

“THAT’S OBSCENE”

(a.k.a., “*THE PRE-CALLER I.D. CRANK-CALL PLAYS*”)

A series of three short, intermittently staged plays

By John Moore

The year is 1974, the place suburban Arvada, the locale a kitchen table that at mealtime can accommodate an army of pre-pubescent smart-asses. Today, there are three up-to-no-good young brothers present, with a fourth hovering in the offstage TV room.

CHARACTERS:

Mike, 15

Dan, 10

Kevin, 9

Peter, 8

Separate but on-stage call-receivers: MAN 1, MAN 2 and OLD WOMAN

SCENE 1: "CRITICAL MASS"

DAN (hangs up phone): Nope. Woman.

KEVIN (perusing phone book): Try this: 422-6452... “Larry Loomis.”

DAN (dials number, lowers voice): Yes, is this Mr. Loomis? ... Larry Loomis?

MAN 1: It is.

DAN: Yes, Mr. Loomis, this is the city sewage company ...

MAN 1: The what?

DAN: Yes, that's right, the city sewage company ... Mr. Loomis, we've been monitoring our levels and gauges here at the plant, and it appears that we have reached something of a critical mass....

MAN 1: I don't understand.

DAN: The readings are much, much higher than normal, Mr. Loomis. In fact, we've reached maximum storage capacity, and there could be serious consequences for the entire city unless immediate action is taken. Now, upon further investigation, it appears that the problem is originating from your address.

MAN 1: I'm not sure I'm following ...

KEVIN: (whispering) 6147 Dover Street.

DAN: You do reside at 6147 Dover Street, don't you?

MAN 1: Yes, but ...

DAN: Well, simply put, Mr. Loomis ... *We've had just about enough shit out of you!*

(DAN hangs up and the threesome breaks into hysterical fits of infantile laughter)...

SCENE 2: "THAT AIN'T FUNNY"

DAN (hangs up phone): Nope. Woman.

KEVIN (perusing phone book): OK, try this: 424-7562... "The Colters."

(DAN dials number.)

VOICE: Hello?

(DAN hangs up.)

DAN: Woman.

KEVIN: Dammit. Four straight. (Peruses phone book.) OK, try this: 421-0475... "The Lemanskys."

(DAN dials number.)

MAN 2: Hello.

DAN: Hey dad, it's me. Come pick me up.

MAN 2: I'm sorry. Who is this?

DAN: It's me, dad. Dance class is over. Come pick me up.

MAN 2: I think there's been a mistake.

DAN: Stop fooling around, dad. It's cold out here.

MAN 2: Young man, you must have dialed the wrong number. I'm not your father.

DAN (confused): What, are you serious?

MAN 2: I'm quite sure.

DAN: Are you kidding me here, dad?

MAN 2: I assure you, I'm not. You try again now, and good luck finding --

DAN: No wait wait wait, mister. Don't hang up.

MAN 2: What can I do for you?

DAN: Well, it's just that I'm in a pay phone, and I just used my last dime.

MAN 2: Well, that is a pickle.

DAN (Getting excited): Oh my gosh, I don't know how I'm going to get home now...

MAN 2: Well I'm sure that ...

DAN: If I don't have another dime, then I can't call my dad, and he can't pick me up ... (starts to cry).

MAN 2: Now calm down there, young man...

DAN: WAAAAAAH!

MAN 2: Now, really, there's no need for that!

DAN: I'm never going to get home!!!!!! Never!!!

MAN 2: Son, take a deep breath. I CAN HELP YOU.

DAN: You can?

MAN 2: Of course I can. Everything will be fine.

DAN: So you'll come pick me up?

MAN 2: Well, no, but I can call your father for you and tell him your dance practice is over and to come pick you up. You see? Problem solved.

DAN: (calms himself): Hey ... that just might work!

MAN 2: Of course it will work, son, now you just give me your phone number.

DAN: Yeah yeah yeah it's 424-6384...

