Boo! Cozy up to Halloween with these spooky tales

BOOK BREAK

VICTORIA DIAZ

If things have been going bump in the night around your place lately, don't worry about it. Chances are, it's simply some of the resident ghoulies and goblins, getting geared up for their big night, coming up Halloween is one of my favorite holidays. I like the idea of everybody dressing up in costumes and becoming somebody else for the evening. And I enjoy carving up pumpkins, and passing out treats to mysterious little beggars. But part of the reason I like Halloween is because it gives me a good excuse to go back and re-read (again) at least one of my all-time-favorite tales of terror.

Below are just a few of the ones I keep returning to (You'll find them all in numerous collections and anthologies):

■ Robert Bloch, author of "Psycho," has written horror stories for more than 50 years. His 1943 tale, "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper," is among his best.

Pay close attention from the very beginning to this short story about London's infamous 19th-Century serial killer, who was never caught. As this story goes, Red Jack just may have discovered the secret of eternal life and may be about to strike again.

This time, he's allegedly prowling the streets of Chicago — the November night wind whispers in the shadows and a raggy fog weaves its way through the darkened neighborhood.

■ As the scene opens in Ray Bradbury's "The Tombling Da veins," A highway is being built through the cemetery where her long-dead fianc elles buried and his body must be unearthed by the community, then moved to another resting place.

First, though, Grandma decides to have a look inside the disinterred casket. What she discovers about her long-ago lover — and eventually about herself — makes for one of Bradbury's best-told tales. If you're looking for a light-hearted horror story, this is it.

■ I've said it before, but I'll say it again — Stephen King should write more short stories. One of his best efforts is a riveting little piece of work he sold to "Cavalier" magazine in 1975, titled "Strawberry Spring." In it, a serial killer stalks a small college campus after dark. Perhaps one of the night shadows is "the man or the thing that came to be known as Springheel Jack." Or perhaps that's him now, his "footfalls clicking dreamily off down the winding paths . . ." You may experience just a touch of insomnia after reading this one.

■ Any list of recommended reading for Halloween would be incomplete, of course, without one of Poe's masterful tales.

One of my personal favorites happens to be "The Masque of the Red Death," a story I was first exposed to when I heard a reading of it years ago, performed by actor Basil Rathbone.

It's about the prosperous Prince Prospero and his favored friends, who sequester themselves in a magnificent castle in an attempt to escape a plague ravaging the less-favored, outside world. They fail, of course, but just how they meet with the Grim Reaper in Poe's many-colored "bloodbedewed halls" makes for absolutely unforgettable reading — especially after dark.

■ "The Doll," by Joyce Carol Oates, was written in 1980 and first published in the literary magazine, "Epoch."

In Oates' inimitable gothic style, it tells of a college president who visits a strange town and, on a quiet neighborhood street, comes across a life-sized replica of the dollhouse she played with as a child. Should she stop? Should she ring the doorbell? Should she go inside?

Victoria Diaz of Livonia tracks the books and literary industry.

How to survive moving away

Relocation is as much a matter of the heart as the body.

An Oakland University Continuum Center evening workshop will look at why and what happens.

"Relocation and Grief: Survival Skills For A Successful Move" will be offered 7-10 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4, on the Rochester campus.

Roxanne Allen will explore the stages of "uprooting" from first reaction through reality. Participants will examine the mix of emotions from excitement over the change to the "blessing" of a fresh start to resentment over a forced situation.

Time will be spent looking at the "grieving" caused by leaving the familiar behind. Also covered will be the warning signals of trouble in kids and what to do before, during, and after the move to gain the resources to get through it all.

Fee is $39/$49 for two members of the same family; MasterCard/VISA accepted. Register before Nov. 2; call 370-3033.

How to handle difficult people

Everyone faces an occasional situation with a contrary personality, but what happens when it becomes a regular contact?

The Oakland University Continuum Center will offer an evening workshop, "How To Handle Difficult People," from 7-10 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4, on the Rochester campus.

Roberta "Jeff" Dailey will present ways to effectively manage repeatedly disagreeable people by learning to manage self.

Participants will learn coping techniques and conflict management strategies to reduce the incidence of head-on interference. Also covered will be methods to avoid withdrawal by personalities that are shy.

The fee is $39; MasterCard/VISA accepted. Register before Nov. 2; call 370-3033.

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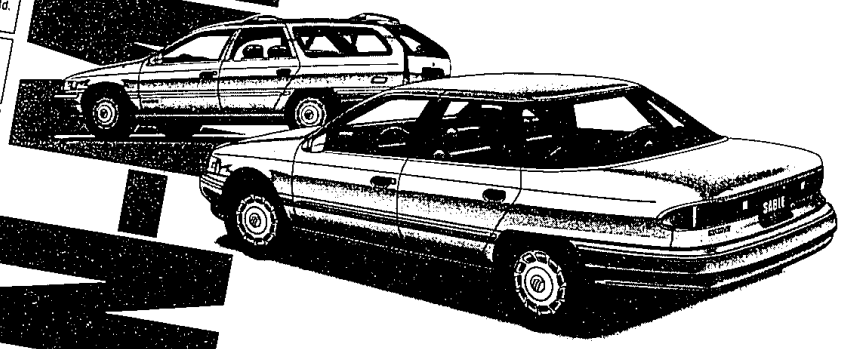

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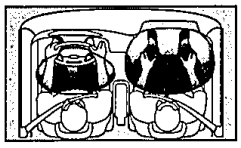

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