

**Wish Pumpkins**

**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: Blblblb... 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. Blblbl...  
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.

DONNA  
 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.

WENDEL  
 Christmas! It's a month till  
 Halloween!

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

DONNA  
 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.

WENDEL  
 Hey, these are nice ones.

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

DONNA  
 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.

DONNA  
 Wendel. He's a *remarkable* planner.

WENDEL  
 And I'm not?

DONNA  
 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.

WENDEL  
 (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 fliiii..es 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. Blublublubl... 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.