

**THREE MEN IN A BOAT
(TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DOG).**

By

JEROME K JEROME

In a new version by

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Three Men in a Boat

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MONTMORENCY

JEROME

HARRIS

GEORGE

DOCTOR

CHEMIST

MRS POPPETS

BIGGS'S BOY

BOOTSHOP GENT

BLUEPOSTS SUPT.

GROCER'S BOY

LUGGAGE PORTER

2nd PORTER

STATION-MASTER

TRAFFIC SUPT.

PLATFORM 3 MAN*

PLATFORM 4 MAN*

PLATOFORM 17B MAN

ENGINE DRIVER

TRESPASS MAN

HOSTESS

GUEST #1

GUEST #2

NERVOUS PIANIST

2ND PIANIST

LOCK KEEPER

EMILY

JOHN EDWARD

ANNE BOLEYN

HENRY VIII

FISHERMAN #1

FISHERMAN #2

FISHERMAN #3

TOM CAT

GREENGROCER*

BUTCHER*

BAKER*

BOATMAN

STEAMLAUNCH MAN

HAMBLEDON LOCK-

KEEPER

STEAMLAUNCH MAN #2

OLD FELLOW

LOCAL BOATMAN

MIDDLE AGED GENT

LANDLORD

THEATRE MANAGER

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Montmorency is, at different times, played one and all of the other three simply by donning a hat. The particular allocation is denoted by the character letter in parentheses after the dog's name. For, as we all know, Montmorency is canine. He is ever present. The lengthy list of secondary characters in the play is similarly played by one or all of the other three and the allocation is denoted in the self-same fashion.

Those characters marked with an asterisk* are contributed by members of the audience using cue cards or similar device. Indeed the audience plays a major role in the evening being absolutely present in the characters' consciousness and openly acknowledged and spoken to on numerous occasions. I have not marked these direct address moments, preferring to leave it to the director and actors to make their own decisions.

It is the year 1890 and although the audience doesn't gain the knowledge till the conclusion of the piece it is the day that commemorates the passing of Montmorency some two years previously. The memory of their companion is golden and raw at the same time.

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PROLOGUE

ACT ONE – THE FIRST EVENING

Scene 1 – An idea emerges

Scene 2 – Plans are laid

ACT TWO – THE DAY OF DEPARTURE

Scene 1 – Rise and Shine

Scene 2 – Isambard's Kingdom

Scene 3 – Water beneath the Keel

Scene 4 – An Altercation and a Song

Scene 5 – Reunited at Weybridge

Scene 6 – Victuals in the Gloaming

ACT THREE – THE SECOND MORNING

Scene 1 – A Bracing start to the Day.

Scene 2 – A Right Royal Stretch

Scene 3 – More Sustenance

Scene 4 – An Ill Wind

INTERVAL

ACT FOUR – THE THIRD DAY

Scene 1 – Riverside Folk

Scene 2 – Back on the Water

Scene 3 – At the End of the Day

Scene 4 – Show me the Way to go Home

ACT FIVE – JOURNEY'S END

Scene 1 – A Gentle Start

Scene 2 – A Fishy Tale

Scene 3 – A very Human Tragedy

Scene 4 – Dreaming Spires Ahoy!

Scene 5 – All Change

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Before the performance begins J, HARRIS and GEORGE are in the house chatting with the audience. They are in character at all times. They select audience members who will be needed during the performance and prepare them for what will be expected of them. At a given moment when all is prepared they return to the stage.

PROLOGUE

J, HARRIS and GEORGE all raise their glasses. Beer for HARRIS, port for GEORGE and wine for JEROME.

JEROME Absent friends.

HARRIS Down the hatch.

GEORGE What ho!

They drink. GEORGE plays a short piece on the ukulele. J holds up a music hall style sign saying:

ACT ONE – THE FIRST EVENING

Scene 1 – An idea emerges

JEROME Act one.

JEROME There were, to be strictly truthful in all things ...

