

Kidding

PILOT EPISODE

"Green Means Go"

Written By
Dave Holstein

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FADE IN:

1 INT. 737 FROM COLUMBUS TO LOS ANGELES - DAY

1

JEFF PICKLES (53) sits sandwiched in a middle seat, flying coach. Nearby, a child screams bloody murder. But he doesn't mind. It takes a lot to make him unhappy. He's an old soul, a kind face. Think of Jim Carrey and fondly remember *The Truman Show*. He's very patient. Not an ounce of cynicism in his whole body. Warm eyes that believe everybody is capable of good. In another life he would have been a priest, instead he's America's face of children's television. He wears his trademark short-sleeve white button down shirt and tie.

A young STRESSED MOM tepidly approaches Jeff's seat

STRESSED MOM

I'm sorry. It's my daughter. She won't stop crying and she's scratching peoples' throats.

(um)

Would you... sit next to her?

Jeff's seatmates look at him, unsure. Jeff doesn't hesitate.

JEFF

Sure.

2 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, LOS ANGELES - LATER

2

James Corden at his desk. We're on break. The first guest of the show, DANNY TREJO, sits on the far side of the guest couch fiddling with gold bling the spells out P-Hound. James hears a voice over his earbud.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

James? Look in camera A.

JAMES CORDEN

I'm looking.

INTERCUT WITH:

3 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

3

The show's DIRECTOR staring at a wall of video feeds. A few techies sit behind her.

DIRECTOR

Whatever you do, do not talk about the ar-cay accident-eh.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

JAMES CORDEN
(into camera)
Was that pig latin or Canadian?

DIRECTOR
I'm seriously serious.

JAMES CORDEN
Yeah. I'm not retarded.

4 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, HALLWAY - SAME TIME

4

An EFFUSIVE SET PA holds a Sharpie and a jar of pickles and walks down the hallway with JADED SET PA (both 22).

JADED SET PA
I don't think you should do it.
The last PA who asked a guest for
an autograph got demoted to the
social media team.

EFFUSIVE SET PA
This is different. When I was
eleven and a half I got my tonsils
out and he visited me in the
children's hospital.

JADED SET PA
Yeah, you and about a thousand
other kids--

They hear a LOUD CRASH from inside a dressing room.

5 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

5

The two PAs enter to see a shattered mirror. Glass everywhere. Stool overturned.

EFFUSIVE SET PA
Oh my god. Are you okay?

Reverse to see Jeff standing calmly on the other side of the room, holding a puppet with long spaghetti arms we'll come to know as The Oops.

JEFF
I was sitting at the mirror and
then I guess the mirror decided it
didn't want to be a mirror anymore.

JADED SET PA
Everything in this building is a
hundred years old.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

JADED SET PA (cont'd)
This stuff breaks all the time.
I'm so sorry. Can we get you
anything?

JEFF
A magic marker?

Effusive Set PA hands Jeff her Sharpie. He takes her jar.

EFFUSIVE SET PA
Could you make it out to--

JEFF
(writing)
To Allison, say ahhh, because
you've turned into an ahh-mazing
young woman...

Jeff smiles at her. Effusive's heart melts. Off Jaded's
face, shock and disbelief...

6 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW - MOMENTS LATER

6

We're on. James holds up a book called "Talking to Children"
by Jeff Pickles. B-Roll on the TV of Jeff on his PBS show.

JAMES CORDEN
Our next guest is celebrating his
thirtieth anniversary -- that's a
long time, huh? -- in children's
television. He's the star, the
host, the puppetmaster behind "Mr.
Pickles Puppet Time" on PBS. He's
raised your son, your daughter,
your step-daughter for you while
you were in the next room taking
bath salts and screaming at the
photos in your high school
yearbook. He has a new book
"Talking to Children" that's doing
extremely well. Please help me
welcome, Mr. Jeff Pickles!

Jeff comes out, the audience explodes. Everyone grew up with
this man. He's like a father to them. The house band plays
the theme to Mr. Pickles' Puppet Time. James greets Jeff,
introduces him to Danny Trejo.

James Corden (cont'd)
Mr. Pickles, Danny Trejo. Danny
Trejo, Mr. Pickles. Meeting of the
minds.

(CONTINUED)

Danny and Mr. Pickles shake. The audience laughs.

JEFF

(reading Danny's bling)
P-Hound. What does the P stand
for?

DANNY TREJO

Oh uh. It's P like... uh, the part
on a lady, on a woman, you know, her--

Vagina. The audience laughs. Jeff doesn't get it.

JEFF

Oh. All right. All right.

DANNY TREJO

Respect.

JAMES CORDEN

So how did you get started in
children's television. Was it the
money or--?

JEFF

Well, they were just starting up
the public television station in
Columbus, Ohio -- WROT, where we
still shoot today.

JAMES CORDEN

What's wrong with Hollywood?

The crowd laughs.

7 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

7

ANGLE ON: Two male techies in the control room, early 30s.
Muted volume of Jeff and James's conversation.

JEFF (ON SCREEN)

Nothing's wrong with it.

MALE TECHIE 1

I can't look at him and not
think about it.

JAMES CORDEN (ON SCREEN)

So you're locally produced,
but nationally syndicated?

MALE TECHIE 2

One minute your kid's calling
shotgun, the next...

JEFF (ON SCREEN)

That's right.

MALE TECHIE 1

Right through the windshield.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

JAMES CORDEN (ON SCREEN) FEMALE TECHIE *
 Man, can we do that? Can we What are you guys talking
 move this whole thing to about?
 Peoria?

Male Techie 1 shows her a TMZ tabloid article on his iPhone. The headline reads, "**Pickles All Over the Road**" -- with a photo of Jeff and Jeff's son, 13, taken from his little league baseball card. The male techies shake their heads.

MALE TECHIE 2
 (re: Mr. Pickles)
 His wife piles both kids in the mini-van. They get hit by a semi or something and one kid like slams the pavement and bursts like a grape.

