

DON'T ROCK THE BOAT

A Wacky Comedy Cruise in Three Acts

By Tim Kelly

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Take the TV show *The Love Boat*, season with *Mutiny on the Bounty*, serve *Pirates of Penzance* for dessert and you get some idea of what *DON'T ROCK THE BOAT* is all about!

This is a youthful comedy cruise that has laughs coming faster than torpedoes. Tom Butterworth is determined to be the youngest cruise ship captain in history, even if this means sailing on a converted gunboat named *Vengeance*, with a crew of rejects from the Maritime High School and a trio of girl singers who are passing themselves off as a famous show biz act. No wonder the engineer is seasick and the cruise hostess is pulling her hair in frustration. What about the passengers? There's a fabulous Hollywood star, Honey Hotchkiss, who is determined to star in *Gone With the Wind, Part Two* - only the producer would sooner walk the plank. There's also a clumsy pair of thieves, a lady who loves pets but is allergic to fur, a non-stop jogger, and a gung-ho nurse who practices giving hypos by stabbing oranges - and anything else that's handy. To top it all off, there's a hijacking at sea by a misguided group of pirate loonies.

If this isn't enough to sink the *Vengeance*, there may be a shark in the pool. There is definitely a storm and a sandbar that proves unfriendly. One other thing - the ship has no insurance. However, by the final curtain it's all romance and hilarity.

The set is simple, the dialogue easy to memorize, and the plot is designed for easy rehearsals. There is even a place for a series of musical numbers, if desired. If you sail on a cruise ship, do it with *Vengeance* - but make sure you can swim. And laugh!

* * * * *

Meet up with Capt. Tom and some of your favorite *Don't Rock the Boat* characters again in Tim Kelly's sequel, *Lagooned!* The crew and passengers of the *Vengeance* are marooned on a weird island in the South Pacific where they do their best to survive cannibals, nasty wildlife and oh yeah, Navy target practice, too. It's one of the wackiest sequels to wash up on the stage in years!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(11 m, 14 w)

Extra Passengers and Pirates as desired

BORIS: A student at Maritime High School.

DOUGLAS: Another.

MIKE: Another.

MR. CRANKMEYER: Their teacher - huff and gruff.

ARLENE ZANE: Young, pretty cruise director, practically the only sane one on board.

JOGGER: An exercise nut.

BRENDA: A student dreaming of stardom.

JAN: Another.

PENNY: Another.

HONEY HOTCHKISS: A fabulous but dumb film star.

MISS BUFORD: Her secretary.

COMMODORE WITHERS: Retired Navy man.

MRS. WITHERS: His lady.

ANTONIO: An emotional engineer.

CODY: Seasick second-in-command.

TOM BUTTERWORTH: Young, likable captain.

VICTOR BEY: Hollywood producer - hates Honey.

MISS MARSHALL: From the insurance company.

NURSE: Has trouble giving injections.

1ST OLD LADY: A passenger.

2ND OLD LADY: Another.

MAX: Shady character.

TRIXIE: His accomplice.

PIRATE #1: On board without a ticket.

PIRATE #2: Another.

PIANO PLAYER: If desired.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

If necessary, some female roles can be switched to male. They are JOGGER, MISS BUFORD, NURSE, FIRST LITTLE OLD LADY, and MISS MARSHALL. Some male roles which can be changed to female are MAX and PIRATE.

For doubling, MISS MARSHALL of ACT I can become a PIRATE, LITTLE OLD LADY, or PASSENGER in ACT III.

EXTRAS: Use extras as passengers and pirates. Get big laughs by casting faculty members as MISS MARSHALL or CRANKMEYER.

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SYNOPSIS

SETTING/TIME: On the cruise ship *Vengeance*. The present.

ACT I: The main lounge. Morning.

ACT II: Scene 1, The following day.
Scene 2, That night.

ACT III: Later.

STAGE SETTING

The main lounge of the *Vengeance* has a bulletin board UC decorated with travel posters, a sign announcing "Welcome Aboard Party," and a passenger list. One canvas chair is SR and one SL of the bulletin board. DR is a table with three chairs. Another table is DL, with three chairs. On the forestage, in front of the stage curtain, extreme DSR and extreme DSL is a ship's railing - or a suggestion of a ship's railing. On the railings are lifesavers with the word *Vengeance* painted on. Optional nautical items are visible. Entrance into the lounge can be gained at either SR or SL. The set works nicely in drapes or a few scenery flats.

VARIATION A variation is to have this outside deck placed below the stage's edge on the auditorium floor and have characters promenade. These optional set variations help reinforce the "on board" feeling.

STAGING TIPS

Keep the action lively. Each cartoon incident piles onto another, building for farcical effect. Don't allow dialogue, blocking, or interaction to lag. Each scene must begin with interest and vitality and end with a bang, blackout, curtain.

Suggested curtain call: The cast members, some with horns and noisemakers, line up waving and tossing paper streamers into the audience as if they had come to see them off on a cruise. Add the sound effects of a ship's horn or ship's bells.

Another suggestion: Entire cast lines up across stage and rocks from side to side, hoping to free the *Vengeance* from the sandbar.

ACT I

(AT RISE: It is morning. The lounge is empty. Voices from off SL.)

BORIS' VOICE: This is a great opportunity, Mr. Crankmeyer.

CRANKMEYER'S VOICE: Ha!

DOUGLAS' VOICE: We won't disappoint you, Mr. Crankmeyer.

CRANKMEYER'S VOICE: I've heard that before!

MIKE'S VOICE: Honest.

CRANKMEYER'S VOICE: Time will tell.

