

Teen's Best Friend

by

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SYNOPSIS

Teen's Best Friend. By Henry Levy (1M, 1 M or F actor to play dog) Middle-schooler Jeffrey is navigating life in this coming-of-age family comedy. Told from Jeffrey's perspective, this comedic scene explores middle school stress in a conversation that Jeffrey imagines with his beloved dog, Penny.

CHARACTER LIST- Teen's Best Friend

1. JEFFREY: (quirky seventh grader, kind but emotional, trying to survive life as a middle schooler and figure out who he is and how to relate to the people (and animals) around him)
2. PENNY: (Jeffrey's dog, a large mixed breed, becomes personified in this scene to reflect Jeffrey's inner emotional struggles, joyful and simple on the surface, yet also philosophical. A perfect emotional support pet.)

JEFFREY is pacing around center stage. The set is a modern kitchen with a window frame behind the table where you can see the sky is almost dark. JEFFREY is wearing a school uniform that looks rumpled, his backpack is laying on the floor. PENNY is sitting underneath a table center stage.

JEFFREY:

In a tired, frustrated voice, calling out to a character offstage.

Yes, Mom. I said I would get it done, okay? Binder, where is that science binder? Binder, why do you hide from me?

JEFFREY notices the binder peeking out of his backpack and grabs it roughly, throwing it on to the kitchen table and startling PENNY, who stirs.

Binder, study yourself!

PENNY:

Woof!

JEFFREY:

Quiet, Penny! The last thing I have time for right now is you! Now where is my pencil?

JEFFREY rustles around his backpack and to find a pencil. He spots it across the room.

Great, pencil. Why are you over there? Are you even sharp? Fix yourself!

PENNY:

Yeah, pencil! Woof!

JEFFREY looks startled, looks around to try to determine where the voice came from. He has a comical startled response, jumping up onto a chair and hugging his legs. PENNY emerges from

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under the table and wanders over to his side.

JEFFREY:

Wait! Who said that? Where is that voice coming from?

PENNY:

Over here, you bonehead!

JEFFREY:

Bbbbbbbbbbbbut, dogs don't talk. You definitely don't talk!

PENNY:

I just did! And I'm confused. Do pencils talk? Aren't you the kid yelling at inanimate objects to fix themselves? You seem like you could use a friend tonight.

JEFFREY:

I do not need a talking dog. A talking dog that can label the parts of a cell, maybe? But the last thing I need is actual confirmation that I am going crazy.

PENNY:

Not crazy, just... teenager. You know that your mom agreed to get a dog because she read somewhere that dogs help kids manage their stress. You know, kids that actually PET and PLAY with their dogs.

PENNY grabs a ball in her mouth and drops it at Jeffrey's feet. JEFFREY glowers at the ball and then at PENNY.

JEFFREY:

How the heck do you know that, dog? Great! Now even my anxiety management dog is disappointed in me! Get on the list my friend. Wait, aren't you supposed to be MY best friend. You know, no judgment?

PENNY:

Of course I'm your best friend! Just seems like maybe what you need tonight is a reality check that your life is pretty good! For one thing, your dinner always smells AMAZING. And you get to actually sit at the table, not just scan the floor for scraps your little brother

drops. Have you seen my food? And your brother wants to play ball with you all the time! I think he would throw it with you for hours. PARADISE.

JEFFREY:

Great, another creature in my life telling me how thankful I should be! Did it ever occur to you that maybe I don't like playing ball? I know that is SUPER hard for ANYONE to understand. A boy that doesn't like sports. NEWS FLASH! I am not my brother!

PENNY:

Woah! Man. Chill out! Not trying to get you all worked up. Don't you learn about mindful breathing at school? Meditation? Something?

JEFFREY:

Yes, right between a standardized test and a math class they force us to "release our thoughts" and "pay attention to our breath." Meanwhile I am holding on to my thoughts for dear life so I don't forget these scientific formulas and I am "listening" to myself hyperventilate!

PENNY:

Okay, maybe talk therapy is not my strong suit! Let's try something else. Here, pet me!

PENNY arches her back up into JEFFREY's hand, forcing him to pet her. She then proceeds to rub herself against his leg and JEFFREY's body begins to relax and a small smile emerges.

JEFFREY:

You know, dinner was pretty delicious tonight. Taco night is the best. Next time I promise to drop more on the floor for you, Ok? But for real, being in middle school is not NEARLY as easy as adults imagine it is. It's a lot of pressure. Tests, homework, everyone acting all weird all the time. Lines to memorize for the school play, scenes to write. And then adults expect me to be happy and cooperative all the time even though THEY can have bad days. The only things I am allowed to yell at are my school supplies. I would trade places with you any day!

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PENNY:

Deal! I love riding in the car instead of being left behind! And I would be an INCREDIBLE actor.

PENNY does a dramatic humorous death scene then grabs the ball in her mouth and brings it back to JEFFREY, who laughs.

JEFFREY:

You are totally crazy. Okay, okay, so I do love acting. There are parts of the day that are fun. It's just all together, it's extreme. And then I start to think about the future and, well, I just don't know. Will my Youtube career ever take off?

PENNY:

Um, no.

JEFFREY looks at Penny accusingly.

But seriously, that's deep. I think about the future every day. See, in the morning, I get a walk and some sleepy cuddles from you and then every day you leave me behind. All day I wonder, what about the future? But then every night you come home again and you're there for me. Just like you! Every night your family comes home again.

JEFFREY:

You're right. Every night my video game systems are waiting for me to provide just the comfort I need.

PENNY looks at Jeffrey pointedly.

And my family, my family is pretty cool too, I guess. And you, you are a good girl.

JEFFREY pets Penny on the head and throws the tennis ball.

PENNY runs after the ball, wagging her tail and then brings JEFFREY a newly sharpened pencil.

Okay, okay, I'll get my work done. Thanks, Penny. You are all right.

End Scene.