonably expensive yet cheaply made, and, for most consumers, totally disposable. The plastic waste that Halloween generates is mind-boggling. Of course, a true Halloween obsessive is going to painstakingly put together a costume that is hilarious, witty, elaborate, and beautiful. I admire that, but I have enough self-awareness to know I'll never possess those skills.

One would think, and reasonably so, that adult Halloween parties might be better than college ones. Not in my experience! Certainly, the Halloween parties I've attended over the course of my 20s have been better ventilated and slightly less crowded, but they still fall victim to the high expectations and overly optimistic anticipation that is placed on Halloween parties. For adults, Halloween is probably the horniest holiday — a single person attending a Halloween party is often coming in with the explicit intention, or at least a vague hope, of hooking up. When everyone in the room is either doing a couple's costume with their partner or increasingly desperate to hit it off with someone, anyone, the vibe becomes really bad really fast.

Last year, I opted out of Halloween by leaving the country for nearly the entire month of October — the decision wasn't solely about skipping my least favorite holiday, but I won't pretend it wasn't a factor. Halloween came and went during an extended visit to my grandmother, who lives in Croatia, where there is little to no acknowledgment of the day. I saw

no giant skeletons or Styrofoam gravestones, and although it was an emotionally difficult period for reasons unrelated to Halloween, not having to think about costumes and pumpkins and vampires was one small comfort at the time.

This year, not being able to leave the country during Halloween, I simply skipped town four states over. On the actual day of Halloween, I will not wear a costume, nor will I decorate my stoop or scare anyone. I will wear a warm sweater, I will pass out candy, and then I will cleanse my visual palate by watching a Studio Ghibli film before going to bed at 10 p.m. And although I can accept the label of Halloween grinch without shame, I’m the type of person who can always find the silver lining even in things I dislike. So, I’ll give you the three things I do like about Halloween: candy corn, the movie *Twitches*, and witnessing the pure delight of young trick-or-treaters. If you love Halloween, I’m not here to yuck your yum. I just want you to know you don’t have to live like this. Let us join hands and avoid Halloween parties together, so that all those attending them can really have some fun with their fellow Halloween-heads.

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