

This is a scary story. Scary and spooky. Scary enough to scare the pants right off of you. They’d go running down the street by themselves looking for a place to hide. Scary.

It’s mostly scary because it’s true.

This is the story of a young boy by the name of Frank Flint. The 7 time winner of the local county annual bike race. From the age of 5 to the age of 12, young Frank won that race year in and year out.

Now Frank wasn’t exactly what you’d call a strong fella. In fact, you’d more then likely describe him as weak. A weak spindly little rag-a-muffin of a kid. Looked like a plucked chicken, without the muscle. Had trouble lifting a ten pound weight even if you were helping him with five of the pounds. He’d turn sideways and almost disappear. Weak kid. Pale, gangly weak kid.

Now, you say to yourself. Well how is it that such a weak little kid can win the local county bike race year after year, 7 years running? How? Against such local greats as “Stilts” Mc Nally, “Buzzhead” Feldon, “Tubby” McGee? These were local heroes, enormously strong men. How could Frank win against such odds?

I’ll tell you. He had two secret weapons at his disposal. First was his bike, which he called the Phantom. The Phantom was an amazing bike. A dream on two wheels. Frank had built the Phantom by himself. Custom made out of parts of other bikes he had come across over the years. You know how some bikes are nice, but they’ve got the perfect front wheel. Well, Frank would take that wheel. And then he’d take the perfect gear from another bike, the perfect frame, perfect seat, perfect handle bars, and put them all together into the Phantom. He even had a custom built bell right there on the handle bars, tuned by professional glockenspiel player Theodore Von Flynn to play a perfect G sharp. Brrrrring.

Oh, it was a thing of beauty. It just plain looked fast. And it was fast, all by itself. You could hear it from a block away, it’s oversized tires

making a low growl against the pavement. Grrrrroooooowww.

Frank’s other secret weapon, which I’m sure some of you children are familiar with, was candy. Lots and lots of candy. You see, every day before the race, Frank would load himself up on all the candy his stomach could handle. Twix bars, Snickers bars, M&M’s, Skittles, Milk Duds, Milk Drops, Cinnamon Crispies, Chipmunk Sugar Lumps, Grandma’s Secret Lemon Drops, sometimes just raw sugar, straight from the bag.

All that candy and sugar gave him that extra zip, that zoom that he needed to win race after race, 7 years running. Well, technically 8, but we’ll get to his 8th win later.

On the morning of the race that was to be his 8th win, Frank woke up late. His alarm clock had been knocked from the side table by his cat Mr. Pitters. Now, whether Mr. Pitters did this on purpose or not, I cannot confirm nor deny, but I do know that cats are a mischievous bunch and it wouldn’t surprise me one bit if that little tabby had done it on purpose.

Either way, Frank was late, very late. There was no way he was going to make it from his house to the candy store, then to the starting line in time. He was barely going to be able to make it from his house to the starting line. He was going to have to take a short cut. Through the woods.

Now, folks around these parts don’t much like to talk about the woods. The woods are an evil dark spooky place. Even in the middle of the day, they’re dark. The woods are the kind of a place where the stories that come out of them don’t end happy. Stories about Moss-Men, and spiders that talk to you, badgers the size of Shetland ponies. Scary place.

But, Frank was in a rush, so with a ring of his bell, brrrrringgg, he and the Phantom rolled into the woods. Grrrrrrrowooooowwwww.

Now, it’s also believed that a certain fella hangs out in the woods. A fella who goes by the name of the Devil. That’s right, I said the Devil.

Now, the Devil takes on all sorts of different disguises. Changes himself to look like almost anyone. Like he’s putting on a new jacket. Could make himself look like an ice cream man, or a fireman, or a butcher with big meaty hands, or a ballerina with little tippy toes, or an ophthalmologist. But, now matter what he disguises himself as, he always wears a little red flower right here on his lapel. I don’t know, it’s a fashion thing he does.

On the day in question, Frank and the Phantom were racing through the woods as fast as they could, which wasn’t very fast without his candy, when out of the corner of his eye Frank saw a wandering candyman. Wandering, as candymen don’t do, through the woods with a little red flower on his lapel. Frank almost didn’t see the man, but the man called out to Frank and said, “Hey there boy, where you off to in such a hurry?” Frank was about to explain the whole thing when the man just said, “I think I have exactly what you need right here.”

Let me just pause the story here just for one moment and give you kids a warning. If you’re ever wandering through the woods and you need something really bad. Candy, money, a new boyfriend, new girlfriend, a car, or all of the above, and suddenly from out of nowhere there’s a man there with exactly what you need, candy, money, a new boyfriend, new girlfriend, a car, or all of the above, exactly the item you desire, and he’s got a red flower on his lapel... I don’t know if I’d accept that gift. That man could be the Devil, and that gift would be cursed.

