



DEAR PRUDENCE

story by Laurie Weltz & Ari Frankel

a comedy feature, Inspired by the Once Upon a Potty classics
©1975-2022 child matters media, used by permission

LOGLINE

"Those kids" from the most famous potty-training picture-books are now adults: NASA waste management researcher JOSHUA finds his erotic baker sister PRUDENCE is still a handful and offers a secret ingredient to clean up her act, once and for all.

TREATMENT

JOSHUA GOLDMAN [John C. Reilly / Jonah Hill] has a twin sister, PRUDENCE [Kirsten Wiig / Tina Fey]. Their mother FAITH [Jean Smart, Fiona Shaw] wrote the bestselling *Potty Party* picture-book classics, which helped teach several generations of toddlers how to use the toilet. The *Potty Party* series created icons of the adorable 2-year-old Prudence and Joshua as they sat and sat and sat and sat on their potty, flushed a toilet, washed hands, and asked questions.

Growing up, the nerdy Joshua was mercilessly teased by his schoolmates about being "that boy from the potty books". Further isolated, he invested all his energy into his studies. Joshua's dream was to go to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and become a rocket scientist. When MIT later rejects him, despite a near-perfect application, he is devastated. He is accepted at every other school he applied to. JoJo, as Prudence calls him, ends up graduating with honors in physics from Stanford.

Prudence, on the other hand (or Pru, as Joshua nicknamed her), always the wild rebel, just let the *Potty Party* teasing roll off her back. In fact, she was often front and center in acting out

elaborate toilet jokes herself. Prudence's dream was to have as much fun as possible in high-school, and she succeeded, leaving behind a string of broken hearts and embarrassing moments. Everything was left behind but one shameful event affecting Joshua, a move that has haunted Prudence ever since.

§

Fast forward 25 years, the *Potty Party* series continues selling respectably, and Joshua has grown to become a robotics astrophysicist working at NASA'S Johnson Space Center in Houston. He is happily married to his college sweetheart PEACHES POTTER Stone/Scarlett Johansson] who has recently broken away from her family's packaged food business to start her own company, *iBake*. Peaches' new venture will sell everything you need to make your own decorated baked goods from prepackaged boxes. Joshua and Peaches have two cute but nerdy twins, MOLLY and PETER. They are one happy-if-uptight family.

Almost-40 Prudence is still the rebel, living in San Francisco and running a bakery called *Dear Prudence*, specializing in edible erotic cupcakes. BOB [Billy Bob Thornton, John Lithgow] is her peculiar business partner. Prudence has not had a serious boyfriend for several years, instead losing herself in her work and casual hook-ups. She justifies her hook-ups as E.D.R. (erotic design research). After all, how can one sculpt all those penis cupcakes without some real-life models?!

Things have not been going well for *Dear Prudence*: sales have plummeted after her former assistant RAFAEL [Paul Shaffer, Rick Moranis] opened his own bakery nearby. A rocket freak, Raffi collects Apollo scale models, and perfected spaceship and other TFO (tasty flying objects) molds.

Prudence is depressed, money is tight, and even making the monthly rent has become a struggle. So, when Bob reads about a new *Cupcake Cream Conference & Competition*, offering lucrative prizes, he urges Prudence to sign up. Any win would help!

Prudence has a long list of reasons why she can't go to Houston: her best work is truly obscene; the competition coincides with her birthday; she is allergic to big hair and all things Texas. Bob bats away her excuses one by one, with witty responses.

Prudence gets to the point: "My brother lives in Houston." "That's great! You'll have a free place to stay." Prudence explains that her brother hates her. "Why?" asks Bob. "Well, he doesn't actually, actively totally hates me just yet," Prudence

explains, "But he definitely would, if he knew what I did."
"Well, don't tell him," Bob replies. "You know how I am when I drink," she protests. "Then don't drink," he answers. Prudence looks at him aghast, "It's Texas! What else is there to do?"