FEMALE TECHIE
 Oh my god-- (then) I thought he was gay.

8 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW - MOMENTS LATER (DAY 1)

8

JAMES CORDEN
 Be honest, have you ever watched my show before?

JEFF
 No. I have not.

JAMES CORDEN
 See kids, sometimes it's okay to lie.

JEFF
 But my wife does; she watches it every night. And if it's okay, I'd like to sing a song to her now...

Mr. Pickles pulls out a puppet shaped like a ukulele that also plays a ukulele.

JAMES CORDEN
 Hey! Who's this guy?

DANNY TREJO
 Come on. Everyone knows Uke-Larry!
 Man, I love me some Uke-Larry.

JAMES CORDEN
 What are you going to sing for us tonight, Uke-Larry?

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

It's a song I wrote called, "Don't
Be Mad Because Don't Be Mad."

Audience applauds. Jeff begins to play the song.

JEFF (cont'd (cont'd)

*WHEN THE EARTH FALLS ON YOUR TOE
AND THE MAD GROWS IN YOUR FEET
AND YOU'RE SO MAD AT YOUR MAD
THAT YOUR MAD WON'T LET YOU SLEEP
REMEMBER...*

*YOU CAN CHOOSE TO SMILE
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO LAUGH
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE MAD
(ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE MAD)*

*BECAUSE EVEN WHEN THE WHOLE WIDE
WORLD SEEMS WRONG
AND NOTHING YOU DO SEEMS RIGHT
INSTEAD OF BEATING YOUR SISTER WITH
A SKI POLE
OR PUTTING HER HAMSTER UP ON EBAY*

JUST LAUGH!

The audience, Danny and James Corden join the song.

AUDIENCE/DANNY TREJO/JAMES

JUST LAUGH!

JEFF

I mean not so much that people think
you have some sort of nervous
laughing disorder, but you know...

(then)

*DON'T BE MAD. BECAUSE DON'T BE MAD. JUST
LAUGH!*

*WHEN YOU TRIP ON YOUR STUFFED GIRAFFE
PLEASE DON'T RIP YOUR GIRAFFE IN HALF...*

The song continues as we...

9 EXT. APARTMENT NEAR OHIO STATE, COLUMBUS, OHIO - NIGHT

9

Summer in Ohio. We hear the song continue as we watch Jeff, carrying his suitcase, walk up the steps to his apartment building. It's off-campus housing for Ohio State. He walks past a student, EDWARD FORTYHANDS, passed out on the front stoop with two empty forty ounce bottles of beer duct-taped to his hands.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF/DANNY/JAMES (V.O.)

JUST LAUGH!

*LET THOSE TEARS BECOME A SMILE
BECAUSE A SMILE CAN MAKE A FRIEND
AND A FRIEND CAN MAKE YOU WHOLE
AGAIN...*

10 INT. APARTMENT NEAR OHIO STATE, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 10

As Jeff tries to get the keys in his door, ELIZA (17 or 18, pretty, fifteen pounds heavier than she'd like to be) taps his shoulder. She also has 40s duct-taped to her hands.

ELIZA

Could you help me? My keys are in my pocket. The back pocket.

Jeff reaches into her back pocket, pulls out her keys and opens her door. He places the keys between her two beers.

ELIZA (cont'd)

Thanks.

Jeff nods and goes to his door.

JEFF (V.O.)

*IT CAN MAKE THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD
SEEM SMALL AGAIN...
(LIKE YOU COULD SWALLOW IT WITH A
GLASS OF GRAPE JUICE)
EVEN WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY*

DANNY TREJO

(ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY)

11 INT. JEFF'S SAD APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS 11

Jeff walks into his barren apartment, his six year old flip phone to his ear. There's a futon he's been sleeping on. It's clear he lives here alone. On top of the fridge sits a Peabody award. His neighbor blasts some hip-hop music through the thin walls. Through Jeff's phone we hear the happy voices on his home answering machine...

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

(various voices from his family)
You've reached Jeff, Jill, Will and Phil! We're the Pickles! Leave a message--

Jeff hangs up.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

JEFF (V.O.)
SO JUST SMILE
(JUST SMILE)
 AND DON'T BE MAD
 (BECAUSE DON'T BE MAD)

Close on the fridge: a magnetic OSU football schedule holds up his son's little league baseball card -- the same image from the TZM article.

Jeff opens the fridge. It's very organized and healthy. He opens a bottle of root beer, flips his futon into a couch, turns on the TV, sees himself on Corden for a second...

JEFF (ON TV)
 (big finish)
 JUST LAUGH--

...before cutting himself off and flipping the channel to *Death Wish* and watching Charles Bronson gruesomely gun down bad guys with an AK-47. Off Jeff, is he smiling?

12 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, CRAFTS ROOM - LATER

12

DEIRDRE, mid-40s, high-strung, suburban, maternal, crafty (think Jennifer Jason Leigh) sits at a table with a sewing machine stuffing newspaper into a puppet of President Obama. Behind her are hundreds of puppets. Hand puppets. Finger puppets. Sock puppets. Puppets made out of real vegetables. Marionettes. Deirdre runs out of newspaper.

13 EXT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, TRASH BINS - MOMENTS LATER

13

Deirdre opens up the recycling bin, pulls out a newspaper. She sees something weird in the recycling bin and looks closer: someone has dumped what looks like a plate of cooked carrots and broccoli inside. She frowns.

14 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

14

Deirdre walks past her husband, SCOTT, zombie-eyed and watching James Corden.

15 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, MADDY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

15

Maddy, Deidre's daughter, 7, is in her nightgown, juggling a soccer ball on her knee. She hears her mom coming and climbs back into bed. Deirdre enters.

DEIRDRE
 Honey, knock knock.

(CONTINUED)

MADDY

Mom, I'm trying... to sleep.

The soccer ball rolls to a halt.

DEIRDRE

Uh-huh. How was dinner tonight?

MADDY

Delicious and nutritious and
amazing.