Course Frank didn’t have the foresight to talk to me about any of this so he just said, “What do have for me sir?” The man reached into his fanny pack and tossed and individually wrapped piece of candy to Frank who caught it before he even knew what he was doing. He looked at the candy, it’s red wrapper reading “The Devil’s Candy”. Now, this should have been a tip off to Frank, but he was in a rush.

Now, Frank had been told by his mom not to accept candy from strangers, but the package appeared to be untampered with, not poked or prodded. Little did Frank know, the Devil don’t waste his time tampering with individual candies, no sir, the Devil has his own candy factory where he makes all kinds of candies, in bulk. Candies like Dots, Ju-ju bees, Now and Later’s, Slo-pokes... sticky candy, nasty sticky candy that stays in your teeth for days, and the Devil’s Candy the most sticky candy in the world, it’s almost 110% pure nougat. One small bite sized piece... 874 calories. That’s how evil this candy is.

Course, Frank didn’t know any of this so with a quick “Thank you” he and the Phantom were off, and the candyman seemed to slither off into the weeds of the woods.

Frank made it to the starting line right as they were raising up the gun to start the race. He got up in the front of the line, the place of honor for last year’s winner, right between “Stilts” McNally, and “Buzzhead” Feldon, “Tubby” McGee was way in the back he was never going to win this year, he knew it, we all knew it.

The gun went off and Frank popped the candy into his mouth. Bam! It hit him like a bolt of lightning! More energy than he had ever felt in his life! His legs felt like live wires. More energy than any box of Double Stuffed Oreos ever gave him. Zoom! Off he went. Half a mile down the... by all accounts he was half a mile down the road before the other competitors had even laid a pedal down. It was an amazing sight. Even “Buzzhead” Feldon, who is amazed by nothing, was heard to say, quote “That sure was something.”

Fast. So fast, that he won the race. Race officials said that Frank had actually crossed the finish line before the other competitors had crossed the starting line. Fast.

So, Frank had won his 8th race, but he couldn’t collect his trophy. You see, Frank couldn’t stop. He and the Phantom finished the race and just kept right on going, right on through town. Faster and

faster. It seemed impossible to Frank, but they were going faster even still. So fast that animals couldn’t get out of the way in time. Squirrels were ricocheting off the tires like popcorn on a hot kettle. “Ping!” “Ping!” “Squeek-squeek!”. And still on they went.

Then, suddenly the Phantom’s tires caught on fire. And still they went faster. Frank could no longer steer, it was as if the Phantom had a mind of its own and steered itself through a dry open field with a streak of fire behind them. Straight towards the woods.

Now, by this time Frank had put 4 and 5 together, come up with ten, and thought, my bike’s on fire, I can’t stop, I can’t steer, I’m headed back for the woods where that strange man gave me something called “The Devil’s Candy”, I think that man was the Devil, I don’t want to go back into the woods. But his revelation had come to late. With one final “brrrrinnngg” of his bell, Frank and the Phantom raced into the woods with a Flooosh! The woods burst into flame, and Frank was never seen alive again.

The woods burned for 7 straight days. Actually, they burned for 4 days, but on the fourth day “Buzzhead” Feldon who was helping out on the volunteer fire department, tossed a cigarette butt out the window and started the whole thing back up again.

They say that the fire burned so hot and so fast that trees in the middle of the woods didn’t have time to burn. They just melted where they stood. And some folks say that that is what happened to Frank and the Phantom. They didn’t burn up or nothing, they just melted. Melted together into one mass of freakishness. One melty bicycle creature. With bike tires for feet. Pedals for knees. Gears for teeth. Handle bars coming out of his head. And a bell for a hand... brrriinnngg.

And they say that this creature only has one thought. One thought goes through its fevered mind day in day out, night after night. “More candy.” “Give me more candy.”

Now the fateful race took place on a long ago November afternoon. And since that time, it’s said that Frank and the Phantom come out of the woods every November looking for more candy. They shamble their melty selves out and go from house to house breaking in and stealing candy. And if you’re home, they take the candy from you in horrible melty ways. Ways I don’t even want to try to describe to you.

So. A couple of years back, before you were all born, the children of this town took it upon themselves to do something very brave. Very brave indeed. You see, they knew that Frank would be coming in November, so they would go out on the last day of October. Halloween, October 31st, and they would dress up in disguises so that Frank wouldn’t know who was doing the deed, and they’d go door to door saying “Trick or treat, trick or treat, gimmie some candy.” and they’d take all the candy out of all the houses and they’d eat it all up for themselves, keep it away from Frank. Eat it up, or hide it away in a really good hiding spot for Easter. And they saved this town from the terror of Frank and the Phantom. Very brave.

‘Course, some folks say that Frank doesn’t wait for November to roll around. Sometimes he’ll come out on Halloween, and follow the kids who are Trick or Treating, and steal their candy in horrible melty ways. And sometime he won’t wait until the 31st, he’ll come out on any night that he smells candy, which could be anytime really.

So, you kids, I have to words of warning for you. First, don’t take candy from strangers, but you knew that already. Second, beware of Frank.

BOO!