Competitor Rafael draws even more attention after hiring voluptuous stripper ANNIE SPRINKLES to assist with hawking his flashy, hi-flying sweets. A few days later, *Dear Prudence* fails a city health inspection, because some of their equipment is old.

When Bob points out that they only have enough money to either pay their rent that month or buy new equipment, but not both, Prudence agrees to go to enter the *Cupcake Summit Conference* competition. She won't tell her brother that she is in town. Her packing is a mess, and Prudence heads for Houston.

§

Upon arriving, Prudence makes her way to her budget hotel, spotting flirty, cute, Dutch bad boy, MICHIEL [Ryan Gosling, Damian Lewis] resting poolside. Boy, it's hot. "Must. Stay. Focused," Prudence meditates, dragging her bags to her room. Dropping her keys outside the door, it is the less cute yet much more polite and respectful CONNOR [Bradley Cooper, John Corbett] who picks the keys up for her to enter her room.

The next morning is the first day of the *Conference*. Prudence sets up her table/booth, eyes her fellow exhibitors/competitors, and is happy to spot Michiel and Connor nearby. Michiel is energetic and chatty, sharing his quality Brooklyn pastry work. Connor, calm and collected, is from Chicago. Prudence can't keep her eyes of bad boy Michiel.

All participants are introduced to the judges and to the lead sponsor of the competition, Peaches Crocker-Goldman, founder of iBake. Prudence recognizes her sister-in-law Peaches, tries to hide, but Peaches sees her, and gives her a big hug, saying "I can't believe you didn't tell us that you were coming to Houston," and that Joshua will be so happy to see her. Peaches insists that Prudence come stay with them and try as Prudence might to get out of it, Peaches ends up dragging her home at the end of the conference day.

Joshua is equally surprised to see his twin sister. It soon becomes clear that black sheep Prudence doesn't belong with this straight-edged family, as she continually shocks them with her behavior. Joshua and Peaches maintain composure and try not to let Prudence get to them too much. Prudence hopes to make

everything right, by offering to bake the cake "for JoJo's and my 40th birthday dinner."

The next day, back at the conference, the cupcake competition planning is about to begin. Prudence has been stressing out about what her design should look like. The motto for the sculpted, reproducible cupcake theme is "love conquers all" and after having run down a joking list of all the X-rated cupcakes she could make with that theme with her stand neighbors Connor and Michiel, Prudence finally decides to stick with something wholesome, and sketches a circular, enticing mother-embracing-a-child image. It is clear, adorable, clean, and promising; perfect for a winning, multicolor cupcake mold.

The bakers must spend five hours a day at the summit, turning out their competition cupcakes, but the rest of the time they are on their own, so Prudence decides to stage some photo research with pairs she pulls together, as models for her "Momma Hug" design.

She is surprised, but quickly delighted, to run into Rafael and Annie walking the conference aisles, licking on colorful rocket lollipops! "What the [blip] are you doing here!?" she cries. Annie explains that Rafael was ready for a vacation, "He wanted to liftoff somewhere, so here we are." "Would you pose for my couple-hugging collection," asks Prudence. "Shoot!" allows Rafael, drowning in Annie's embrace, with a smile on his face.

Michiel, who has no friends in Houston, tags along with Prudence a lot, even following her up and down the aisles as she poses and photographs couples. Connor also tries to get close to Prudence, but with less luck. Prudence takes Michiel's attention as sign that he likes her and is overjoyed when he tells her some of the people from the competition are going out for drinks that afternoon and asks her to join. She forgets that she promised Joshua and Peaches to pick up her niece and nephew later from a playdate/dinner/movie night at friends' house.

Michiel shows up with a party van full of other people, including Connor, Rafael and Annie. The van driver [John Goodman cameo] shows off a stripper pole, full bar, and disco lights. Annie loosens up, and Prudence is dismayed to find Michiel paying great attention to her cleavage. Heavy drinking relaxes Prudence enough to dose off. When she awakens, she spots Annie humping Michiel's beautiful, exposed loins. Prudence is not a happy baker.

