

A SLICE OF PUMPKIN LIFE

by

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A 'One Week Challenge' entry

October 5, 2007

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A small-town fate is in full swing. People mill leisurely through the maze of brick-a-brack, carnival style games and home cooking that the surrounding stalls have on offer.

The whole place is dressed up in decorative COBWEBS and figures of various GHOULS AND GOBLINS.

Central to this quaint setting is a MARQUEE with a display of JACK O' LANTERNS at its entrance. A banner overhead reads

'HALLOWEEN FATE PUMPKIN CARVING COMPETITION'

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

Standing proudly on a makeshift stage, MAYOR WILLIS addresses the SMALL CROWD that has gathered to watch.

THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA LENS

Mayor Willis makes his speech. He is being recorded.

MAYOR WILLIS

And now, it is with great pleasure,  
that I present to you, Riverdale's  
most anticipated annual event, The  
Halloween Fate Pumpkin Carving  
Competition!

A small ROUND OF APPLAUSE follows.

MAYOR WILLIS (CONT'D)

For the forty seventh year running,  
our little town has proudly held  
this wonderful tradition. Riverdale  
is built on a solid foundation of  
good old fashioned family values  
and togetherness. And that's what  
this competition never fails to  
deliver; a real sense of community  
spirit, and good clean fun.

MAUDE (O.S.)

Wrap it up jerk-off, we're not  
getting any younger over here!

The CAMERA JERKS to the left to find

MAUDE, a greying, hard faced old battleaxe of a woman.

She sits on a stool behind a long table that stretches across the back of the stage with FIVE OTHER CONTESTANTS. Each has a carved pumpkin in front of them.

Mayor Willis's reddening face now fills the screen. He forces a laugh and clears his throat.

MAYOR WILLIS  
This year's winner of the Pumpkin  
Carving Competition is...

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON

GEORGE, an old friendly faced man sitting at the end of the table.

The CAMERA FREEZES on this image.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD - DAY

The epitome of picturesque suburbia. Beautiful houses with freshly mown lawns and white picket fences line this idyllic street.

George makes his way up the driveway of one of the houses. He carries bulging grocery bags.

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

ON VIDEO CAMERA

George removes pumpkins from the bags and places them on the counter.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
So do you enter the competition  
every year George?

GEORGE  
Oh my yes. Without fail. My  
pumpkins are my pride and joy.

He heads for the living room. The CAMERA FOLLOWS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The back of George's head fills the frame as he enters.

GEORGE  
I look forward to it every year, as  
do they. It's what they live for.

George steps aside to reveal SEVERAL CARVED PUMPKINS sitting on the couch. Each has a cup of tea placed in front of it.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Isn't it my darlings! Yes it is!

He points out a pumpkin wearing a smile and a blonde wig of pigtails.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
This is Sally.

The camera rests on SALLY. She smiles back.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
And this one's little Billy. Say  
hello Billy!

The camera moves along to find BILLY, a pumpkin wearing a baseball cap. He says nothing. George smiles.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
He's shy. Ohhh, I almost forgot!

George grabs the TV remote and switches onto 'PASSIONS'.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
It's their favorite.

The PUMPKINS stare blankly at the TV.

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

George's FROZEN IMAGE morphs back to one of movement.

Billy sits at the table in front of George. A label next to him reads 'BILLY THE KID'. George whispers reassuringly into Billy's ear.

The CAMERA MOVES past George to find

WENDY, a prim, immaculately dressed woman with a wide smile and perfectly rigid hair.

The CAMERA FREEZES.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A worryingly clean, impossibly neat, floral nightmare of a living space.

PUMPKINS carved to display emotional expressions on their faces have been carefully placed around the room.

Two GREEK MASK-LIKE PUMPKINS, carved to look like comedy and tragedy, sit either end of the mantle piece, bookending a large collection of ROMANCE NOVELS.

IN THE CORNER

Wendy examines a scared looking pumpkin which sits on top of a well-polished piano. She turns it a quarter of an inch.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

ON VIDEO CAMERA

Wendy carves another pumpkin.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
 What got you interested in pumpkin  
 carving?

WENDY  
 Well, I love to cook.

MONTAGE:

Wendy dices meat on a chopping board.

WENDY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I've always had a very deep rooted  
 connection with food...

Wendy sprinkles some herbs into a sizzling saucepan.

WENDY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ...pouring the love I have for my  
 family into the meals I prepare for  
 them.

Wendy samples a spoonful of her sumptuous creation.

WENDY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I think you can really express  
 yourself inner-most self with food.

Wendy EATS A BANANA in a seductive manner, slipping the  
 length of it deep into her mouth.

She looks up and sees the camera-- quickly gets back to  
 making dinner.

END OF MONTAGE:

ON VIDEO CAMERA

Wendy continues to carve her pumpkin. She seems a little  
 flustered now.