DEIRDRE

Yeah, did you throw your carrots
into the recycling bin?

Maddy doesn't answer.

DEIRDRE (cont'd)

I dug a loving spoonful of time out
of my day to cook you a healthy
meal. Then you dump it and you lie
about it. You need to eat your
greens. Your daddy ate his. Don't
you want to be big and strong like
daddy?

MADDY

I don't know. Is that what I want?

DEIRDRE

Okay, no bath time. And no
showers.

MADDY

What?

DEIRDRE

Until you eat your vegetables, no
washing up.

MADDY

So?

DEIRDRE

New rule.

MADDY

Fine. I hate baths.

Deirdre smiles a mother-of-the-year smile.

(CONTINUED)

DEIRDRE

Okay. Good night, sweetie. And when you throw food in the blue bins, the garbage people have to throw out the whole bin, so dream about those trees that can't become anything new now.

Deirdre closes the door.

16 INT. WROT STUDIOS, COLUMBUS, OHIO - LATER

16

We're walking with Jeff and MARTY -- 70s, executive producer and CEO of the small industry surrounding this show. They walk through the crowded halls of what was once a public access television station, but which through the process of collecting years of royalties on the Mr. Pickles show, has quietly upgraded while maintaining its charm.

JEFF

The trouble is I don't know how much longer I can keep lying to my friends.

MARTY

Well, they're not your friends, they're your viewers. And you're not lying, you're... preserving yourself.

JEFF

I think we can devote a show to it. I want to. It's time.

MARTY

No.

Marty catches himself. He doesn't want to sound insensitive. DEIRDRE walks by with the Obama puppet. Marty stops her.

MARTY (cont'd)

What is that?

DEIRDRE

Obama.

MARTY

He looks like a California raisin.

JEFF

I like it.

Deirdre walks on, dejected. Marty turns back to Jeff.

(CONTINUED)

MARTY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean-- It's not that I don't think our *audience* is ready for a show about "passing on"--

JEFF

I didn't say passing on, I said death. Capital D. Death.

MARTY

--It's brave of you and it'll take care of the elephant in the room... I don't think *you're* ready for it.

JEFF

Everybody knows. And the longer we wait to address it in our special language, the more it looks like I'm telling every child in America that when something terrible happens to them that they should pretend it didn't.

Burt and Clay, two gay guys, walk past wearing two halves of a giant horse puppet akin to Sesame Street's Snuffleupagus.

MARTY

Why does Snagglehorse smell like ass sex? Anybody? Burt? Clay?

BERT

It's not sex, Marty; it's sweat.

CLAY

We live in these for six hours a day; it's not a costume, it's a locker room shaped like an horse.

JEFF

You need to watch the bad language.

MARTY

Look, Hallmark wants us to help associate Father's Day with the color purple. You know how Halloween has orange, Hannukah blue, yada yada-- any thoughts? I was thinking we go royal purple: purple neckties or purple robes like a King's robe, like how dad is king. We could get uh, purple meat. Like we can get a purple steak.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARTY (cont'd)

Green eggs and ham, only purple steaks and yams or something like that. "It's Daddy Day, let's make him a perfect purple dinner!"

JEFF

We've already done four shows about colors; I don't think we need another one. I think children know their colors. And I think I'm in a unique position right now to talk about the expiration dates that mommy and daddy and all of us have.

MARTY

Well, they'll never drink milk again.

JEFF

When we let kids think it's okay not to talk about the dark feelings, they get quiet, and we don't want a country of quiet kids. It's the quiet ones who make the news.

They walk to Marty's office. His assistant DERREL (21), a tatted gangbanger reformed by the Big Brother program, sits at a desk.

He's eating a Little Suzy Snap Cake (think Little Debbie's). On seeing Jeff, Derrel immediately spits it into the trash and tries to hide the evidence. It's really awkward (and we'll learn why later). Marty shoots him a look.

DERREL

Uh, hi, I was just--

JEFF

Hey Derrel, got you something...

Jeff hands Derrel a signed *Machete 3* DVD. Derrel reads.

DERREL

"To Derrel, Be nice to sluts. --
Danny Trejo" Thanks Mr. P.

Derrel offers him a fist, Jeff makes a fist and bumps it.

JEFF

I always feel like I'm hitting you when we do that.

DERREL

You're not.

(CONTINUED)

They go into Marty's office. Lots of Puppet Time merchandise on display: t-shirts, baby shampoo, stuffed animals, the model of a theme park, etc. Marty closes the door.

MARTY

You need to understand something.

Marty holds up the bottle of shampoo with Snagglehorse on it.

MARTY (cont'd)

There's two of you. There's Mr. Pickles the sixteen million dollar licensing industry of baby shampoo and DVDs and books that keep the lights on in our little charity, money that enables us to keep America's younger eyes off of cartoons and brain-rotting Spongebobbing pornography. Then there's Mr. Pickles the separated husband and fractured father who has to hammer out some serious personal issues. And trust me, never the two should meet to prevent the destruction of them both. You do a show about death and you'll make children cry, and if children cry--

Jeff holds up the no-tears baby shampoo. He doesn't want to be a corporate huckster.

JEFF

Then they're not using our no-tears baby shampoo.

Beat. Marty levels with him.

MARTY

I'm here for you. I really am. But it's different with a live audience. You upset them at home, it's a parent issue, but here, on camera, you don't want that.

JEFF

Okay. Okay.
(then)
Thank you.

MARTY

Good.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (4)

16

The moment settles.

MARTY (cont'd)

I've got a balloon of poop hanging
out of my ass that's gonna pop any
second. Talk later.

Marty leaves. Off Jeff...

17 INT. JEFF'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

17

Jeff wanders through the house Jeff used to live in with his family. It's a mess. He scrolls through the TIVO to see last night's episode of James Corden is still unwatched. He leaves it up on the screen and puts the remote down. A yappy dog begs for his attention.

18 INT. JEFF'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

18

Jeff surveys the skyscraper of dirty dishes, sees two recently used personalized cereal bowls: one says "Phil," the other says "Will." He sighs. This place is falling apart.

