

The Incredibly Likely, Yet Completely Made-Up, Story Of My Invitation And Subsequent Eviction From The Rowlands' Dinner Party

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January 14, 2007

This story really begins with my love of extreme sports. I'm a complete sucker for any sport with the name "extreme" in it. I started with the innocent ones, like extreme mountain biking, but those are like gateway drugs. Before you know it, you're into sports like Extreme Unmunktu, and you're climbing up a vertical wall using only Twizzlers as rope, while you iron two shirts at the same time with a specially weighted piece of hot lava.

Anyhow, my buddy, Frederick III, was on his way over to my place to do some extreme sporting. Frederick didn't get his dad's name or anything; his parents thought it would be cute for his name to sound as though it belonged to a king. Needless to say, he was teased mercilessly until high school, when he grew an incredible set of muscles and was referred to reverently as "Prince Fred" by everyone who valued their appendages and digits. Prince Fred swaggered into my house with a smoking backpack.

"Frederick," I said, mostly because I knew he hated his full name, "what have you got in that bag?"

"Hot lava!" he exclaimed, an expectant grin already forming on his face. "I thought we could play some..."

"Extreme Unmunktu?" I asked. "Forget it. No one plays that any more except women or communists."

Frederick III began to shed the backpack. "What?"

"I've got a better idea," I said.

Frederick III was all ears. "What?" (On average, this one-word inquisition composed a full third of Frederick's vocabulary.)

"Well, I just found out about this new extreme sport," I began, in a patient voice. Fred's eyes widened and I knew I had him. "First," I said, "you have to get on a skateboard and ride uphill all the way to the top of a cliff, and then, using only butter and olive oil..."

DING! The doorbell interrupted us both. I looked through the peephole and saw an extremely frilly man on a horse. "Come in," I said, more to the man than the horse. He just looked confused.

“Is this... Prince Frederick’s place?” asked the man. His diction was crisp and precise, but he spoke with a strong accent I couldn’t place.

“I’m Prince Frederick,” said Frederick III, with a mix of childish glee and adult apprehension.

“Then this is for you,” said the man, producing a small envelope with a magician’s flourish and quickly riding off into the sunset.

“Awesome,” said Frederick, opening it. “It’s an invitation for us for the Rowlands’ dinner party!”

“That is so extreme!” I exclaimed. “Everyone knows that the Rowland’s dinner party is the most extreme thing ever. I can’t wait to go.” I paused. A thought was forming in my head. “But why would they invite us? They don’t even know us.”

“What?” asked Frederick. A sheep-like look of confusion spread over his face, like peanut butter on one side of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

“Oh, I know what happened,” I said, after a moment’s deduction. “Clearly, they wanted to invite their friend *Fred* over, but they sent their letter to the wrong century, where the mail service (peace be upon it) determined that it was headed for Frederick III, who was the only living Frederick in 1340 because he had all the others put to death. Then, the delivery person *also* got lost in time and delivered it to the Frederick III in *this* century.”

“I understand,” said Frederick, who didn’t. “When’s the party?”

I examined the invitation. “Five minutes,” I said. “We’d have to travel faster than the speed of light to get there on time.”

“Race you,” said Fred.

Four minutes later, huffing and puffing, we arrived at the Rowlands’ doorstep. “Traveling faster than the speed of light wears me out,” said Frederick.

“For real,” I said, between huffs and puffs and after knocking on the door. “I can’t wait for that extreme food I heard was going to be at this party.”

Katherine answered the door. “Who are you?” she asked, not unkindly.

“Prince Fred,” shouted Frederick before I could say anything, “and his friend Jonathan.” He gave me a look that dripped smug superiority all over his shirt. I said nothing.

The Rowlands appraised the situation: here were two young men they had not invited to their party. They were unshaven, they had clearly been violating the laws of physics, and one of them was doing a victory dance with what looked suspiciously like a dinner party invitation from the 12th century.

“Come in,” said the Rowlands.

We were in the house before they had pronounced the “n” in the word “in.”

“Woah,” said Frederick. He’d never been to the Rowlands’ place before. I pretended that I had.

“Yeah, it must be your first time,” I said. “The Rowlands are great. They let you do anything you want.” I headed over to their fridge and grabbed two soda cans, which I opened at the same time (one with each hand). I carelessly began glugging the contents.

“Nice,” said Frederick III. He picked up the TV and tuned it to his favorite cable channel, which showed only old ads for Jello.

The Rowlands looked at each other and then at us. “Our dinner party is a formal event,” said Chris. “Could you be more well-behaved?”

“What?” asked Frederick. He was eating grapes. I, on the other hand, was mortified. The full weight of our transgression hit me like about a third of a ton of bricks.

“Prince Fred,” I said, “we have made a mistake. This is the wrong Rowland residence.” I was lying, of course. I realized that we’d made fools of ourselves in front of polite company, and that we’d better scoot before we were forced out of the house.

“Gotcha,” said Frederick. “But what next?”

“Let’s thank the Rowlands,” I said. “Thanks for the soda!”

Frederick caught on. “Also the grapes,” he muttered.

We left quickly.

“Come on, Prince Fred,” I said, putting my arm around him. “We’ve got some Twizzlers and hot lava with our names on it.”

Frederick III beamed. “Dibs on the blue shirt,” he said.