WENDY (CONT'D)  
 Richard, that's my husband, he's  
 away a lot. On business. I needed a  
 hobby to pass the time, and I  
 suppose expressing myself through  
 the art of pumpkin carving was the  
 next stage in my relationship with  
 food. I even grow them myself. I  
 used to grow cucumbers... large  
 cucumbers... but, well, lets just  
 say there was an incident and  
 Richard put a stop to it. So it's  
 pumpkins now. Richard isn't  
 threatened by pumpkins.

She flashes an angelic smile.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Same scene, only now TWO TEENS stand either side of Wendy  
They each have a pumpkin in front of them.

WENDY

It's really brought the family  
together. My children are  
practicing self-expression this  
year too.

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON

PATTY, a seriously overweight girl with sad eyes.

WENDY (CONT'D)

This is my daughter Patty.  
(laughs nervously)  
The name is purely coincidental I  
promise you, she was actually very  
small as a baby.

PATTY

I usually enter the pie eating  
competition but my mum says after  
seven years and seven dress sizes  
it's time to stop being rewarded  
for reaching whale-like proportions  
and not having a boyfriend.

Wendy forces herself to maintain her strained smile.

WENDY

And this little ray of sunshine is  
my son Tim.

The CAMERA SLIDES the other way, finding

TIM, a hoody-wearing emo-type with a pierced lip. Long, black  
greasy hair hides half of his gloomy face.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Ready to carve your pumpkin Tim?

Tim stares down at his pumpkin.

WENDY (CCONT'D) (CONT'D)

Tim honey?

Tim LUNGES at his pumpkin in a fit of rage, PULVERIZING it  
with a carving knife.

Wendy tries desperately to pull him away as he SCREAMS and  
SHOUTS like a madman.

The CAMERA QUICKLY SHUTS OFF. Nothing but black.

The CAMERA TURNS BACK ON to reveal

Wendy-- alone again, working hard on her pumpkin. She's trying to appear upbeat but is clearly losing her cool. She GRUNTS with every thrust of the blade.

WENDY (CONT'D)

What was I saying? Right. Self expression. It keeps me sane really, pumpkin carving. Well, that and my romance novels. I love a good romance novel don't you? In fact I find I do my best work after reading Jackie Collins.

She turns her pumpkin around to face the camera. It has closed eyes and a mouth wide open as if in some kind of euphoric state...

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

Wendy's FROZEN IMAGE comes back to life, widening to reveal her euphoric pumpkin sitting in front of her. It is labeled 'JOY'.

The CAMERA MOVES along the table, passing Tim and his pulverized pumpkin.

It carries on past Patty, who is in the middle of devouring her half-carved pumpkin.

The camera stops on Maude and IDA, an equally scary-looking and equally old woman sitting next to her. They look at each other, eyes narrowing.

The CAMERA FREEZES.

EXT. IDA'S BACK YARD - DAY

ON VIDEO CAMERA

Ida flashes a kind smile.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

What do you feel your chances are of winning this years pumpkin carving competition?

IDA

(softly)

Well, it's hard to say. The competition is particularly tough this year.

IDA (CONT'D)

The contestants are an exceptionally talented bunch, each and every one of them. But, I am quietly confident that--

MAUDE (O.S.)

Ha! Quietly my wrinkled ass!

Ida turns to see Maude peering over the fence.

IDA

Put a lid on it fuck face!

MAUDE

Come over here and say that you big pussy!

IDA

Bring it on bitch!

Ida turns back to camera. She smiles.

EXT. MAUDE'S BACK YARD - DAY

MAUDE'S ANGRY FACE

fills the screen as she GRIPS THE CAMERA with both hands, pulling it towards her.

MAUDE

Hey, this way. This is where the real action is. You don't wanna bother with her hack job piece of shit pumpkins. Over here!

She DRAGS the camera into the corner of her back yard, then steps to the side to reveal

A PUMPKIN PATCH guarded by a SCARECROW. Each pumpkin is of impressive size.

MAUDE (CONT'D)

You've seen hers, right? Old saggy tits over there? You've seen her pumpkins? Tell me mine aren't bigger. Go on, tell me mine aren't the biggest fucking pumpkins you've ever seen in your whole fucking life.

The CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the pumpkins. Maude YANKS the camera back up face her.

MAUDE (CONT'D)

Mine are bigger right? There's no way she can win. Right?

She moves in closer, her eyes gleaming with menace.



MAUDE (CONT'D)

RIGHT?!

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Well... yes, yours are bigger...  
but, it's a pumpkin *carving*  
competition, not a--

MAUDE

Excuse me? What are you babbling?!  
Are you on her side you dumb  
bastard?!

IDA (O.S.)

Damn straight he is!

The CAMERA SWOOPS AROUND--

Ida is peering over the fence, smirking with delight.

IDA (CONT'D)

Knows real talent when he sees it.

MAUDE

Go dig a grave, whore.