19 INT. JEFF'S HOUSE, MASTER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

19

Jeff flushes the toilet, washes his hands. He looks up at the mirror and sees someone has spelled BUFFALO CUNT on the mirror in lipstick. He cocks his head. Buffalo what?

JILL (O.S.)

What are you doing here?

We RACK FOCUS in the mirror to see Jeff's wife JILL 40s/50s, in the doorway. She's a former church lady who's recently hit a rebellious streak. He's very much in love with her.

JEFF

Thought you might be free for lunch.
Are you?

She tenses.

JILL

I am but I have wine club at two and
it's more fun on an empty stomach.

A beat. Jeff swallows that.

JEFF

(re: Buffalo Cunt)
Will did this?

(CONTINUED)

JILL

Probably.

JEFF

You know when children act like this, what they're telling you is how much they want you to be in charge. It can be scary for children not to have limits.

Jill stares. He continues.

JEFF (cont'd)

Limits protect them from the dangers of the outside world but also help with the inside world of feelings.

JILL

Are you fucking serious right now?

JEFF

So... I think what he's really saying is "Help me."

JILL

I think he wrote 'cunt' and then added the word 'buffalo' to quantify its size. Because he's thirteen and he's angry. And he's allowed to be both.

She scratches her neck, revealing part of a tattoo that says "Phil" just above her right breast.

JEFF

Did you get a? Is that a tattoo?

She covers up.

JILL

A small one.

JEFF

What? Can I see it?

JILL

No.

JEFF

Why not?

JILL

Because it's on my, you know, boob.
And I don't think that's
appropriate.

JEFF

But it's appropriate to drink wine
before three pm? What's next with
you... Pall Malls? Batteries
dangling from the smoke detector so
you can puff your Pall Malls?

A beat. She lets the air clear.

JILL

One day you'll acknowledge it
happened. One day you'll let it
all out too.

JEFF

Would it help if I moved back in?

JILL

Would it help with what?

We hear Will walk in through the front door.

JEFF

Will, is that you?

Enter WILL, 13. Now this is weird. Will looks *identical* to
the kid on the little league card. The one who's supposed to
be dead. For Jeff (and for us), it's like seeing a ghost.

WILL

Do you know where my winter clothes are?

JILL

It's July.

WILL

Yeah?

Jill shoots Jeff a look.

JEFF

For what purpose do you need your
winter clothes?

(CONTINUED)

WILL

There's a clothing drive at church. I want to collect the ones that don't fit me as well and donate them to the indigent.

JEFF

Well, isn't that thoughtful?

WILL

Yes.

JILL

They're in a box in the garage. Above the bicycles. Beneath the inflatable nativity.

WILL

Hey, you didn't suck on Corden last night.

Will leaves. Jeff wipes off the mirror.

JILL

I love Corden. You were on Corden?

JEFF

Yeah.

JILL

Why were you on the Corden show?

For you.

JEFF

The dog needs to go out.

Jeff grabs a leash. Off Jill, somewhat flattered...

20 INT. WOODS BEHIND THEIR HOUSE - SAME TIME

We see WILL wearing full winter armor (coat, gloves, scarf, ski-mask) in the July heat. He's holding a large black garbage bag and a milk crate. He walks through the woods.

He sets down the milk crate in front of a tree and steps on it. He's now face-to-face with a large active beehive hanging from a tree branch.

As he carefully wraps the garbage bag around the beehive...

21 EXT. JEFF'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - LATER

21

Jeff walks out of the house with the dog. He sees Will in his winter clothes holding a garbage bag with the trunk to his mother's new car popped. We hear a noticeable buzzing.

JEFF

Will?

Bzzz.

WILL

Yes, dad.

JEFF

What do you have in that bag?

WILL

Um... Bees?

JEFF

Were you going to put bees in mom's trunk?

No response. Jeff takes the bag o'bees and throws them in the trash can. A moment.

JEFF (cont'd)

Do you want to go for a walk?

22 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

22

Jeff walks the dog and carries a watering can. Will walks beside him in his winter clothes, sweating balls.

JEFF

Do you know what stewardship is?

WILL

Do you always have to talk to people like they're four years old?

JEFF

It means you take care of things. People. Not because you *should*; because you *can*.

The dog takes a whizz on a lawn with a For Sale sign out front. Jeff sprinkles some water on the pee spot so it won't stain the grass.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF (cont'd)
See, now Piglet won't stain the
grass. Good girl, Piglet.

WILL
But nobody even lives here.

JEFF
You do it because it makes you feel
good.

WILL
Uh-huh.

JEFF
You wanna try?

An excited realtor, JOANNE, and two prospective BUYERS walk
out the front door with their TWO KIDS, 5 and 7.

JOANNE
Hey there, Mr. Pickles! Always so
considerate.

JEFF
Hey, there Joanne!

JOANNE
(to her clients)
See, it even comes with famous
neighbors.
(to Jeff)
Isn't this neighborhood a nice place
to raise a family, Mr. Pickles?

JEFF
Yes ma'am. It's a super duper
place to do that.

Jeff waves to the daughter. She picks a flower and shyly
brings it over to Mr. Pickles. Will rolls his eyes.

JEFF (cont'd)
Thank you! And what's your name?--

WILL
These houses were built over an old
zoo that burned down. Sometimes at
night you can still hear the
monkeys screaming.

Jeff stares at his son. Some awkward silence.

JOANNE

Okay, thanks you guys!
(to her clients)
Why don't we cruise around back?

Joanne and her clients go out back. Will turns to see his dad is staring at him. A deep thousand yard stare. The looking-at-a-ghost stare. It unnerves Will.

WILL

What?
(then)
Dad?

Jeff sighs.

JEFF

Your auntie and grampa are coming over for dinner tonight. They'd like to see you.
(a beat, then)
Do you want to come live with me for a while?

WILL

No.

JEFF

Why not?

WILL

I don't have a reason.