MAN 2: That's 424-6384?

DAN: Yeah.

MAN 2: Well, that's odd. That's nowhere close to the number you actually dia--

DAN: Yeah, tell him that dance class is over and that I'm at the pay phone on the corner. He knows where it is.

MAN 2: OK, fine. You hang tight young man, and your father will soon be on his way.

DAN: Hey thanks mister, you're a lifesaver.

MAN 2: My pleasure. You have a nice day.

DAN: Yeah thanks, and you too.

(DAN hangs up, and the three boys bust out laughing. KEVIN runs over to a door leading off-stage and calls out ...)

KEVIN: Hey Mike, we're ready for you.

MIKE (off-stage): Fuck yourself.

KEVIN: C'mon, he's gonna call any minute!

(After a pause, MIKE emerges. He's big and burly for his 15 years, with straggly hair covering his face and a post-pubescent deepness to his voice).

MIKE: Dance class?

KEVIN AND DAN: Yeah. Hahahaha!!!

MIKE: Fine (phone rings, MIKE clears throat, picks up, speaks deeply) ... Hello?

MAN 2'S VOICE: Oh, yes, hello, sir, my name is ... Frank Lemansky and it's the darndest thing, but I just got a call from your son ...

MIKE: You ... just got a call ... from my son?

MAN 2: Yes, you see, it seems he misdialed while he was trying to call you from the pay phone and he got me instead ...

MIKE: Is that right?

MAN 2: Yes, he was calling to tell you that his dance class is over and he's ready for his ride. But it was his last dime, so he couldn't ...

MIKE: Hold up, sir. Now let me get this straight ...

MAN 2: OK, yes, then, fine --

MIKE: You're telling me that my son just called you...

MAN 2: That's right.

MIKE: From a payphone?

MAN 2: That's correct.

MIKE: To ask for a ride ...

MAN 2: Yes.

MIKE: From *dance* class?

MAN 2: Exactly.

MIKE: Well, mister, I don't happen to think that you're very funny ...

MAN 2'S VOICE: I don't understand....

MIKE: In fact. I think it's pretty cruel to call a man up ...

MAN 2: Well, what, cruel?

MIKE: ... To tell him that his son needs a ride home ...

MAN 2: Well, he does ...

MIKE: ... From class ...

MAN 2: That's what he said...

MIKE: From DANCE class ...

MAN 2: Yes, so?

MIKE: ... WHEN MY KID AIN'T GOT NO LEGS!!!!

(MIKE hangs up the phone. The four fall over themselves in hysterical fits of laughter).

SCENE 3: "GRANDMA?"

DAN (hangs up phone): No answer.

KEVIN (perusing phone book): Crap. OK, try this: 422-2932... It's listed as "M. O'Brien."

(DAN dials number.)

VOICE: Hello?

(DAN hangs up.)

DAN: Nope. Man.

KEVIN (perusing phone book): Crap. Aha, here: 424-8630... "Mary Gartland."

(DAN dials number.)

DAN: Little Scary Man, you ready?

PETER (sadly): I guess so.

OLD WOMAN: Hello?

DAN: Well, you better be. This is it! C'mere.

PETER: Do you guys ever get the feeling that we're wasting our lives?

DAN: Shut up and cry.

PETER: Oh, all right.

DAN: Hey! A little enthusiasm? (DAN winds up and smacks his little brother square on the shoulder.)

PETER: Owww! That hurt (starts to cry).

OLD WOMAN: Hello?

DAN: That's the point (hands the phone to PETER). Don't fuck it up.

OLD WOMAN: Is anyone there? Hello?

PETER: (still crying) Grandma?

DAN: That's better.

OLD WOMAN: Excuse me?

PETER: Hi, grandma, it's me.

OLD WOMAN: I'm sorry, it's who?

PETER: It's me, grandma ... Tommy.

OLD WOMAN: I'm sorry, little boy; I think you have the wrong number.

PETER: Grandma, come pick me up.

