

EVIL WITCH, BIG CITY

By Deborah Karczewski

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Deborah Karczewski

I am The Big Sister from the Underworld ... The Sibling of Nightmares. I don't want to be. I just am. Honestly, I *want* to be World's Greatest Big Sister ... because Amanda deserves it. That kid puts up with so much, and she hardly ever complains. You know how it is. She's forced to go to all of my tennis matches ... she has to wear all of my out of date hand-me-downs ... she even ends up having to watch whatever I'm watching on TV. And *I'm* the nice one! Don't even get me started on how my brothers treat the poor thing! They seem to think she's one step above the cat! Sometimes I forget what it's like to be a little kid. So, when I occasionally come out of my all-about-me phase, I try to be nice to her. You know? A role model. But all of my good intentions twist around, and I end up terrorizing her instead! It's bizarre! I'm like The Involuntary Sister of Doom. The Unconscious Torturer of Innocent Souls! The Accidental Mind Blaster! Honest!

Don't believe me? I am so not exaggerating! Okay, take yesterday, for example. Even though I'm talking about only *one* day, I created several years' worth of psychological damage that will probably take forever to undo! I think I've scarred my baby sister for life! It was Mandy's third birthday, and I wanted to make it super memorable. You know how you don't remember much before kindergarten? Just a few random memories, most of them bad? Well, I was determined that when Mandy is my age, she'd say to her friends, "My most vivid memory is my third birthday, and it's all due to my sister Jenny, The World's Greatest Sister." (*sighs*) Be careful what you wish for. I got the first half of my wish, anyway. My parents were organizing a surprise party for Mandy. The plan was for my brothers to decorate the house while I entertained The Birthday Girl for the afternoon. Being the oldest, I could be trusted taking Mandy out of the house so she wouldn't suspect what was going on at home. I decided that it might be fun to go to Middletown Park. Mandy, who wanted to celebrate turning three, begged to wear her princess outfit. Sure, what the heck. That little kid lives for, breathes, and thinks about nothing but princesses. I swear - her whole room is decorated for royalty. Even her pajamas are covered with embroidered gold crowns. So – gee – guess what Mandy wanted to be for Halloween? Mom spent a whole month on that tiny gown. Then, since I happened to be experiencing one of my rare breaks from the all-about-me phase, I got out the hot glue gun and covered the whole dress with plastic jewels. Mandy is sure that they're real diamonds. Well anyway,

this is July not October, but people always think little girls are cute in Halloween costumes no matter what time of year it is. I figured, let the kid have a special day. Mandy was beyond overjoyed. Not only was her big sister paying attention to her for a change ... not only was I taking her to the playground of her favorite park ... not only was she three whole years old ... but she was a princess in July!

The whole way to the subway station, people would stop us and say things like “Oh, aren’t you adorable!” and “Little girl, are you looking for Prince Charming?” or “Princess, you are ‘the fairest of them all!’” And Mandy would beam like a headlight. She was so proud. One lady thought she was being funny when she exclaimed, “Don’t eat any poison apples, my pretty!” Mandy screwed up her little face and cried, “Oh Thithter!” – she has the cutest lisp – she cried, “Oh Thithter, are appleth really poithon?”

“No Mandy, of course not. That lady was just making a joke about Snow White!” She nodded, but she didn’t look convinced.

The subway station was packed as usual. When we could hear the train’s approach way down the tunnel, everybody started shoving and pushing toward the track. I felt like we were surrounded by incredibly rude sardines. Right when we were entering the subway car, Mandy’s “princess tiara” toppled off her head. In less than a second Mandy slid her hand from my fist! The crowd seemed to swallow her up like Jello around a grape! I couldn’t turn around. Bodies were forcing me forward. Before I could scream, the doors closed shut! Omigosh! There I was with my face plastered up against the grimy window of the train ... and there was Mandy, on the other side of the window, out on the platform! I tried to pry open the doors, but they wouldn’t budge! I started pounding on the window, kicking at the doors, yelling her name! I saw Mandy’s little, confused face staring at me through the window. Even though I couldn’t hear her baby voice, I could tell that my name was on her lips. I don’t know what came over me. I rammed my shoulder into the door, smashing it over and over like I was a caged beast. I started howling like a wounded animal. The sound caught on among the crowd. Suddenly I heard a whole chorus of yelping beasts! Luckily, somebody must have caught on before the train took off. I owe somebody for that one – big time! I don’t know if it’s because of heaven or the conductor, but the doors popped open. There ... standing outside the train ... was the most disheveled, downtrodden, tearful princess anyone’s ever seen.

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