

PRANK CALL SKETCH

by T.B.

CAST: One, Two, Three, Jed.

(SETTING: Some house somewhere. Three college kids are having a get-together. There's a phone on a little table, with a chair next to it. They're having a rave-up.)

ALL (sung to the tune of "Mony Mony"): PARTY, PARTY! PARTY, PARTY! PARTY, PARTY!

ONE: You know, there's just nothing like being a freshman in college and getting together with your other underage friends for a Friday night of drinking Busch Light Draft!

ALL: PARTY, PARTY! PARTY, PARTY!

TWO: Hey, who else is coming over, tonight?

ONE: Well, it's just us -- the gang -- but I've invited one more person.

TWO: I sincerely hope you invited that girl from our World Cultural Earth Studies class.

ONE: Nope. I tried. She's got a boyfriend.

TWO: Bitch!

ONE: No, the person I invited is actually this kid I met when I was hanging around on campus the other day. His name is Jed, and he's this really cool, weird kid. He's kinda strange, but I thought he might be "fun-strange." So he should be here any minute.

(Offstage, a bell rings -- like one of those Salvation Army bells.)

ONE: That must be him, now.

(ONE goes and opens the "front door." Standing there is JED, who is obviously a total weirdo. He's holding a bell and smiling. He's got a brown bag under his arm.)

ONE: What's up with the bell, man?

JED: (Perplexed) You told me to just ring the bell when I arrived...

ONE: The doorbell, dude!

JED: (Realizing his mistake) Ah! What a maroon I am! Sorry!

ONE: Come on in, man. Everybody, this is Jed.

ALL: (Random greetings)

ONE: Jed, what can I get you? We've got Busch Light Draft...and Doritos.

JED: Oh, no thank you. I brought a parcel of my own for tonight's festivities.

(JED opens his bag. From it, he produces a huge chunk of beef jerky and a pouch full of milk. Everyone is weirded out.)

THREE: What...whatcha got, there, Jed?

JED: I don't drink alcohol, so I came with some provisions of my own. This here is my grandfather's pig jerky – I think this is from the shank. And the milk is my mother's.

TWO: Dude.

JED: She's never short on goat's milk.

TWO: Oh, thank god.

JED: Oh, that reminds me: thanks. I'd like to just have a prayer with you all, just to start things off. Would you like to hold hands, everyone?

(EVERYONE is weirded out.)

THREE: Actually, Jed, I'm pretty sure all of us are atheists and agnostics. We're not really into the whole "worshipping-the-invisible-man" thing.

TWO: I'm a Taoist, actually.

THREE: Oh, sorry.

TWO: Don't sweat it.

JED: Oh. Oh, dear. Well, I suppose this is just the kind of situation Mother warned me about.

ONE: What do you mean by "situation," Jed?

JED: Well, during my schooling, Mother often told me that there would come a time when she could no longer shield me from the sinful influences of the outside world, but that she would do her best to prepare me for that time. This, my first year of secular college, *is* that time.

THREE: Oh, I get it. You're homeschooled.

JED: Indeed. The best education available: The Bible, taught by the best teacher a kid could hope for: his own mother.

TWO: Huh. I always thought the best teachers were the ones who, you know, went through college and worked their asses off to become educated.

JED: Oops, you said the "A" word!

TWO: Holy shit.

JED: And then the "S" word! One more, and I'll have to wash my ears with lavender soap! Boy, it's like Uncle William from the big city is still alive and talking, being around you lot!

ONE: (to the group) I told you he was...different. But we had a good talk about sports, so I thought he was cool, and I think he is. Jed, you'll have to just get used to us, and we'll get used to you, okay?

JED: What did you say? "Cool?"

ONE: Yes, cool.

JED: That means that I'm accepted, does it?

ONE: Yeah, absolutely.

JED: (touched) I sincerely thank all of you. I have never felt so warmly received. Please...partake of my mother's milk and grandfather's jerky. Please.

THREE: That's okay, man. You keep that for yourself.

TWO: I'm fine.

ONE: Guys, I was thinking that, tonight, we could have a little fun by doing something classic. It's something we don't get a chance to do much, anymore, but since we're here at my mom's house, and she's got this old rotary-dial phone with her number blocked, I thought we could make some...prank calls!

TWO: Gimme a break.

THREE: What are we, twelve?

ONE: Seriously, when's the last time you guys did a prank call? It'll be fun – and it'll be a special kind of fun when Jed does his. Oh, Jed?

JED (looking up from his jerky): Yes?

ONE: I'm going to make a prank call. Do you know what that is?

JED: No?

ONE: It's where I call someone and try to agitate them for my amusement. Watch and learn.

(ONE picks up the phone and dials.)

ONE: Hello, there. I'm Ted Mickelberg, from Frigidaire. We're getting a reading over here that's causing us a little bit of distress. Could you just look in your kitchen and tell me if your refrigerator is running?

(ONE waits a moment.)

ONE: Oh, it is? Well, maybe you should catch it!

(ALL laugh. ONE hangs up.)

JED: But – I don't understand – they make...legged refrigerators? Is that for easier transportation of food?

