Wish Pumpkins
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THESE MUSIC TRACKS WERE THE ICING ON MY PUMPKIN CAKE!

HAUNTED HOUSE: HAP PALMER, (SNEAKING MUSIC) GIMME A SMILE,
(PUMPKIN SONG): ANDREW GOLD (FOR PUMPKIN HEAVEN).

WISH PUMPKINS IS FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT, COMPLETE WITH A FLOPPY-
DOG NAMED CHECKERS AND A HEAVEN FOR PUMPKINS.
CARTOON INTRO

A thematic song with playful lyrics ripples along the screen:

"PLEASE NO FANGS LIKE A MEAN CROCODILE," is a moving banner (like a satin ribbon) encouraging little kids to read. It explains one pumpkin’s sentiments: Not all pumpkins want to be scary. Jacks appear as unique as the people who carve them.

An ANTHROPOMORPHIC UNCARVED PUMPKIN is one of many orbiting moons singing “Gimme a Smile.” But whose stealthy SHADOWS are those?

It’s NELSON (slap the back) LEVER stalking nerdy WENDEL PETERS in a revolving Halloween Universe composed of colorful, pliable, morphing, imagination bubbles which randomly turn into various objects:

DANCING LEAVES, BONE-GUYS, CANDY... and lots of different JACKS who compete for the spotlight.

Look! Some things are changing, becoming REAL.

THE REAL SARAH nestles a pumpkin in a blanket-nest while a REAL CAT does the whisker-rub on the pumpkin’s stem, and curls up with REAL CHECKERS THE DOG, inside a floating orb containing CATNIP and DOG TREATS.

Wendel’s emotions continually trigger his shock-shake: Blblblbb... Lastly, some BUBBLES BURST: GOODIES, DECORATIONS, floating, dissolving... A gust of autumn wind and...

EXT. REAL LIFE - THE PETERS’ STREET - EARLY EVENING

...the cartoon materializes into OUR WORLD. CLUNCKY SNEAKY MUSIC as WENDEL, forties, is close to home after walking his dog, Checkers. He commando-crawls along the boulevard amid scattered leaves, next to the white picket fence while trying to shush his beloved floppy-dog.

WENDEL
Shshsh. Checkers--no, over here boy. Good Floppy-dog. Ha! He thinks he’s gonna get me this year.
Well, you can’t mess with someone who isn’t around to mess with.

Wendel appears to be making headway when all of a sudden, he reaches his right hand over with a full-speed-ahead motion; then SPLAT!

WENDEL
UGH!
He retrieves his hand from a stinky mass of dog poop. Checkers begins barking at a dog across the street and yanking on the leash while Wendel tries the GRASS RUB method of getting rid of the doo-doo.

WENDEL
No Checkers. Back here.

He skirts the doo. Checkers completes a circle; the leash wraps around Wendel’s neck. He gags and struggles to maneuver with only one good hand, unwraps Checkers; then spies a garden hose in someone’s front yard. Hunched and tippy-toeing towards it, he slips; turns on the water, washes his hands.

Meanwhile, a cop drives by. Sending into dispatch...

COP
No, it’s just Wendel Peters. I recognized his dog right away.

WENDEL
Ok Boy, you know the drill. We’re almost home.

Back on the boulevard and the “commando,” he drags himself all the way to his gate. Spying through the pickets at his neighbor’s house, he assumes he’s in the clear.

WENDEL
Now!

He jumps up, unlatches the gate, races to the door, but he HEARS his wife, DONNA, talking to NELSON.

DONNA
At least that’s where I think we’ll put the tunnel this year.

NELSON
Well, I always did think that tunnel was one of Wendel’s finest ideas.

Wendel dives down behind a big shrub at the side of the steps pulling Checkers with him. Donna and Nelson arrive in front. Checkers bounds back into view.

DONNA
Checkers? Where’s Daddy?

WENDEL
Oh, ha-ha. I’m here. Just thought I saw some of Jeffrey’s little marbles down there. Poor little guy, you know how he gets when he loses things.
Donna laughs.