GEORGE ... and for hopeless and incurable veracity nothing can surpass this record of events that really happened.

JEROME There were, to be strictly truthful in all things, four of us. Creatures of flesh and blood. All feeling seedy.

HARRIS Harris - with fits of giddiness.

GEORGE George - about fifteen stone, with fits of giddiness too; feeling thirsty.

HARRIS Never knew George when he didn't.

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JEROME With me, it was my liver that was out of order.

Each of them fervently believes that they have the following illnesses and they try to trump each other in the game of malady-poker.

GEORGE Hay fever.

HARRIS Ague.

JEROME St Vitus's Dance.

GEORGE Bright's disease.

HARRIS Cholera.

JEROME Scarlet Fever.

GEORGE Diphtheria.

HARRIS Gout.

GEORGE Zymosis.

JEROME *[impressed]* Good one, George! Zymosis!

HARRIS And every other known malady in the pharmacology!

JEROME Except housemaid's knee.

GEO/HARRIS Except housemaid's knee.

GEORGE The overstrain on our brains has produced a general depression throughout the system.

JEROME I hardly know what I am doing when I get up in the morning.

HARRIS I hardly know what I am doing when I go to bed.

GEORGE And I feel like this in the night.

He demonstrates with a clever and powerful piece of acting

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JEROME George fancies he is ill; but there's never anything really the matter with him you know.

HARRIS There were, to be strictly truthful in all things, four of us.

During the following two speeches HARRIS becomes the physical re-incarnation of their canine companion. It is a transition which each of them recreates every time they play the dog. It can be done very quickly or in the grand manner. As this is the first time it happens it is probably the most impressive it will ever be.

GEORGE/JEROME Montmorency, first impressions of –

GEORGE There is a sort of Oh-what-a-wicked- world-this-is-and-how-I-wish-I-could-do-something-to-make-it-better-and- nobler expression about Montmorency that has been known to bring the tears into the eyes of pious old ladies and gentlemen.

Now wearing the hat, HARRIS, turning towards the audience, has become the essence of MONTMORENCY

MONTMORENCY [H] barks

JEROME He does not revel in romantic solitude. Give him something noisy; and if a trifle low, so much the jollier.

MONTMORENCY [H] To look at me, you would imagine that I was an angel sent upon the earth, for some reason withheld from mankind, in the shape of a small fox-terrier. There were, to be strictly truthful in all things, four of us.

He barks once. GEORGE takes hat from HARRIS' head and moves it round the stage as MONTMORENCY, sniffing and barking.

JEROME We agree that we are overworked, and need rest?

HARRIS Rest.

GEORGE A week's rest and a complete change.

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JEROME I've been to my medical man.

With which we're into a music-hall routine. George provides appropriate sound effects.

JEROME Doctor, Doctor!

DOCTOR [H] Well, what is it young feller-me-lad?

JEROME Doctor, Doctor! My irregular heartbeat is really frightening me.

DOCTOR [H] Don't worry - we'll soon put a stop to that!

JEROME I beg your pardon?

DOCTOR [H] Just my little joke don't you know! Well young feller-me-lad, what's the matter with you?

JEROME I will not take up your time but I will tell you what is not the matter with me. I have not got housemaid's knee. Everything else, however, I have got. He ...

DOCTOR feels his pulse

DOCTOR [H] feels his pulse ...

JEROME and he ...

DOCTOR looks at his tongue

DOCTOR [H] looks at his tongue ...

JEROME and he ...

DOCTOR writes a prescription

DOCTOR [H] writes out a prescription.

JEROME I take it to the nearest chemist's. What-ho, Apothecary!¹

¹ Romeo and Juliet Act 5 Scene 1

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GEORGE appears as said CHEMIST. He reads the prescription and sadly shakes his head.

But the man says he doesn't keep it.

GEORGE is very pleased with himself being able to deliberately misquote the following from Romeo and Juliet's Apothecary

CHEMIST [G] Such mortal drugs I do not have.

