

= Death Has a Shadow =

" Death Has a Shadow " is the pilot episode of the animated series Family Guy . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States after Super Bowl XXXIII on January 31 , 1999 . The episode is based on series creator Seth MacFarlane 's original pitch to Fox , The Life of Larry , and is a remake of the original Family Guy pilot . In the episode , Peter loses his job after drinking too much at a stag party and falls asleep at work . He signs up for welfare to keep his wife Lois from finding out , but gets much more money than he expected . Lois finds out and Peter decides to dump it from a blimp at the Super Bowl . He is arrested and must await his family 's rescue .

The basis for Family Guy was MacFarlane 's thesis film The Life of Larry , created in 1995 while he was a student at the Rhode Island School of Design . A sequel was conceived in 1996 called Larry & Steve , which aired in 1997 as a segment of Cartoon Network 's World Premiere Toons . Both shorts caught the attention of Fox , who contacted MacFarlane in 1999 to develop a series called Family Guy based on the films . A hand @-@ drawn pilot was created by MacFarlane with a budget of \$ 50 @,@ 000 , which led to the series being accepted for production . It was rated TV @-@ PG @-@ L (TV @-@ 14 @-@ L on Adult Swim) .

Critical responses to the episode were mostly positive . According to Nielsen ratings , it was viewed in 22 @.@ 01 million homes during its original airing in the United States . " Death Has a Shadow " was written by Seth MacFarlane and directed by Peter Shin , and featured a guest performance from Pat Summerall as well as various recurring guest voices from the series . In the tenth season episode " Back to the Pilot " , which premiered on November 13 , 2011 , Brian and Stewie go back in time to " Death Has a Shadow " .

= = Plot = =

As Lois prepares dinner , Stewie puts the final touches on his mind @-@ control device , only for it to be taken away from him by Lois , who won 't allow ' toys ' at the table . Later , Peter asks Lois for permission to attend an upcoming stag party . After he promises he won 't drink , Lois lets him go . Unfortunately , Peter forgets his promise to Lois and plays such drinking games as " Drink the beer " . He goes to work the next day with a hangover , and falls asleep on the job as a safety inspector in a toy factory . Peter misses dangerous objects such as a butcher knife , a surge protector , a gasoline can , razor blades , a porcupine , a toaster with forks inside and a plug in water . The company receives bad press after releasing unsafe toy products , and Peter is promptly fired by Mr. Weed .

At dinner , Peter breaks the news to his children , but decides to keep it from Lois . He tries different jobs , such as cereal mascot and sneeze guard , but fails miserably . Brian pressures him to tell her the truth , but all he manages to do is to tell Lois how fat she is . Brian insists that Peter must look out for his family 's welfare . With the word " welfare " in his mind , Peter soon applies for a government assistance at a welfare office . But a processing error creates a weekly check for \$ 150 @,@ 000 . Telling Lois he received a big raise , Peter spends his money on many foolish and extravagant things , such as renting the Statue of David , treating Meg to cosmetic surgery and even going so far as to surround his house with a moat to protect them from the Black Knight .

Unfortunately , Lois is given the welfare check by the mail lady and storms at Peter for lying to her . Peter decides to return the money to the taxpayers by dumping it from a blimp during Super Bowl XXXIII while Brian accompanies him . After the commotion they cause , they are immediately shot down .

Eventually , Lois receives the bad news and goes to court , still angry at Peter for lying to her in the first place . After Peter apologizes for lying to Lois and accepting the money instead of reporting the welfare error , the judge sentences him to 24 months in prison . Lois , Brian , Chris and Meg exclaim , " Oh no ! " , but the Kool Aid Man bursts through the courthouse wall and exclaims , " Oh yeah ! " Lois tries to explain he 's not that bad and she loves him , and insists that , no matter what , she will always stand by her husband . The judge agrees , and sends her to jail with him . Stewie , being a baby , must have his parents by his side , regardless of his burning hate for them , especially Lois .

He then whips out his mind control device and forces the judge into letting his father go free and get his job back .

Peter states that he has learned his lesson and will never do it again . Instead he is going to try for such things as a minority scholarship , a sexual harassment suit , and a disability claim .

= = Background = =

MacFarlane initially conceived Family Guy in 1995 while studying animation under the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) . During college , he created his thesis film entitled The Life of Larry , which was later submitted by his professor at RISD to Hanna @-@ Barbera , which led to MacFarlane being hired by the company . In 1996 , MacFarlane created a sequel to The Life of Larry entitled Larry and Steve , which featured a middle @-@ aged character named Larry and an intellectual dog , Steve . The short was broadcast in 1997 as one of Cartoon Network 's World Premiere Toons .

In 1997 , while writing for Carol , MacFarlane planned to develop the Larry shorts into a short film series for MADtv ; however , the project was abandoned because the show did not possess a large enough budget to make any kind of animation . As development continued , the genre gradually shifted to a prime @-@ time series , while the characters of Larry and Steve formed the basis for Peter and Brian , respectively . During the year , a Hanna @-@ Barbera development executive introduced MacFarlane to alternative comedians Mike Darnell and Leslie Collins in an attempt to get Hanna @-@ Barbera back into the prime @-@ time business . The executives were unimpressed ; a year later , MacFarlane contacted Collins at Fox ; she arranged a meeting with him and the company executives to create a series based on the characters entitled Family Guy .

Fox proposed MacFarlane complete a 15 @-@ minute short , and gave him a budget of \$ 50 @,@ 000 . After the pilot aired , the series was greenlighted . Premises were drawn from several 1980s Saturday morning cartoons MacFarlane had watched as a child , such as The Fonz and the Happy Days Gang and Rubik , the Amazing Cube .