(BORIS, DOUGLAS and MIKE, carrying sea bags, enter SL, cross CS. THEY are energetic and eager.)

BORIS: We're lucky to have you for a teacher, Mr. Crankmeyer.

DOUGLAS: Coming up with a fantastic idea like this.

MIKE: Working on a cruise ship for our final exam.

(CRANKMEYER enters behind them. He is gruff and tough and the BOYS are terrified of him. He takes out a whistle, blows it. Instantly the boys snap to attention and the sea bags drop to the deck. He walks back and forth in front of them, like an admiral inspecting his crew.)

CRANKMEYER: You may think working on a cruise ship for your final exam is a fantastic idea, but I kid you not. If anyone of you three fouls up, it will be the last ship you ever set foot on. I make that a promise. Understand??!

BOYS: *(Softly.)* Yes, sir.

CRANKMEYER: I didn't hear you.

BOYS: *(Loudly.)* Yes, sir!

CRANKMEYER: Yes, sir, what?

BOYS: *(Loudly.)* Yes, sir, Mr. Crankmeyer!

CRANKMEYER: Now hear this. I've taught at the Maritime High School for many years and I've never had to fail one student - until now. Until I found the Three Stooges in my class.

MIKE: The Three Stooges?

CRANKMEYER: *(Pointing to each one as HE says the name.)*
Boris...Douglas...Mike.

DOUGLAS: We have last names, Mr. Crankmeyer.

CRANKMEYER: Not to me you don't. Not until you prove yourselves seaworthy. You boys are messing up my perfect record. I won't forget that. You better believe it.

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BORIS: (*Swallowing hard.*) Gosh, Mr. Crankmeyer, we haven't failed yet.

CRANKMEYER: Don't interrupt!

MIKE: No, sir.

CRANKMEYER: I wasn't snarling at you. I was snarling at Boris.

MIKE: Sorry, sir.

CRANKMEYER: Sorry you will be if anything goes wrong. Your academic record is wretched. You're lazy, dumb, and irresponsible. This is your last chance. Prove yourselves good seamen or you get no diplomas. Is that understood?

BOYS: Understood, sir!

CRANKMEYER: I'll find the captain and tell him we're aboard and ready for duty. (*HE crosses SR. The BOYS are frozen in position. Before he leaves the lounge, he stops, turns.*) Now hear this! Stay put until I get back. Remember - I've got eyes in the back of my head. I see fore and aft. (*HE exits.*)

(*Nervously, the BOYS looks SR. Boris creeps SR to make certain CRANKMEYER is out of earshot.*)

BORIS: I can believe he's got eyes in the back of his head. That's what a monster would have.

DOUGLAS: Did you hear what he called us?

MIKE: The Three Stooges.

DOUGLAS: Lazy. Dumb.

MIKE: Don't forget irresponsible.

DOUGLAS: They ought to call him Captain Bligh. He thinks every ship is the *Bounty*. Meanest man in the Navy. That's what he is.

MIKE: He's not in the Navy.

BORIS: He's on the faculty.

DOUGLAS: Maritime High School isn't like any other high school.

BORIS: Of course not. It's on the water.

DOUGLAS: I mean it doesn't have lovable teachers. It has Crankmeyers.

MIKE: Who says teachers have to be lovable?

DOUGLAS: Maybe they don't have to be lovable, but do they have to be like Crankmeyer? If I flunk out, my parents will kill me.

MIKE: Not if Crankmeyer beats them to it.

BORIS: I might as well drown myself if I come home without that diploma. My father's an ex-Navy man.

MIKE: If I don't get my diploma I'm not going home.

BORIS: (*Looking about.*) Say, what's the name of this tub?

DOUGLAS: (*Shrugs.*) Who knows?

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(ARLENE ZANE, carrying a clipboard, enters SR.)

ARLENE: Looking for someone?

MIKE: No, we're waiting for someone.

ARLENE: A passenger?

DOUGLAS: Our teacher.

BORIS: Mr. Crankmeyer.

ARLENE: Crankmeyer? Crankmeyer? I'm sure there's no Crankmeyer on the passenger list. *(SHE crosses US to bulletin board, checks list.)* "Burns, Collins, Castor, Colt, Dennis, Evans ... " *(Turns to THEM.)* No Crankmeyer.

MIKE: He's going to work on this cruise ship.

DOUGLAS: My friend means we're going to work on this cruise ship.

BORIS: Mr. Crankmeyer is going to supervise.

ARLENE: First I've heard of it. *(Steps SL of DR table.)* I'm Miss Zane, Arlene Zane. I'm the cruise director. Do you boys have names?

BORIS: Boris.

MIKE: Mike.

DOUGLAS: Douglas.

ARLENE: No last names?

MIKE: Not until we prove seaworthy.

ARLENE: *(Doesn't understand.)* Seaworthy?

BORIS: We're students from Maritime High School.

ARLENE: That's the high school that uses a real ship for its campus.

DOUGLAS: Yes, ma'am. It's permanently docked down at Pier Eleven...across the street from the clam shop.

ARLENE: You say you're going to be working on this cruise?

MIKE: You might say it's our final exam.

DOUGLAS: It'll be final for us if we don't pass.

BORIS: *(Professional tone.)* Reporting in, Miss Zane.

MIKE: Ready for sea duty.

(Snappily, THEY come to attention and salute.)

ARLENE: I think it's a wonderful idea. *(Thinks.)* Hmm, I wonder why Capt. Butterworth didn't mention it? *(Shrugs.)* No matter. We'll be shoving off soon, so you'd better be assigned to quarters.

End of Freeview

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