IDA

Give it up Maude the Fraud, you  
couldn't carve your way out of a  
wet paper bag!

MAUDE

I'll carve you a new ass hole in a  
minute!

Maude grabs her CARVING KNIFE and makes for Ida.

The CAMERA TURNS AWAY -- The Documentarian appears on camera,  
racing towards the front yard. The camera shakes violently  
behind him as the camera man follows.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

The CAMERA FOLLOWS the Documentarian as he barrels across the  
front yard towards the road.

A BATTERED TRUCK SCREECHES to a halt in front of him, cutting  
off his escape route.

A tattooed girl with thick multi-colored dread locks jumps  
out of the vehicle. This is RAIN. She moves towards the  
Documentarian.

RAIN

It's you isn't it. You're the one  
documenting this carnage. How do  
you sleep at night?

RAIN(CONT'D)

Do you know how many innocent pumpkins are mercilessly hacked to pieces every year so that their carcasses can be put on display for one night of pointless festivity?!

The Documentarian backs away in fear. She keeps coming.

RAIN (CONT'D)

It's sick. You're sick. Promoting this injustice. Something needs to be done...

She closes in. The Documentarian darts to the right, cutting past her and down the street.

RAIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(shouting after them)  
You won't get away with this!

DOCUMENTARIAN

Come on! Keep running!

The CAMERA FOLLOWS like some Blair Which homage.

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

The FROZEN IMAGE of Maude and Ida starts moving again. They continue to stare each other down, as do their

PUMPKINS-- Maude's is a representation of Ida and vice versa-- both wear cotton wool hair and angry faces... and carving knives stabbed through their backs. They are labeled 'BITCH' and 'WHORE'.

The CAMERA MOVES QUICKLY along, stopping on HANK, the final contestant. He is a scruffy, bearded redneck wearing tatty dungarees.

The CAMERA FREEZES.

EXT. HANK'S HOUSE - DAY

A decrepid looking house on the edge of town. Rolling fields stretch on behind it. A rusty car with no wheels sits out the front of a detached shed-looking garage.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Hank sits in a rocking chair, clutching an open BIBLE, totally immersed.

ON VIDEO CAMERA

Hank stares blankly at the camera.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
 Are you looking forward to taking  
 part this year?

HANK  
 It's just a competition to the rest  
 of 'em. But not me, no sir. The  
 Lord don't like a show off. He  
 wants us to use our talents for  
 good. To help others. So that's  
 what I do. I spread happiness to  
 the good people of this town by  
 wowing them with my creations.  
 That's all I do it for. For the  
 good of others. It's not like I  
 need the prize money.

In the background, his GARAGE COLLAPSES to the ground in a  
 cloud of dust.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)  
 So, you feel that by competing  
 you're doing God's work?

HANK  
 Absolutely. I like nothing more  
 than spreading happiness to God's  
 people... and warding off folk that  
 he, and myself of course, don't  
 take to kindly to.

He points to the floor.

HANK (CONT'D)  
 These fellas normally do the trick.

THE CAMERA follows his finger, finding

A DISPLAY OF CARVED PUMPKINS lined up on the edge of the  
 porch-- one with a face painted black, one with narrow slits  
 for eyes, one being mounted from behind by another.

HANK (CONT'D)  
 And if not...

He places his bible down and picks up a SHOTGUN. He pats the  
 barrel gently.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK as the cameraman slowly backs away.

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

Hank's FROZEN IMAGE comes back to life.

The CAMERA MOVES DOWN to reveal his entry-- a carved pumpkin  
 mounted on a CRUCIFIX. The label is blank.

The CAMERA PULLS AWAY from the table of contestants and settles on Mayor Willis.

MAYOR WILLIS  
And the winner is...

A long dramatic pause.

MAUDE (O.S.)  
You're askin' for it buddy!

MAYOR WILLIS  
Tim Bradshaw, for his thought  
provoking entry, 'Aggression'!

The CROWD APPLAUDS.

The CAMERA SWOOPS back over to the table, landing on Tim, his gloomy expression still in tact. He stands up, holding his massacred mess of a pumpkin.

Wendy, clearly confused and surprised, jumps to her feet and plants a big kiss on his cheek. She turns to the crowd.

WENDY  
I knew he could do it!

Tim makes his way to the front of the stage, passing behind Maude and Ida, who turn their steely gazes away from each other and onto Tim.

Tim approaches Mayor Willis.

THWACK! A carved pumpkin smashes into his head. He does down.

THWACK! THWACK!-- the pumpkins come flying from all directions, splattering SCREAMING TOWNS PEOPLE with gooey innards and knocking people to the ground.

The CAMERA SPINS AROUND to reveal Rain and her friends standing at the entrance of the marquee, wielding carved pumpkins.

Rain turns to face the camera

RAIN  
Told you wouldn't get away with  
this!

She HURLS a pumpkin at the camera--

SPLAT!