Hours fly by until Prudence remembers to navigate the party van to Molly and Peter's friends' house. She emerges from the van drunk, dis-shelved and giggly. The luxury building's doorman

barely agrees to buzz her up. When she finds out that the friends' parents are the school's principal and the district's superintendent, Prudence realizes the shame she has wrought, yet again.

In their drunken efforts to support Prudence, Rafael and Annie make things worse, but sober Connor manages to pull everyone into the van, and safely instruct the driver to the children's home address.

By the time they enter their house, Joshua has already received the call from the friends' parents and knows in what condition Prudence picked up the kids. He is livid. He tells Prudence this is the last straw and that she has to move out. Prudence feels really bad and says to Joshua, this isn't the worst of it. Joshua asks her what she means, she starts to confess to him her deep dark secret but must stop herself.

Peaches has invited some friends and work colleagues for dinner, including Joshua's NASA boss and his wife. All are much like Joshua and Peaches. After an awkward meal, where Prudence continually puts her foot in her mouth by saying the wrong things, she gets up to get the original cake she prepared. It is an almost life size replica of the Joshua character from the *Potty Party* books, without a diaper on, and with an anatomically correct little pink penis. And when Joshua cuts into the cake it squirts "pee" into his face. Prudence laughs uproariously. Joshua is not amused.

Prudence updates the guests on the *Potty Party* books, that no one, except for Peaches knew anything about. The teasing starts all over again, but now from this respectable-if-nerdy grown-up crowd. Molly and Peter look at each other in bewilderment; they are not the least bit amused with the emerging toilet humor.

§

Prudence spends the next day working on her "Hug Me" cupcake designs, with a large magnifying glass, in great detail. Each contestant needs to lay out 6 cupcakes on a tray, showing continuity, cuteness, yumminess. But when they are all nearly finished, she decides it is all awful. Her heart just isn't into it. And as the convention closes for the day and the last visitors exit, she smashes the cupcakes flat, throwing some of the pieces at Connor, who grabs a handful, and they start a mini, messy food fight.

The two of them hang out after everyone is gone, eating her cupcake remains and making a general mess, having a nice, quiet time together. For the first time in her life Prudence finds herself attracted to someone who might actually be good for her. She confesses to Connor that her brother hates her, as he should; that she has done something really terrible, that her business is about to go bust, and now she has no cupcakes. Connor convinces her to pull it together for the sake of her business and make new cupcakes. When she says she doesn't even have the pans she needs, he lends her one of his.

Prudence spends the night working on new cupcake designs. We see how she builds them up, into a structure, forming characters, shapes. very intricate, unique; a one-of-a-kind sculpture, it seems.

§

As the sun rises, Prudence takes her packed bags and heads over to her brother's house. Joshua is just on his way to work, and she tells him she needs to talk to him, and then promises she will be out of his life forever. As she talks, we see a flashback of Prudence's senior year of high school.

She is out late at night, with a group of friends, all of whom are obviously wasted. They come across a car that is loaded with MIT stickers and paraphernalia and decide to prank the car, covering it in broken eggs, etc. Just as they are finishing their handiwork, the OWNER of the car [Christopher Walken, Anne Magnusson cameo] comes out of a house and sees them, they all start to run, but the car owner manages to grab Prudence.

Two boys stay behind, but at a distance, not wanting to leave Prudence alone. One of the boys asks the owner "Hey, what's with all the MIT shit, aren't you a little old for college." The car owner tells him they are the MIT recruiter for their area and adds "I hope none of you are applying." They all tell him, "Hell, no," but then Prudence - wasted and not thinking straight - mentions that her brother is; that it is his dream to go to MIT.

The recruiter asks her what her brother's name is, and she says "Joshua Goldman" realizing her mistake as soon as the words leave her mouth. The recruiter turns to her and says, "Well, Miss Goldman, I can assure you, your brother will not be attending MIT." Then the recruiter releases Prudence.

