

PARKER, SYCAMORE, AND THE TURNIP JACK-O-LANTERN ADVENTURE



Starring: Parker, Turnip Jack-O-Lantern.

Costarring: The Excavator and the Crane. Supporting role:

Skid Steer Loader

Halloween 2022

It was the night before Halloween and all through the little house on Jefferson all the creatures were stirring, particularly Parker.

Halloween is Parker's favorite holiday, well except for Christmas, because he loves to dress up in various outfits, particularly his Fireman outfit. The light reflecting strips, the boots, the walkie talkie, and the whistle make it his go to uniform.



His mother, Bess, says, “Parker it is time for bed. Pick out a book and Dad and I will read it to you until you are sleepy. We will need all the help we can get tonight to get you to fall asleep.”

Parker, of course picks out a Halloween book that features his favorite things in the whole wide world, heavy equipment.

Julie Andrews song “Favorite Things” came to Bess’ mind as she hummed it, she inserted all the types of heavy equipment that Parker so loves.

“Big cranes and wrecking balls,

Tearing down big walls

skid steer loaders

and bulldozer motors

They Push and they move soil

The skid steer really toils

These are a few of Parker’s favorite things!”

“Wrong holiday,” she murmured to herself and smiled. For a moment, her mind’s eye reminisced about Halloween during her childhood.



Bess, begins to read a scary story about a *Gruffalo-Popalo* and much to her surprise Parker is out like a light! The jam-packed day of Halloween outings, festivals, pumpkin carving and playing with Elvis had slap worn him out! His Fireman suit was still on, Bess and John agreed to let him sleep in it, boots, and all. Sugar-plums were not dancing in his head...it was the loud roar and work by an excavator and the like. Bess takes a picture of Parker sprawled out in his outfit and sends it to Roz, Munsey and Pop Pop. Portrait mode of course.

Parker was dreaming heavily and imagined a cool breeze blowing across him from his bedroom window. Then he felt a tapping on his shoulder and when he did not respond the tapping became a more forceful pushing. When Parker opened his eyes, he could not believe what he saw. Coming through his window and into his bedroom was the scooper of an excavator. When he looked beyond the scooper and out the window he saw the excavator.

“Parker,” the excavator said, “get up we need your help!”

Parker was still very sleepy and did not want to get out of bed. He wanted to sleep so more.

“I don’t want to get out of bed. It is very warm and comfortable here. Leave me alone. Get someone else!” Parker said.



“We need you. Please come with me now!” the excavator pleaded.

“Why me? Go to Elvis’ house and get him. I bet he will help you,” said Parker.

The excavator said, “He’s too short.”

“What about my dad then, he’s taller,” said Parker.

The excavator said, “He’s too tall.”

Parker replied, “How about my mom then, she likes adventures.”

The excavator said, “She is too fat, being pregnant and all. Anyway for what we need you for, it would be too dangerous for her and the alligator.” (Alligator is Parker’s name for the new baby.)

Park said, “Then what about Roz, she’d be perfect. Nothing scares her and she is not fat or too tall

“Nope,” said the excavator, “she can’t climb as well as you and probably having her glass of wine by now. Anyway, where we are going are a lot of squirrels, and you know how she feels about them! You are the perfect size, you aren’t afraid of heights and we have watched you climb at Sycamore. Now get out of bed and come with me. This is important and besides, you already have your fireman suit on. Your walkie-talkie and whistle might come in handy. Come on, we ain’t taking no for an answer!”

Parker reluctantly got of bed. The excavator gently lifted him to the scooper and carefully moved him out of his room, through his window and then on to Jefferson Street where other equipment friends of the excavator were waiting.

Everyone was to take part in the project. The skid steer, loader, digger, bulldozer and the crane with his wrecking ball. They all had on Halloween costumes. The excavator was dressed as a brontosaurus,

and his costume was Parker's favorite. The excavator explained to Parker what all the fuss was about.

The excavator laid out the plan, "Today we were working at a new construction site and the digger came upon an interesting finding. It was a large turnip that had been carved like a pumpkin jack-o-lantern. And here is the thing, he could talk. Apparently, he had been buried since around the time the Irish came to America during the potato famine in the 1880's. In Ireland, the tradition of carving a scary face in a root vegetable commonly used turnips instead of pumpkins. I guess pumpkins were harder to come by in Ireland during the famine. Anyway, the turnip's face had been carved and he was pretty scary, but he talks real nice. He wanted us to grant him a wish."