JEFF

Look, your mom and I-- She doesn't want me to live in the house while she deals with her many emotions and I respect that.

WILL

Uh, she didn't leave you because Phil died. She left you because you're a pussy.

JEFF

Please don't say a bad word when you can use a good word.

WILL

Okay, you're a vagina. A vagina with sand in it.

Jeff absorbs that.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

The P.

WILL

What?

JEFF

The P. I just got the P in P-Hound.

WILL

Glad I could help. Piglet went again.

Jeff pours some water over the pee.

WILL (cont'd)

Pussy.

JEFF

Will, take better care of things for me. While I can't be there.

WILL

Can't? I'm gonna go the other way now.

JEFF

I want you to donate those clothes like you said you would.

Will throws his winter coat and stuff on the ground and walks back to his house.

WILL

Oh, and don't try to teach me things. And like don't ever stare at me like that again.

JEFF

Okay.

WILL

And change your outfit. You look like Rosa Parks's bus driver.

JEFF

Okay. See you tonight?

23 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

23

Joanne waves from the front door as the family leaves.

JOANNE

Buh-bye now, thanks for coming!

(CONTINUED)

MOM

Let's go Ralph, get in the car.

DAUGHTER

Shotgun!

We pull back to see their seven year old boy, Ralph, on the lawn, in the foreground, studying something. As he walks away, we see he was looking at the For Sale sign, which has been ripped off its wooden post and torn apart.

ANGLE ON: Wide shot looking down from over the house. On the lip of the roof we see a piece of the sign with Joanne's smiling face on it.

24 EXT. SUBURBAN INTERSECTION, COLUMBUS, OHIO - LATER 24

Jeff pulls up to a red light. Will's box of winter clothes in the backseat. He looks around. We're listening to the title track from "Jesus Christ Superstar".

CHOIR (V.O.)

Jesus Christ! / Jesus Christ! / Who
are you? / What have you
sacrificed?!

25 EXT. SAME INTERSECTION, EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK 25

Chryon reads: **five months ago.**

Winter. A traffic light at the same intersection. An empty intersection. A few sparks fly out of the traffic signal and it turns green on all four sides.

A few cars speed through within a few seconds of each other from perpendicular directions, oblivious to the danger.

26 EXT. COLUMBUS, OHIO STREET - SAME TIME 26

A Little Suzy Snap Cake truck cuts through a dewy fresh morning on its quest to malnourish the Ohio River Valley.

27 INT. LITTLE SUZY SNAP CAKE TRUCK - SAME TIME 27

DENNY drives, two hundred thirty pounds, African-American, forty-seven years young. He's listening to the showtunes channel on satellite radio.

CHOIR (V.O.)

Jesus Christ! / Jesus Christ! / Who
are you? / What have you
sacrificed?!

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

He knows all the words. He lip syncs.

28 INT. JILL'S MINI-VAN - SAME TIME

28

Jill drives her mini-van with her two identical twin boys: Will, who we've met, and PHIL, Will's perfect doppelganger. Will watches C-SPAN on a TV installed in the seatback. Phil sits up front, not wearing a seatbelt.

WILL

Mom, dad's on TV again.

JILL

You're probably right, Will. That's sort of his job.

PHIL

Idiot.

WILL

Shut up, Phil. I mean, he's on like the news.

Will unplugs his headphone so we can hear the audio. We see Jeff on C-SPAN testifying before a Senate Budget Committee, defending funding for PBS.

JEFF (ON SCREEN)

...and it says a lot about this country when the budget for public broadcasting is tacked onto the bottom of a defense bill, the same bill that appropriates tanks, missiles, bombs...

JILL

Well, your father is an impressive man.

PHIL

She means boring.

Phil reaches back and undoes Will's seatbelt.

WILL

Hey, quit it!

Will puts his seatbelt back on.

JILL

Phil, whatever you're doing, stop. Please. Just... stop.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

PHIL

We're gonna be late for school.

Phil undoes Will's seatbelt again.

WILL

Mom!

Will buckles his seat belt again. Off Jill...

29 INT. LITTLE SUZY SNAP CAKE TRUCK - SAME TIME

29

CHOIR (V.O.)

Jesus Christ! / Superstar! / Do you think you're what they say you are?

From Denny's POV we see him speeding towards the intersection just as Jill's mini-van comes into his view. He honks.

SMASH CUT TO:

30 INT. JEFF'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT

30

The sound of the honk bleeds into the present. Jeff looks over at the dented street lamp that still hasn't been repaired. The car behind him is honking at him.

CHOIR (V.O.)

Jesus Christ! / Superstar! / Do you think you're what they say you are?

IRATE DRIVER BEHIND HIM

Go asshole!

Jeff forces a big smile, waves to the guy and drives onward.

31 EXT. CEMETERY - LATER (DAY 2)

31

Will walks through the cemetery holding a magician's wand and a magic flower bouquet. Three stoners, BONG DUDE, GIGGLES and Bong Dude's girlfriend CASSIDY are perched on headstones, smoking weed from a bong made from a Monster energy drink can. They're older than Will, maybe 16. Bong Dude is sitting on a headstone that reads **Philip Pickles 2002-2015.**

WILL

Hey, you're on my brother's grave.

BONG DUDE

Oh. Yikes.

He gets off the grave, and sits next to it, takes a hit.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Can you smoke somewhere else?

BONG DUDE

I guess, but I've been geekin out here since I was 12. This is like 'specially hallowed ground.

Giggles points to the grave next to Phil's. It reads **J.S. Bach 1902-1985.**

GIGGLES

How awesome is that? This is like a historical place.

WILL

I don't think Bach was born in Ohio. And I don't think he died in 1985.

BONG DUDE

Whatever, man. Maybe he died here on his way to Asia. In like a plane crash. Why do you hate music?

WILL

I think that's pronounced *Batch*. His grandson works at the Kroger. Can you move away from that headstone?

BONG DUDE

Uh, I can't really move anywhere right now.