DONNA
You mean your marbles. She
suddenly stops. Ew! Do you smell
something?

NELSON
What is that?

WENDEL
(looking at his sleeve)
Oh ha-ha. Just had a little
accident. I mean “I” didn’t have
an accident, but my hand stepped in
a little bit of a package.

DONNA
Your hand stepped?

NELSON
Well I’ll leave you two be. I’ll
be working in front if you need any
supplies. Oh Wendel--got a
surprise coming.

Nelson sings merrily away, he SMACKS Wendel over the
shoulder.

THE PETERS’ HALLWAY

Freshly showered, Wendel leaves the bathroom. JEFFREY, 7,
and SARAH 4, excitedly clamor for attention.

JEFFREY & SARAH
Guess what? Guess what?

WENDEL
What--what?

He lifts Sarah and carries her downstairs. Jeffrey runs
ahead.

JEFFREY
Tommy Wernick’s Dad is making a
monster jump with his trampoline!

WENDEL
But is at good as our tunnel?

JEFFREY
Daaad, it’s a monster jump!

WENDEL
Yeah--yeah a monster jump--I hear
you.
They enter the kitchen. Donna is rummaging in the fridge.

**DONNA**
Oh no, I forgot to get milk. Honey would you--

**WENDEL**
Oh no. I’m not going out to get attacked by Nelson again.

**DONNA**
When did he ever attack you?

**WENDEL**
Last year. All the holy days of October leading up to Halloween. Telling me all about how he’s doing this and that and how great he is. The guy must be a Satanist or something.

**SARAH**
(through her thumb)
I like satin. I like to twiddle it.

Wendel puts Sarah down.

**DONNA**
No honey... a Satanist is... is...

She fires an evil glare at Wendel.

**DONNA**
Ok now how am I supposed to explain this one?

**JEFFREY**
I know!

**DONNA**
No Jeffrey, don’t go talking about scary things like that.

**JEFFREY**
But Halloween’s supposed to be scary.

**DONNA**
Yeah honey, but funny scary not... See what you did. We need milk!

Wendel shlumps away. Then, bursting with enthusiasm... Ready, set, RUN...
EXT. PETERS’ DRIVEWAY
...to the car; then SMACK on his back.

NELSON
Where are you going in such a hurry
Wendel? You need to slow down
there. You know what stress can
do? Nothing’s worth the worry.

WENDEL
Yeah yeah. You’re right-- What’s
under the blanket?

Nelson pulls it off. ORCHESTRA MUSIC.

NELSON
TA-DA!

Nelson reveals a meticulously carved pumpkin. Wendel, green,
jealous...

WENDEL
Your own design I suppose?

Nelson shoves the pumpkin into Wendel’s arms.

NELSON
For you. To help get you started.
You know what they say, “Learn from
a master.”

Wendel places the pumpkin inside his car.

WENDEL
(lying)
Thanks, well... I got a whole pile
of my own designs you know, but my
wrist was injured last year from
too much golfing.

He slinks into his car, anxious to get away.

NELSON
Listen Wendel, how about you and
Donna coming over for a little pre-
Halloween get together.

WENDEL
Oh no Nelson. I don’t want to hear
about all of your wonderfully big
plans for Halloween again this
year.
NELSON
Come on Wendel... just a friendly
get together. I promise, I won’t
even mention Halloween.

WENDEL
Well...

NELSON
You know how excited Margaret gets
when she wants to try out a new
recipe. Do it for her.

CAR ENGINE starts.

WENDEL
Ok, but if you so much as breath
Halloween, I’m outa there.

Nelson punches Wendel’s shoulder.

NELSON
You’re a pal Wendel.

WENDEL
I know I’m a pal. Palsy walsey-
all- the-way-to-the-grocery-store-
to-get milk.

NELSON
Man! You were racing to get milk?
I thought a pipe burst or
something. Take it easy Wendel.