Parker said, "This all hard to believe. First of all, I've never heard of a turnip jack-o-lantern. Second of all, who is ever going to believe you found a one-hundred-year-old or so talking turnip?"

The excavator said, “Who’s gonna believe you were talking to a talking excavator in a dinosaur costume on Halloween eve?”

Parker replied, “Good point. Anyway, what do you have in store for me, and why did you wake me up?”

The excavator continued, “He wants to be noticed on Halloween. Everybody knows about pumpkin jack-o-lanterns, but no one has ever heard of or ever seen a turnip jack-o-lantern. He is sad about it and asked if we could help. With that carved up face of his looking so scary, we kind of felt sorry for him. And of course, he has been buried all these years waiting to be found. We told him we would help.”

All of this began to interest Parker, but he could not figure out why he in particular was needed.

The excavator explained, “He wants to be seen on Halloween by the whole city of Charlottesville. The question is how. Well, all off my equipment buddies work all over this city and they felt we should put the turnip at the highest point in Charlottesville and all lit up so everyone would see it. That’s where you come in!”

Parker still did not understand his role. “The suspense is killing me. Where exactly do I fit in.”

The excavator said, “Well...the roof of your new house on Sycamore is the highest point allowed by law in Charlottesville. The digger was there the day the City came to measure it to see if it was up to code, so we know. And if we can put the turnip jack-o-lantern on the top of the crane and the crane on top of your new house, everyone all the way to Skyline drive and the Shenandoah National Park will see him.”

The crane piped in, “All of our equipment buddies are going to help me get on top of your house, then I am going to help get you climb to the top of my crane extender. Once you are there, you put the turnip on

very top of me. I already have a spotlight up there from when they put an American Flag up there on July Fourth.”

At the sound of the word “climb” Parker became extremely excited and now delighted they had chosen him for the job. All the heavy equipment buddies made a circle around the excavator and Parker and explained how they planned to get Parker and the turnip to the top.

After a thirty-minute discussion and “strategizing” the excavator said, “Are you with us Parker?” Parker nodded in the affirmative. “Okay, we are all on the same page. Let’s do this!” And off they went to Sycamore.



Parker jumped into his father’s company truck and off he went to
Sycamore!



On Parker's way to Sycamore, he used his walkie-talkie to radio Elvis to meet him at the warehouse. He needed to pick up some equipment to help in the project and wanted Elvis' advice. Particularly wanted to get a ruler and some heavy-duty gloves



Measuring the height of Sycamore, the dimensions of each of the equipment being used, the crane and then his height...Parker said, "This might just work!"



He thought about his firefighter friends helping but thought better of it!
They all had a different idea on how to do the plan and Parker ditched
the idea!



Sycamore, all of the equipment agreed, was one tall building! It was going to take the effort everybody to get the job done before daylight. The plan called for all of the equipment to use the function they were made for to get the crane and wrecking ball to the top. The planned to arrange themselves in a staggered fashion in various levels of Sycamore to then use the excavator to lift the crane to the roof safely. The biggest equipment was to be on the bottom, then as the pyramid of equipment got closer to the roof, the smaller the equipment got. The Bobcat skid steer was the at the very top. Then using all the skill they had acquired by working construction sites over the years the “pyramid” and the excavator positioned themselves to allow the crane to get to the roof. It was no easy task, but they did it. Parker was told to climb on each piece of equipment to make his way to the top. That’s one of the reasons they chose him. He effortlessly

climbed up all the different pieces of equipment using tires, scoopers, shovels, steering wheels and anything he could get his hands and feet on to make his way to the top where the crane was waiting on him. His years of climbing on the playground nets and equipment and indoor rock climbing was now being put to good use.

“I now know why we chose him,” said the skid steer loader. “He climbs like a monkey and he ain’t afraid of nothing. And he is just the right size for the job.”

Now Parker, the crane and the turnip jack-o-lantern were on the top of Sycamore devising the plan for the next step: to have Parker climb up the crane’s extender where the American flag and spotlight were, and place the turnip head. The trick was to lift the flagpole, place the turnip and the replace the flag. In doing so, both the flag and the turnip carving were illuminated by the strong crane spotlight.