CASSIDY

(re: magic wand)

What are you gonna do with that?

Cassidy has a sweet side. She's cute, too.

GIGGLES

Bring him back to life?

WILL

It was his. He wanted to be a magician.

CASSIDY

Why?

WILL

There are a lot of tricks you can do when you have an identical twin. It's pretty cool, actually.

(CONTINUED)

Will steps up, then Giggles offers Will the bong. A beat as Will decides whether or not to take it. Then does.

GIGGLES

Excellent. Now pop a squat on Bach.

Bong Dude gives Will the wand back. Will inhales. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Then he sees his dad watching him from the car. They lock eyes. Fuck. Jeff drives away.

WILL

It's *batch*.

32 INT. WROT STUDIOS, MAIN SET - LATER

32

Jeff is sitting on his set, which is made to look like a huge puppet show. He's wearing a purple robe. He's talking to a puppet named Soap Scum made entirely out of dryer lint, held by Deirdre. A studio audience of children sit on risers.

JEFF

Well, hey there Soap Scum. Careful or you'll stain my sweet new purple threads!

DEIRDRE (AS SOAP SCUM)

Isn't purple a girl's color, Mr. Pickles?

JEFF

Soap Scum! Purple is...

Jeff looks over at Marty.

JEFF (cont'd)

...is every man's favorite color.
Purple is the color of kings.

Marty leaves, satisfied. Jeff hates this.

DEIRDRE

But you're not a king, Mr. Pickles.

JEFF

No, but I'm a daddy and a daddy is like the king of the household!

CLOSE ON: Maddy sitting in the audience. She smells. The KIDS next to her sniff her and scoot away.

MADDY

I had a soccer game.

A bell rings, signalling a cut.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

What's going on with Maddy?

Deirdre peaks out from behind the puppet.

DEIRDRE

Oh, she wouldn't eat her broccoli so I gave her B.O. Early puberty is kicking her A.

Jeff processes that, nods, hides his disapproval.

JEFF

Will's turning into Phil and needs to take better care of his family environment so I showed him how to water down pee pee stains.

DEIRDRE

Fuckin kids.
(then)
Sorry, *friggin*.

JEFF

Do you think I'm a pussy?

Off Deirdre... did he just say that?

33 INT. WROT STUDIOS, HALLWAY - LATER

33

We follow Marty walking down the hall. Burt and Clay walk by with the Snagglehorse costume again.

MARTY

Snagglehorse smells like sex again!

BURT

No, it doesn't!

CLAY

We've only had it on for five minutes!

They pass Deirdre and Maddy.

DEIRDRE

That's my daughter. You're smelling her.

MARTY

I'm not gonna ask.

MADDY

(to Diedre)
I hate you!

33 CONTINUED:

33

Marty walks by Derrel's desk.

DERREL

Jeff's in your office.

34 INT. WROT STUDIOS, MARTY'S OFFICE

34

Marty walks into his office and closes the door. Jeff sits calmly. He's texting Will, "**dont 4get dinner 2night. UR grampa and cousin want 2 C U.**"

JEFF

We're going to do the show that I want to do.

MARTY

No, Pope Pickles, we're not.

JEFF

We need to speak to children like adults.

MARTY

Talk to me.

JEFF

What?

MARTY

Is this whole thing about Jill?

A beat. Maybe a little.

JEFF

She tattooed Phil's name on her right breast.

MARTY

So?

JEFF

I went to work two days later and talked to a giant oven mitt about why not to touch hot stoves. How does that make me look?

MARTY

Honestly? Like a man. And if she's holding that over you, that's her problem. Real women don't want to see your cry face. They want a nice strong tree.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

Well, I think she'd appreciate it if I stopped ignoring what happened. So I'm, I'm doing the *goddam* show I'm gonna *goddam* do.

Jeff stands up in front of Marty. It looks confrontational.

JEFF (cont'd)

We have the audience until five. I own half the puppets, I own the music compositions, I've owned the trademarks ever since I started this show for course credit at OSU. Today is Tuesday. We air it Wednesday or I don't show up to work on Thursday.

(then, just because)

Fuck fuck shit heck buffalo cunt.

MARTY

Jesus, I thought you were finally gonna hit me.

JEFF

No! Why would you think-- Why would I hit you?

MARTY

Okay! Okay. Let me marinate on it.

JEFF

No, I want a promise from you.

Marty thinks.

MARTY

One condition. I'm giving you one condition. You avoid the following disagreeable words and phrases: death, dying, heaven, hell, grave, puddle of blood, brain-splattered asphalt, Jill, Phil, Will, empty future, no reason to live and suicide.

Jeff soaks all that in. Derrel walks by.

JEFF

We'll see.

MARTY

Okay. And when the million mom march calls the FCC because you've scarred the retinas of every non-blind, non-deaf five year old in the English-speaking First World, PBS is gonna call me and I'm sure as fuck fuck shit darn buffalo whatever gonna call you. So stay by your phone.

JEFF

Derrel, make sure our network rep has my home telephone number.

35 INT. WROT STUDIOS, MAIN SET - LATER

35

Cameras on. Studio audience watching. Jeff packs some items carefully into a moving box labeled "**Donations**". No crazy costume. Just Jeff. Marty watching from the side.

JEFF

(into camera)

Have you ever had to move? That can be a difficult time, can't it? Leaving behind your old room. Or old friends. For a new school. Or even a new town. Sometimes when you move, you might pack a Donate Box with toys you don't play with anymore and give them to children who will use them. But what if when you go to your new home, you discover that your favorite stuffed animal...

He puts a stuffed animal of the show's character Super Penguin (a penguin super hero) into the box.

JEFF (cont'd)

...like Super Penguin, was missing. Someone put Super Penguin in the box by accident. How would you feel? Would you feel sad that you never got to say goodbye? Or would you feel okay because you knew he was in a new home, a far away home, laughing and playing and making other children very happy?