Nelson ambles off singing. Wendel goes spastic. Blbllblbl...
He shakes himself out like a wet dog with fleas.

WENDEL
Just shake it all loose. That’s
it. Shake it loose.

To his shake we HEAR a RATTLING and VERY SPOOKY MUSIC.

Wendel drives. Every house is overly bedecked for Halloween.
A 12 ft. GHOUL, a HOGWARTS CASTLE, WITCHES playing cards.

WENDEL
I don’t get it. What’s going on
this year. Suddenly, everybody’s
a... a Hallowmaniac or something.

INT. THE PETERS’ BASEMENT - LATER

Donna is taking clothes out of the dryer. She’s hardly
giving Wendel a look as she tends to her task.
I’m sorry Wendel, I can’t. That’s the night that I have choir practice and it’s an important meeting because we’re arranging for the Christmas pageant.

Wendel’s jaw drops. He looks like he’s been hit by a bullet.

Christmas! It’s a month till Halloween!

Donna sidesteps past him, speeding up the stairs. Wendel follows like a puppy dog.

Just tell them I’m really sorry and that you forgot.

On the way up the stairs, Donna’s underwear falls off the top of the basket. Wendel picks them up and momentarily smiles.

Hey, these are nice ones.

Donna peers down at him from the upper stair then yanks them out of his hands.

You just don’t understand Wendel. The Christmas preparations take a lot of time. That’s why Nelson always beats you with the Halloween extravaganzas. He starts everything way in advance...

Following her into the living room, Wendel reclines wearily into his puffy chair while Donna plunks the laundry down, lifts up part of the wrinkly mass and piles it onto his lap.

Wendel. He’s a remarkable planner.

And I’m not?

You plan and then forget.

She looks towards the ceiling. Then suddenly: SHOCK washes over her face. A watermark is very visible to Donna but apparently Wendel’s eyes aren’t quite as receptive.

(cursory glance upwards)
What? What are you looking at?
DONNA
See? That’s what I mean.

Wendel looks up again scrutinizing a little more.

DONNA
You didn’t fix it did you. It’s gotten bigger.

WENDEL
Ah geeze. It’s been so long I forgot.

How long have you been fixing the roof Wendel? Where’s the plan in that?

Wendel takes the clothes and places them beside him.

WENDEL
Ok, I’m going to the bathroom.

DONNA
Whenever you gotta plan, you go to the bathroom. Why can’t you plan like most people: at a desk, use the computer, sticky notes anything... My grandma used to say: Put an elastic-band around your wrist if you think you’ll forget.

Wendel’s on his way out.

WENDEL
Oh sure, cut off my circulation and give myself gangrene.

DONNA
It’s not the circulation around your wrists that I’m worried about. Maybe your collars are too tight.

WENDEL
The shower helps me think.

DONNA
Wendel you’ve gotta get over that. It doesn’t help you think. A pen and paper helps you think.

WENDEL
I’m gonna fix the roof ok, but I’m thinkin’ about Halloween before I set foot in his house. I at least wanna know I’ve got a plan.

Donna sinks her head into the pile of laundry. Wendel escapes to his retreat.
INT. PETERS’ BATHROOM

Wendel puts down the HAPPY FACE TOILET SEAT and pulls out magazines from the drawer.

SLIDING THE MAGAZINES: BEST HALLOWEEN EVER, LIFE-SIZE GHOSTS & GOBLINS, BEWITCHING IDEAS, SPOOKTACULAR TIMES.

TOSSING THREE, CHOOSING ONE, he flips through the pages: A VERY SCARY DEMON.

BANG! Wendel jumps.

JEFFREY
Dad-ad! Sarah peed again!

EXT. LEVER’S HOUSE – NEXT EVENING

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

NELSON
Hello Wendel, welcome to my castle.
A slightly HAUNTED castle I might add.

His house is stunningly spooky. Wendel sneaks around the room secretly admiring the homemade masterpieces as Nelson gets drinks.