The turnip jack-o-lantern was looking around. “This is better than I could have ever imagined. I can see Monticello; I can see the house on Jefferson St., and I can see the Blue Ridge Mountains around Charlottesville. Thank you so much for helping me. Parker, before we go up, I want to give you something, a pin. It is an Irish Shamrock. It is the most recognized symbol of Ireland and was used by St. Patrick to teach the early Irish pagans about God. Also, it just might bring you good luck. May I pin it on your fireman’s suit?” asked the turnip.

Parker said, “Wow! Sure you can. Thank you.”



Magically a Shamrock pin appeared and attached itself to Parker's fireman's suit.



(Halloween or “All Hallows’ Day” honors saints, martyrs and those who have departed. The Irish used turnips and other root vegetables for their jack-o-lanterns in Ireland. When the Irish immigrated to America, pumpkins were easier to come by, so pumpkins were used more commonly. That is why our turnip is so sad!)

Parker grabbed his walkie-talkie and said to the participants, “Alright guys, I’m going up!”

The crane extension had cross bars and Parker began his way to the top which was 100 ft. above Sycamore. The container holding the turnip head was hoisted up using the wrecking ball chain.

The bulldozer looking up at Parker climb the crane said to the dump truck, “Man that boy can climb; he could be in a Spiderman movie!”



Before anyone could say “Skyline Tents,” Parker was at the top. He had removed the flag with one hand and balancing himself with only by his legs, he put the turnip jack-o-lantern in his spot and replaced the flag. Using his walkie-talkie, he told the excavator and the crane, “Mission completed. I’m coming down!”

At this point he put on his fireman’s gloves, and instead of backing down the crane as they had planned, he grasped the crane chain and slid down to top of the roof! Parker’s flaunting safety made the

excavator angry, but only for a second. He murmured, “That’s why we chose him!”

“Boy, that was fun. I want to “do it a din!” said Parker.

At the sound of Parker’s fireman’s whistle, all the equipment, except the crane, assembled at the base of sycamore to admire their work.

It was a beautiful sight. The American flag waving in the wind, above a magical turnip jack-o-lantern on top of the highest point in Charlottesville. And to top that off, it was going to be his family’s house soon.

Everyone was in good spirits and began to head to their homes. Parker caught a ride back to Jefferson with one of equipment buddies.



Back at Jefferson, Parker climbed back into his bedroom window and again fell fast asleep in his fireman’s uniform.



The next morning, as usual, Parker's mother gets up early to get the coffee percolating and to meditate and stretch a bit, and his father gets up to go work at Sycamore. Before he leaves, John prepares the batter for pancakes and Parker's special Halloween breakfast. He loves pancakes and he loves all the sweet stuff you put on it. Boy does he love him's sweets.

Bess goes in to see if Parker is up and gently nudges him to wake up. Good morning Buddy, happy Halloween. Did you sleep well?

Parker is yawning and slowly awakes. "Mom, I had a really odd dream last night. I dreamed I..."

Bess interrupted Parker and asked, "Where did you get that Shamrock pin Buddy. That sets off your fireman's suit really nice."

Parker is about to begin again to explain about his dream when Bess' cell phone goes off. It is John.

"Bess this is John. I just made it to Sycamore. You are not going to believe what I am looking at. You and Parker get down here quickly and tell Roz also. Wow, this is amazing!"

Bess says, "Parker your dad says that something has happened at Sycamore and wants us to come down there now to see."

Parker looks at her as if he were in very deep thought. Then he smiles.

"What is it Buddy? Is it about your dream? I'm sorry, I interrupted you. Go ahead, what was your dream about?" she asked.

Parker thinks to himself, "The turnip jack-o-lantern was not a dream, it really happened."

"Parker, do you want to tell me about your dream?" his mother asks again.

"That's okay, I'll tell you about it another time. Let's go to Sycamore to see what dad is talking about. I'll eat my pancakes on the way and be sure to put lots of syrup on them!" Parker replied.

The End

Epilogue

As the turnip jack-o-lantern was sitting atop Sycamore with the flag above and the city life below, he was overcome with gratitude for Parker and all his equipment friends. He silently recited an Irish prayer for Parker, his family, and his equipment buddies:

*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.
May God be with you and bless you:
May you see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune,
Rich in blessings.
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.
May the road rise up to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home
And may the hand of a friend always be near.
May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.*