(then)

I had a son named Phil. He was once your age. He died. We put him in a box. We buried him.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

We pan to the studio audience. The kids aren't crying; they're rapt. It's a beautiful moment. Four cheerful puppets handled by Deirdre and other puppeteers including MACY (30s, pretty and peppy) and DUNCAN (30s, Fosse energy) jump in front of Jeff and fill the frame with a song.

JEFF/DEIRDRE (WITH PUPPETS)
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GO AWAY?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STAY?
IS MOVING THE SAME AS MOVING ON?

Off Marty, visibly moved...

36 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (NIGHT 2) 36

Scott and Deirdre are getting dressed to go out. Scott holds up a tiny pair of ladies' socks.

SCOTT
 You wear the world's tiniest socks.

DEIRDRE
 Stop it.

They flirt. There's still love left in this marriage.

SCOTT
 I'm serious. One day the dog's going to choke on these. We need to get you some new feet--

We hear the shower go on down the hall. Deirdre sighs.

SCOTT (cont'd)
 Leave it, Dee Dee.

DEIRDRE
 No. She has to learn.

Deirdre heads off down the hall. Off Scott, shaking his head.

37 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - LATER 37

Maddy about to hop into the shower. Deirdre enters and turns off the shower. She's holding a carrot.

DEIRDRE
 Open up. Two bites. Num num.

MADDY
 No, mom. No.

(CONTINUED)

DEIRDRE

Maddy, open up before I shove it in there. Open up. Here comes the carrot train, er, bus. Choo choo. Honk honk.

Maddy clamps her mouth shut, shakes her head.

DEIRDRE (cont'd)

Why not?

MADDY

It's dirty. It fell on the floor.

DEIRDRE

No, it didn't.

Maddy nods her head.

DEIRDRE (cont'd)

When?

38 EXT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - FLASHBACK

38

Yesterday. Maddy helps Scott take the paper grocery bags out of the back of their Jeep. Their neighbor, REX, peeks his head over the red rose bushes he's carefully manicuring.

REX

I think we got some of your guys's mail again.

SCOTT

I'll be right there, Maddy.

Scott stays and talks to Rex. Maddy goes inside, is about to step on a crack in the driveway...

REX

Don't step on a crack, Maddy! You'll break someone's back or something.

Maddy jumps over the crack. We follow her inside the house.

39 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

39

We play this from her POV. Maddy looks down at the black and white tiled floor. She sees lots of cracks. She tries to navigate her way to the table without spilling the groceries. She steps over crack one, looks out the window to see Rex and her dad in the side yard talking like old friends.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

She steps over crack two. She looks up to see Rex hand her dad some junk mail.

She jumps over a third crack, looks out the window and catches a glimpse of her dad going through the mail, while Rex sneaks his hand down her father's pants.

As her dad playfully pushes Rex away... she drops the grocery bag. The vegetables fall on the floor.

40 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

40

Maddy has just told Deirdre everything she saw.

DEIRDRE

Oh. OH. Okay. Okay.

(then)

Don't forget to wash your hair.

Deirdre hands Maddy some Puppet Time no-tears baby shampoo.

41 INT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

41

Deirdre walks into the bedroom, where Scott is putting his shoes on. She doesn't say a word. She puts on her earrings and eyes Scott's reflection in the mirror. We hear the shower turn on down the hall.

SCOTT

Good for you, dear.

42 INT. JEFF'S SAD APARTMENT - LATER (NIGHT)

42

We slowly pan in a circle behind the backs of those seated at a cramped dinner table Jeff has set up in his apartment. Lots of food served family style. Jeff's father, sister and niece sit around it. An empty chair for Will.

SISTER'S VOICE

Is this mom's chicken or something you found on Epicurious?

JEFF

It's mom's.

DAD'S VOICE

You cooked this? I didn't realize they allowed hot plates in the dorms.

SISTER'S VOICE

Dad, leave him alone.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

I thought we were going to say grace.

DAD'S VOICE

Kiddo, we haven't said grace since I pulled you out of church camp when you were ten. Pass the dry chicken.

JEFF

Here you go, Dad.

As we pan around, we REVEAL that the sister's voice belongs to Deirdre and dad's voice belongs to Marty.

MARTY (FORMERLY DAD'S VOICE)

And did you pre-butter the broccoli?
Why do you get to decide how much butter I want?

JEFF

Maddy likes it.

Jeff watches Maddy eating her vegetables. He's mesmerized.

MARTY

Where's William? You promised me a William.

Jeff ignores him.

JEFF

(to Deirdre, re: Maddy)
How do you do that?

DEIRDRE (FORMERLY SISTER'S VOICE)

What?

JEFF

Get them to listen to you.
Everything I say goes in the ear
and out the nostrils.

SCOTT

Maddy, slow down. Digest.

DEIRDRE

It's easy. I think of everything we do on the show and then I come home and do the exact opposite.

Jeff watches Maddy help herself to seconds of the broccoli. We widen out. Ladies and gentlemen: the Pickles family.

43 INT. JEFF'S HOUSE, WILL'S BEDROOM - LATER (NIGHT) 43

Jeff knocks on Will's bedroom door. Will opens it. Jeff hands him back the box of winter clothes.

JEFF

Put these on.

44 EXT. CEMETERY - LATER (NIGHT) 44

Will in his winter clothes walks to his brother's grave with the trash bag of bees. He places the magic wand in the ground. He takes some magic flowers and presses the button that makes them bloom, and places them next to the wand.

He puts on some ski goggles. He picks up the trash bag and takes out the beehive. He holds it in his gloved hands, above his head. Then he smashes it over his brother's grave.

Through a swarm of bees, we see Will walk over to Jeff, who we REVEAL waiting by the car.

WILL

Fuckin' 'stewardship'.

45 INT. JEFF'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING (DAY) 45

Jeff sits on his futon, staring at a cordless phone on the coffee table between him and the TV, which is off. He waits for the phone to ring. Surprisingly, it doesn't. He checks the clock. **9:05.** Hmm, maybe it's going over well.