THREE: No, you idiot – it's a pun. "Running" means "on."

JED (beat): Oh! Oh, yes, of course. You were using a word's multiple meanings to cause humorous confusion. I see! Do another!

ONE: Actually, Jed, why don't *you* give it a try? I'm sure we'd all like to see how *that* goes.

JED: Oh, dear. I'm not sure I've got the sense of humor for this. But it seems so delightful! All right, I'll do it – just so long as it won't cause harm to anyone.

TWO: It's completely harmless. Just dial any random number and pretend to be someone you're not. But you've got to remember: make it seem very real, or else it won't be funny. And try to agitate the person, because that makes it even funnier.

JED: All right. Here I go!

(He dials. Someone answers. Immediately, he becomes intense, dark, vicious in his manner. Frightening.)

JED: LISTEN HERE, MOTHERFUCKER. IF YOU EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER ALIVE AGAIN, YOU WILL DO EVERYTHING I SAY EXACTLY THE WAY I SAY IT. FIRST: I WANT \$100,000 I UNMARKED BILLS PLACED IN A CANVAS BAG...

(ONE slams his hand on the cradle, cutting off the call)

ONE: Whoa, buddy! WHOA, WHOA, WHOA!

JED (back to normal): Did it work? Was it funny?

THREE: What the hell was that?

TWO: Jed, I know you're homeschooled, but I'm starting to wonder if you're not actually retarded.

JED: Oh, dear. I made a mistake?

ONE: Jed...um, here's the thing: your commitment was admirable, but the...content was a little too intense. You don't want to have people thinking their daughters are in mortal danger, do you understand? You want to unnerve them, but not so much.

JED: I see...I understand. Oh, let me try it again.

ONE: Okay. Just be...calmer.

(JED dials a number. Someone picks up.)

JED: Hello. My name is...

(He looks around the room. He sees the telephone and the chair.)

JED:...my name is Telephone...Chair...Jones. I'm...conducting a survey, and I'd like to ask you a few questions. Okay? Okay. First question is: do you enjoy fine...leather products? Oh, you do. Wonderful. Second: do you EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER ALIVE AGAIN? BECAUSE I'VE GOT HER TIED UP IN MY BASEMENT, AND IF YOU DON'T PAY ME FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, I'M GOING TO SLIT THAT CUNT'S THROAT AND SEND YOU A BOTTLE OF HER BLOOD IN THE MAIL!

(ONE slams his hand on the phone.)

THREE: JESUS CHRIST, JED!

JED: Oops, took the Lord's name in vain, there.

THREE: What in the fuck?

TWO: I'm starting to think I should maybe head out, guys. This has been fun and everything...

JED: Oh, dear. Wait. I've done it again. I see that. I can tell by your drawn faces. I'm sorry. It's...I'm trying too hard to fit in, is what it is. You all seem so incredibly kind and fun-loving and well-adjusted, and I'm...I'm just some freak from the country who still drinks his mother's breast milk and has to call it goat's milk so people aren't offended.

(ALL become unnerved and ill.)

JED: I know. It's terrible – please. Please, give me another chance. Just one.

TWO (to ONE): He's your guest, man.

ONE (beat): Okay. One more. But, Jed – don't get so intense. Just – play with the person. You can still be yourself. Just be a version of yourself, right?

JED: All right. This is going to be the one, I can feel it.

(He dials. Someone answers.)

JED: Hello, mother!

(ALL look confused.)

JED: Yes, I'm here with them, now. Yes, they're all very nice. They offered me food and drink and everything. Yes, right now we're playing a game where we call people on the telephone and tell them lies. Yes, prank calling – you've heard of it. Oh, I know. It *is* terrible, I agree. That's the kind of behavior you see from the outsiders, though – you were right all along. Yes, as a matter of fact, I followed your directions to the letter. When I received my invitation, I showed up to the house quite early and gained entry through an open window, like you suggested I do. I then found the alcohol in the refrigerator and applied the poison to the individual cans. I timed it out just perfectly so the poison would affect them at the very moment I called you. No, it hasn't happened, yet.

(ONE collapses in a heap. TWO and THREE, horrified, go to help him.)

JED: Oh, no – I misspoke. It's working, now. The other two should go down momentarily.

(TWO and THREE go to grab JED, but they collapse.)

JED: And, there they go. Yes, that's all of them. Just three. Okay. Okay. Sure. I won't forget. No, I'm not going to try any of the alcohol. Don't worry. I'll call you the next time I get invited somewhere by one of these heathens. Yes, it's a real thrill. I know, you were right, just like always. Okay. I know – I won't leave a fingerprint. I promise. Okay. Love you, too. Praise the lord. Bye.

(JED surveys his surroundings. He packs up his meat and milk and wipes up fingerprints here and there. He goes to leave, but then he sees the phone. He gets a look in his eye. He quickly sits and dials a number.)

JED: Hello? Hi. I was just wondering – I'm a man who is concerned about kitchen appliances for some reason. Could you tell me if your refrigerator is running? Sure, I'll hold.

(he covers his mouth to stifle a giggle.)

(lights out)

THE END