= = Production = =

Production of the pilot for Family Guy began in 1998 , and took six months to create and produce . Recalling the experience in an interview with The New York Times , MacFarlane stated ,

I spent about six months with no sleep and no life , just drawing like crazy in my kitchen and doing this pilot .

Upon completion of the pilot , the series went on the air . " Death Has a Shadow " was the first episode of Family Guy to be aired . It was written by creator MacFarlane , and was the first episode to be directed by Peter Shin . The episode guest starred Lori Alan as Diane Simmons , Carlos Alazraqui as Mr. Weed , Mike Henry as Cleveland Brown , Billy West , Fred Tatasciore , Joey Slotnick , Phil LaMarr , Wally Wingert , and fellow cartoonist Butch Hartman as various characters . The episode aired after Super Bowl XXXIII on January 31 , 1999 .

For " Death Has a Shadow " , several changes were made from the original pilot pitch . For the series , Lois was a redhead , as opposed to the original pilot , where she was a blonde . In the original pilot , Lois discovered that Peter lost his job , and by the end of the episode , he fails to get a new one nor does he apply for welfare . The idea for Peter to apply for welfare and unintentionally become wealthy was suggested by executive producer David Zuckerman , who suggested the idea in order to add a larger amount of plot to the episode . Several sequences and gags were integrated into the episode from creator MacFarlane 's 1995 thesis film The Life of Larry , including the sequence where the Griffin family sees Philadelphia , and a brief cutaway where Peter farts for the first time at the age of 30 .

MacFarlane was cast as four of the show 's main characters : Peter Griffin , Brian Griffin , Stewie Griffin , and Glenn Quagmire . MacFarlane chose to voice these characters himself , believing it would be easier to portray the voices he already envisioned than for someone else to attempt it . MacFarlane drew inspiration for the voice of Peter from a security guard he overheard talking while

attending the Rhode Island School of Design . Stewie 's voice was based on the voice of English actor Rex Harrison , especially his performance in the 1964 musical *My Fair Lady* . MacFarlane uses his regular speaking voice when playing Brian . The voice of Quagmire was inspired by fast @-@ speaking radio advertising spokesmen from the 1950s . MacFarlane also provides voices for various other recurring and one @-@ time characters , including news anchor Tom Tucker and Lois ' father Carter Pewterschmidt .

Alex Borstein was cast as Lois Griffin , Tricia Takanawa , Loretta Brown , and Lois ' mother Barbara Pewterschmidt . Borstein was asked to provide a voice for the original pilot while she was working on MADtv . She had not met MacFarlane or seen any of his artwork and said it was " really sight unseen " . At the time , Borstein performed in a stage show in Los Angeles , in which she played a redheaded mother whose voice she had based on one of her cousins . The voice was originally slower , but when MacFarlane heard it , he replied " Make it a little less [...] annoying ... and speed it up , or every episode will last four hours " . Seth Green was chosen to play Chris Griffin and Neil Goldman . Green stated that he did an impression of the " Buffalo Bill " character from the thriller film *The Silence of the Lambs* during his audition . His main inspiration for Chris ' voice came from envisioning how " Buffalo Bill " would sound if he were speaking through a public address system at a McDonald 's . Lacey Chabert was cast as Meg Griffin . Chabert voiced Meg Griffin for the first production season (15 episodes) , but due to a contractual agreement was never credited . Chabert left the series because of time conflicts with schoolwork and her role on *Party of Five* , and was replaced by Mila Kunis .

= = Cultural references = =

In the final scenes of the episode , the Griffin family is seen watching a television program called *TV 's Bloopers* , a reference to the 1984 ABC and NBC television series *TV 's Bloopers and Practical Jokes* .

Towards the end of the courtroom scene , the Kool @-@ Aid Man is seen breaking through a wall , which later became a running gag in the series involving a certain character or breaking through a wall and Peter 's job as a Mascot is a parody of the *Cocoa Puffs* commercial .

During Peter 's recount of his job search to Brian , the talent show flashback mirrors the setting from *The Sound of Music* and makes a reference to the characters of the film , the von Trapp family .

= = Reception = =

The episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . In a 2008 review , Ahsan Haque of IGN rated the episode an 8 @. @ 9 / 10 , praising the integration of humor into the episode 's storyline . Haque noted that the episode was " a very strong start to this long running classic series , and revisiting it serves as a reminder that unlike many other television shows , there are very few awkward moments , and much of the show 's brilliance is immediately apparent . " In 2009 , the site singled out " *Death Has a Shadow* " as a " strong start [to *Family Guy*] " .

Robin Pierson of *The TV Critic* gave the episode a mixed review , rating the episode a 67 / 100 , calling it one of the most densely packed pilots on television . He mentioned that it was entertaining but said that there were many jokes that followed the quality does not win out over quantity saying . He compared Peter to *Homer Simpson* and he compared the show to *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* . He criticized the amount of unfunny jokes while he praised the surreal moments . At the end of his review he stated that *Family Guy* was a different kind of animated comedy which set out to do jokes that other cartoons couldn ' t do , also mentioning that the show had promise to become really funny .

A more negative review came from EW.com 's Ken Tucker , who called the animation clunky , which he said made Hanna @-@ Barbera 's animation look like state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art . Tucker also said in his review that he hoped that smart people would use the *Family Guy* half @-@ hour to turn off the television set and start a debate over the air strikes in Kosovo . He also called the show " *The Simpsons* as conceived by a singularly sophomoric mind that lacks any reference

point beyond other TV shows " . Even before it aired the pilot had received some criticism from the Parents Television Council , a watchdog ; the creator of this website L. Brent Bozell III wrote that he initially speculated that Family Guy would be " pushing the envelope " .