JEROME You are a chemist?

CHEMIST [G] I am a chemist. If I was a co-operative stores and family hotel combined, I might be able to oblige you. Being only a chemist hampers me.

JEROME I read the prescription.

MONTMORENCY [G] One pound beefsteak!

HARRIS One pint bitter beer every 6 hours.

MONTMORENCY [G] One pound beefsteak!!

JEROME One ten-mile walk every morning.

MONTMORENCY [G] One pound beefsteak!!!

HARRIS One bed at 11 sharp every night.

MONTMORENCY [G] One pound beefsteak!!!!

JEROME I followed the directions with the happy result - speaking for myself ...

ALL ... that his/my life was preserved!

MONTMORENCY [J] barks and the routine is at an end.

GEORGE A week's rest and a complete change. The overstrain upon our brains has produced a general depression throughout the

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system. A change of scene, and the absence of the necessity for thought, will restore the mental equilibrium.

- JEROME George has a cousin, who is usually described in the charge-sheet as a medical student, so that he naturally has a somewhat family-physicianary way of putting things.
- GEORGE We should seek out some olde-worlde spot ...
- JEROME `Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife'²
- HARRIS Eh?
- GEORGE ... and mooch away a week among its lanes.
- JEROME `Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;'
- HARRIS If you want rest and change, you can't beat a sea trip.
- GEORGE Or some quaint old dwelling on a cliff perhaps.
- JEROME `Along the cool sequester'd vale of life'
- HARRIS What?
- JEROME `They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.'
- GEORGE I know a fine out-of-the-way village called [*wherever the performance is being played*].
- HARRIS Sounds humpy to me. I know the sort of place you mean, George; [*Name of village*] Where everybody goes to bed at eight o'clock, and you have to walk ten miles to get your baccy. How about a week on the rolling deep eh?
- GEORGE [*cagily*] A sea trip does you good when you are going to have a couple of months of it, but, for a week, it is wicked.

² All four of Jerome's lines are from [Thomas Gray's](#) poem [Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard](#) (1751):

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- JEROME *[equally cagily]* I am never queer. But I am afraid for you George. I'm against it. Not upon my own account you understand.
- GEORGE I should be all right but would advise Harris not to think of it, as I feel sure he should be ill.
- HARRIS It is always a mystery to me how people manage to get sick at sea. It is a curious fact, but nobody ever is sea-sick - on land. At sea, you come across plenty of people very bad indeed but I never met a man yet, on land, who had ever known at all what it was to be sea-sick.
- GEORGE Let's go up the river. Fresh air, exercise and quiet will give us a good appetite.
- HARRIS The river would suit me to a "T."
- JEROME It suits me to a "T" too. Although I don't know what a "T" is, except a sixpenny one, which includes bread-and-butter and cake ad lib.
- GEORGE How far should we go?
- HARRIS A week should do it.
- JEROME To Oxford then.
- HARRIS Hardly what I'd call sequester'd.
- JEROME No-one goes to bed at eight though and there is a baccy shop on every corner.
- GEORGE Perhaps we can find a good medico who might diagnose us. Put us right.
- HARRIS Well. Plenty of doctors in Oxford. I suppose.
- JEROME That's settled then.
- HARRIS dons the hat.*

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- MONTMORENCY [H] It's all very well for you fellows, you like it, but I don't. There's nothing for me to do. Scenery is not in my line, and I don't smoke.
- GEORGE The constant change of scene will occupy our minds.
- MONTMORENCY [H] If I see a rat, you won't stop; ...
- GEORGE The hard work will make us sleep well.
- MONTMORENCY [H] ... and if I go to sleep, you get fooling about with the boat, and slop me overboard.
- JEROME It's a good idea of yours, George.
- HARRIS Yes, a good idea of yours, George.
- JEROME The motion was carried by the majority of three to one.
- MONTMORENCY [H] If you ask me, I call the whole thing bally foolishness.