As the flashback ends, we return to present day Houston. Joshua is at first speechless; then starts screaming that she ruined his

life. She keeps trying to point out to him that in reality she didn't ruin his life, but he doesn't let her finish what she is trying to say before he storms off to work. Prudence drags her bags behind her in defeat, heading toward Bush Intercontinental Airport to catch a flight home.

§

Meanwhile, back at the convention, the judges are making their rounds, judging the sculpted cupcakes. They all seem to be most impressed with one hi-rise design, sitting alone on a table, orphaned, with no baker in sight. The nametag on the table indicates that it was "made by Prudence Goldman of Dear Prudence." Various cupcakes magically form a globe on top of which stands a Joshua likeness, holding a gently phallic-looking rocket ship over his head, like the conquering hero returning home. Squashed beneath one of his feet is a prone figure of Prudence and under the other foot is a building that says MIT on it. Beside his likeness are three smaller cupcakes, with the likenesses of his wife and two kids, staring up at him adoringly.

Written on a banner around the side of the multi-tiered cupcake structure are the words "Houston, we solved our problem!" Prudence has also left a note addressed to Joshua, sitting beside the cupcake tower. As Peaches reviews all this, a tear comes to her eye, and she picks up the note and puts it in her pocket.

Prudence's plane takes off, carrying her back to San Francisco. We hear part of the note in Prudence's voice, "Dear JoJo, I'm sorry, and I understand if you can never forgive me, but as I tried to tell you the other night, think about all that you have in your life because you didn't go to MIT: no Peaches, no Molly and Peter, no dream job at NASA. so maybe I did ruin something in your life, but, on the other hand maybe I saved big, big chunks of it as well!"

A few days later, Prudence and Bob are clearing out their bakery; *Dear Prudence* is set to shutter its doors and cool its ovens. There is a knock on the window. Prudence looks up to see Joshua standing there, he has an envelope in his hand. Prudence opens the door and she and Joshua look at each other tenuously. He hands her the envelope, which she opens. It is a check for having won first place in the *Cupcake Summit Conference Competition*.

Joshua and Prudence hug deeply. "Oh, JoJo!" sighs Prudence. "Dear Pru... umm. I mean, Prudence dearest," answers Joshua. "Peaches would like to talk to you," he continues. "Where is she?" "Here,

inside my rental," explains Joshua, leading Prudence into a party van which is suspiciously similar to one we have seen previously.

Sitting in the van are a bunch of Prudence's San-Francisco friends, her vacationing mother Faith [snuggling with Rafael. how did that happen?!], Michiel in Annie's lap [no surprise there] and even Molly and Peter, next to a large cupcake tray, sampling some winning designs. Then she notices Peaches in the front passenger seat. She tells her that no one from the Houston birthday party can stop talking about the wonderful interactive "peeing" Joshua cake structure that she made, that her "Hug-a-Momma" cupcake designs are awesome. "I want to invite you to join me at iBake as my CCP, chief creative pastry designer. I think we could both make a lot of money and have a lot of fun," Peaches promises with a hug.

As Prudence buries her head in Peaches' hugging shoulders, she spots Bob pushing/egging Connor on, to climb onboard the party van. They look at each other and Connor says, "I came to collect, Pru" Prudence smiles, looking at him questioningly, but hopefully. Oh, we have a problem, C.?!" Then Connor teases, "You owe me. Bigtime. I lent you some cupcake molds, 'memba?"

Prudence wipes a happy tear off her cute face. The friends, family, even Faith and Rafael, start to dance to the beat of the *Potty Party* song, disco style, as the party van starts up, switches on its many, flickering, rotating lights, and gently pulls away. Bob has now pushed Connor securely into the moving van, as its doors close. A sharp turn throws him atop Prudence coming in to hug Connor, and all three collapse on top of a plate of winning cupcakes which are strategically placed on an open seat. Bob laughs awkwardly, shouting out "Group Hug!"

Prudence and Connor simply close their eyes and connect with a kiss. They miss the last, freeze frame shot of the movie, showing everyone on the van, some scantily clad, turning at once in response to Bob's challenge, all heading towards them for the final, all-embracing "group hug".

THE END