He picks up the remote and turns on the TV. He sees himself on his show standing on a giant keyboard you can walk on (like in *Big*). Each key is a different color.

JEFF (ON SCREEN)

Wow. Look at this, children. Do you know what this is? It's our keyboard of color. Look, I can walk on it. Let's play it. Let's see if we remember our colors.

Jeff on screen steps on a red petal. It makes a sound.

JEFF (ON SCREEN) (cont'd)

Red. This is the color red.

This isn't the show Marty promised to air. As Jeff realizes Marty called his bluff, we PUSH IN on the TV...

46 EXT. DEIRDRE'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME 46

We see Deirdre on a mission, hedge clippers in hand...

JEFF (V.O.)

Red is for roses we give to those
we love.

...desecrating her neighbor's prized rose bushes.

47 INT. A BEDROOM - SAME TIME 47

Marty, naked from the waist down, gets ready for work,
putting on his PURPLE tie.

JEFF (V.O.)

Purple is for the tie your father
wears to work.

48 INT. WROT STUDIOS, HALLWAY 48

A man dressed like Super Penguin subtly drops some cash on
Derrel's desk.

JEFF (V.O.)

White is for the fresh-falling snow
that keeps you home from school.

A white hand drops a baggy of coke on the desk for Super
Penguin and pockets the cash. Widen to reveal the hand
belongs to Macy, the peppy, innocent mom-faced puppeteer we
met earlier. Derrel pretends he's cool with this. He's not.

49 INT. WROT STUDIOS, WARDROBE ROOM 49

We see the giant Snagglehorse costume gyrating violently...

JEFF (V.O.)

Brown is for the fur on
Snagglehorse's rump.

We hear the sounds of Bert and Clay having aggressive anal
sex inside it.

CLAY

Fuck me like you hate me!

BURT

ARGHHHHH!!!

50 EXT. CEMETERY - LATER 50

The three stoners approach Phil's grave...

(CONTINUED)

JEFF (V.O.)
Yellow is like a bumble bee that goes bzz bzz bzz.

...but stop when they see it's protected by a swarm of bees.

BONG DUDE
Fuuuuck.

GIGGLES
This dude Eric got stung once on his nut and it swolled up and he had to wear a special sock around it.

The stoners turn around and leave. We pull back to see Will watching all this from a nearby hill, pleased with himself. Cassidy glances over and makes eye contact with him, smiles, then pretends she didn't. She's cute.

51 INT. RANDOM LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME 51

Close on a small TV screen. Now we're looking at the show playing in someone else's living room. Jeff steps on green.

JEFF (V.O.)
Green. That's an easy one.

We reverse to see a LITTLE GIRL watching the TV with her dad, truck driver DENNY. The one who killed Phil. They eat Little Suzy Snap Cakes. He squeezes his daughter tightly.

JEFF (V.O.)
Green, well, green means go.

52 INT. JEFF'S SAD APARTMENT - SAME TIME 52

Jeff picks up the phone and dials.

INTERCUT WITH:

53 INT. A KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER 53

Marty eats cereal out of a bowl and leans over his iPhone on speaker talking to Jeff.

MARTY
When are you going to get it through your head Jeff: the show *can't* change. You *can't* change.

54 INT. JEFF'S SAD APARTMENT - LATER

54

His place is now packed up in moving boxes. He's not on the phone anymore, but we still hear Marty's voice. Jeff takes a poster off the wall to reveal four or five fist-sized holes.

MARTY (V.O.)

That's why you're still on the shelf.
That's why you're still around. The tie. The shirt. The haircut.
You're a minted image. You're a brand. You don't put the Pope in a Speedo, and you don't take the creme out of the Oreo. You change one little thing, and you're gonna force a conversation with the viewer they don't want to have.

JEFF (V.O.)

What does that mean?

55 INT. JEFF'S SAD APARTMENT, BATHROOM - LATER

55

Jeff turns on an electric razor and studies his image in the mirror. Then he shaves a bald racing stripe down the center of his head. He flips off the razor. Perfect.

MARTY (V.O.)

We're in a fragile business -- and it's all predicated on one notion: you are not a real person. You're the man in the box! You're a block of wood. And you like it that way. Because otherwise you're the almost-divorced father of a weird, broken family, and nobody wants that guy in their living room. Would you?

(then)

Take the day off. I'll see you first thing mañana.

He looks at himself in the mirror: his image changed. He's going to force this conversation.

JEFF (V.O.)

Yeah. First thing.

56 INT. AN EMPTY HOUSE - LATER

56

Jeff surveys an empty house. Spacious. Modern. He looks out the living room window onto the front lawn. He sees Will walking Piglet, who he lets pee on a flower bed. Jeff sighs. Joanne the realtor interrupts his concentration.

(CONTINUED)

JOANNE

So what do you think?

She sees Jeff's hair for the first time, pretends to ignore it.

JEFF

I'll take it.

Joanne's pleased. Jeff walks into the kitchen. He looks out the kitchen window and sees his wife in her house, in her kitchen next door. She's cleaning the dishes in the sink. Will enters with the dog. They don't see Jeff.

Then Jeff sees a strange man, JILL'S BOYFRIEND, walk up to Jill and start drying Phil's bowl. He touches her affectionately. She smiles. Jeff's face twitches. He grabs hold of the faucet in front of him, feels his anger slowly bubble to the surface...

As we PUSH IN on that anger, we smash to three quick pops...

57 INT. JAMES CORDEN SHOW, DRESSING ROOM - EARLIER 57

Jeff shatters the mirror with a metal stool...

58 EXT. AN EMPTY HOUSE - EARLIER 58

Jeff breaks the For Sale sign over his knee as Will recedes in the distance, his winter clothes in the street...

59 INT. AN EMPTY KITCHEN - BACK TO PRESENT 59

Jeff rips the faucet off the sink...

SMASH TO BLACK.

A fully orchestrated version of Jeff singing "Don't Be Mad Because Don't Be Mad" plays over end credits.

END OF PILOT