OLD WOMAN: But I ...

PETER: It hurts so bad, grandma, and ...

OLD WOMAN: Are you crying?

PETER: Yeah, grandma. I'm crying!

OLD WOMAN: Well, calm down, young man, and tell me what happened.

PETER: Daddy beat mommy again.

OLD WOMAN: What? Your father --

PETER: Daddy beat her up pretty good this time. She's all bleeding...

OLD WOMAN: Bleeding?!

PETER Her eyes were all purple and yellow, grandma --

OLD WOMAN: How awful—

PETER: And then daddy beat me, and I'm all bleeding too and ...

OLD WOMAN: How old are you, Tommy?

PETER: You know how old I am grandma, jeez! ... So I ran away as fast as I could and now come pick me up grandma ... *Pleeeeee*

OLD WOMAN: But Tommy, I want you to listen to me carefully. I am not your grandmother...

PETER: (Wailing now) Don't say that, grandma!

OLD WOMAN: But it's true!

PETER: I think mommy's eye is going to fall out...

OLD WOMAN: Oh dear God!

PETER: ... And I lost another tooth.

OLD WOMAN: Your father took out your tooth?

PETER: And then I ran down to the corner to call you like always and ... and ...

OLD WOMAN: Oh my God, you poor ...

PETER: ... And as I was running down the street he said if I didn't stop and come back that he would go back in and kill mommy, but I just kept on running and --

OLD WOMAN: Dear God, we have to call the police!

PETER: Just come pick me up like you always do, grandma – I'm in the usual spot.

OLD WOMAN: You mean this has happened before?

PETER: You know daddy's a bad man, grandma. And I haven't even seen Jimmy in over three weeks now and ...

OLD WOMAN: Tommy Tell me ... WHO'S JIMMY?

PETER: You know who Jimmy is, grandma. He's your grandson, too, and --

OLD WOMAN (now frantic): Now listen to me, Tommy. I'm trying to tell you, I'm not your grandmother. You dialed the wrong number and you got me by mistake, and --

PETER (really starts to lay in on): That's not a very nice thing to say, grandma. I'm cold and I'm all bleeding! And now you won't be my grandma anymore?

OLD WOMAN: Oh heaven help me. Tell me exactly where you are Tommy, I'll call the police...

PETER: No! Daddy says never call the police again or else, grandma. I don't want "or else," grandma. I want you!

OLD WOMAN: Of course I will come for you, Tommy. Just tell me where you are!

PETER: You know where I am, grandma. I'm at the gas station ... like always.

OLD WOMAN: But what gas station, Tommy? What do the street signs say?

PETER: Well ... one looks like it says "Ral...ston?"

OLD WOMAN: OK, good. I know that street. What does the other one say?

PETER: I think it says ... *Flower* ...

OLD WOMAN: Thank goodness, I know exactly where that is. Now Tommy, you stay put. I am going to get down there just as fast as I can...

PETER: I love you grandma. ... I'm starting to feel dizzy!

OLD WOMAN: Oh you poor child. Stay out on the corner where I can spot you.

PETER: OH NO!

OLD WOMAN: What is it, Tommy?

PETER: It's him!

OLD WOMAN: Who? What?

PETER: It's him, grandma. I see Daddy! He's coming right toward me!

OLD WOMAN: Oh, dear ...

PETER: And he looks so mad, grandma. He looks like the devil. And grandma ...???

OLD WOMAN: Yes, Tommy. What is it?

PETER: He's got a hammer in his hand!

OLD WOMAN: Ahh!! Tommy, now you listen to me. I want you to run, little boy. Do you hear me? Run. I'll be there in 10 minutes. But right now I need you to run, Tommy. Do you hear me? RUN!!!

PETER: He's here, grandma. And he's waving that hammer and
Aaaaaaaaagggggghhhhhh!!!

(PETER hangs up the phone)...

DAN, KEVIN and PETER fall onto the floor in uncontrollable fits of laughter.

THE END