INT. THE PETERS’ KITCHEN

WENDEL
You know what’s going on? That’s why the whole town’s going crazy.

DONNA
What? What happened?

WENDEL
I think he planned for Charlie to call at the exact time I was there. He knew I’d want to know what all his excitement was about. And I had to ask. I haaad to ask.

DONNA
What did he say to Charlie?

WENDEL
He said he’s gonna be on the “National” news.

Wendel’s mouth goes crooked as he mockingly repeats in a nasal tone.
WENDEL
The NAA-tional. Him and his dumb monster-house.

A tisk tisk from Donna.

WENDEL
I was here first. I’m the one who got this block going.

DONNA
Oh Wendel, you sound like a child.

WENDEL
Well it’s true. I built the first haunted house in Roseglen. And everyone loves my tunnel.

Wendel stands.

DONNA
Where are you going?

WENDEL
I got to go to the bathroom.

Donna sighs.

JEFFREY
Oh that reminds me Mom.

DONNA
What Jeffrey?

JEFFREY
I think we’re gonna need more toilet paper.

DONNA
I just bought a whole whack of toilet paper.

JEFFREY
Yeah but Dad’s been using it.

DONNA
At least he’s been doing something in that bathroom. I’ll pick up something to settle his stomach.

JEFFREY
No, I mean he’s been using it for making mummies.

DONNA
Wendel!
INT. THE PETERS’ BATHROOM

Wendel’s on the toilet (for a reason). He notices the empty roll.

WENDEL
Oh no.

EXT. THE PETERS’ HOUSE – DAY BEFORE HALLOWEEN – EVENING

SIGNAGE: CARVE YOUR PERFECT PUMPKIN: DONATE TO CHILDREN’S CHARITIES

Wendel’s in his glory in front of a huge pile of pumpkins. Checkers lopes about.

WENDEL
Step right up. Carve your perfect pumpkin!

A long line of “big kids” are waiting to choose their pumpkin when finally: a very little girl, about three years old looks up and says:

LITTLE GIRL
Mr. Peters, how do you carve the perfect pumpkin?

A beat. Wendel scans the ELABORATE PUMPKINS shining in his window; then spots Sarah sitting down with a pumpkin and dressing it with lace.

SARAH
No Jeffrey. I don’t want mine carved.

Wendel squats down to the child’s level.

WENDEL
Well, sometimes you don’t really carve them.

LITTLE GIRL
Why not?

WENDEL
Because the special ones don’t get carved. They’re called Wish Pumpkins.

LITTLE GIRL
Wish Pumpkins?

WENDEL
They’re special for goodie-making.
LITTLE GIRL
A jack-o-lantern?

WENDEL
Better than a jack-o-lantern. Did you know you can make pumpkin soup, pumpkin muffins--

LITTLE GIRL
I know 'bout pumpkin pie.

WENDEL
That too!

The little girl’s parents are just within ear-shot.

WENDEL
Well, when you bring your parents a Wish Pumpkin, it can't be carved like for a Jack, but for something good to eat. And then, the Wish Pumpkin’s spirit flies off to a magical field of pumpkins getting ready for next Halloween. And they all talk about what they did. One of a pumpkin’s greatest dreams is to be a Wish Pumpkin when they grow up.

Wendel places TWO PUMPKINS, big and little, into her wagon.

WENDEL
This one here: This is a genuine Wish Pumpkin. And here’s a Jack.

LITTLE GIRL
Mommy Daddy! I’ve got us a Wish Pumpkin!

MOTHER
Wendel, this is even better than your tunnel.

A HAND gently appears on Wendel’s shoulder. Nelson’s mellow.

NELSON
What do you say we work together next year? I’d love to work with a master of Wish Pumpkins.

Wendel shakes suddenly. Blublblublab... Nelson’s confused.

WENDEL
I get these seizures sometimes.

OPENING MUSIC, FLYING HIGH over a full field of dreamy-eyed flesh-like PUMPKINS. FAIRY DUST shimmers around them.