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# Leonard Pitts: Megan Meier and the MySpace 'joke'

Friend's parents sure know how to pull a joke.

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This will kill you.

Have you heard about the practical joke that was played on a girl in Dardenne Prairie, near St. Louis? You're going to slap your knee at this one.

See, this girl – Megan Meier was her name – was 13. You remember 13, that gawky, uncertain age when you're growing into a new body, hormones firing off like howitzers. They say Megan was a heavysset child, emotionally vulnerable as only an adolescent girl can be. They say she had ADD and struggled with depression.

Are you laughing yet?

It seems Megan had this friend, a girl who lived a few doors down. Through seventh grade, they had gone round and round: best friends one day, feuding the next, the way kids do. Finally, Megan broke off the friendship for good. She was done with the other girl. But the girl was not done with her.

This all happened last year, by the way, but we are indebted to reporter Steve Pokin of the *Suburban Journals* newspaper for bringing it to our attention just days ago. Since then, the story has made national headlines.

So anyway, sometime after Megan and the other girl ended their relationship, this guy named Josh Evans shows up on Megan's MySpace page saying he wants to be added as a friend. And this Josh, he's like a gift from the god of cute boys. He's new in town, home schooled, fatherless, a musician, a major hottie. And he wants to be friends. He thinks Megan is pretty. Chunky, socially awkward Megan.

She describes herself to him with an acrostic. M, for modern. E, for enthusiastic. G, for goofy. A, for alluring.

N, for neglected.

For a time, everything was good. Oh, it was strange that Josh never gave her a phone number and never asked for hers, but Megan overlooked that. Then Josh sent that strange message: "I don't know if I want to be friends with you anymore because I've heard that you are not very nice to your friends." Megan was shocked. Where was this coming from?

It was a Sunday night. As it turned out, the last Sunday of Megan's life. Are you laughing yet?

The next day after school, Megan asked her mother – Tina Meier restricted Megan's online access – to log on the computer so Megan could check for new messages. What she found horrified her. Josh was still sending mean notes. And he had apparently been sharing her messages with others. Now the online community was abuzz with invective. Megan was fat. Megan was a slut.

Megan was destroyed. Especially after one last hateful message from Josh. You're a bad person, he said. Everybody hates you. The world would be better without you.

He got his wish just hours later. Megan Meier hanged herself that night.

Weeks later, her family got the punch line. There never was a Josh. He was a fiction, created by the parents, Curt and Lori Drew, of the girl who had once been Megan's friend. By. The. Parents.

People have threatened and harassed the Drews, and there are fears for their safety. No fears of prosecution, though; what they did broke no laws. But me, I don't want to hurt or jail them. I just want them to know how funny that joke was.

No one wants acceptance quite as desperately as an adolescent girl who has never been the most popular, never been the prettiest. What brilliance, what comic genius, to take that vulnerability and use it against her.

So no, I don't want these folks hurt. I want them healthy. I want them long-lived. And I want them to be reminded, every day of their long, healthy lives, what a great joke they pulled.

They really paid Megan back. They really got her good.

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