

ZARTAN, THE GRAPE MAN

A Comedy-Farce
in 2 Acts

By James R. De Long

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STORY OF THE PLAY

In Jujuba, it really is a jungle out there! The veerry English Prof. Schmoo is on safari to find his former Oxford student, an ape named Dr. Teecha. Teecha the talking ape is now working as an anthropologist and studying a purple wild man of the jungle, Zartan, the Grape Man. The discovery of the yodeling Zartan could provide the missing link between man and ape!

But it's not easy finding a missing link in a jungle filled with the cannabalistic Cannon Ball natives, who like eating dinner while watching "Wild Kingdom" on big screen TV, or a bunch of loony pirates hunting for treasure. Led by Tetrina the Terrible, a mean lady for sure, the Pirates keep following the safari party. By dressing up poor Dead Eye Jack as a female ape, the Pirates hope to capture Dr. Teecha, and sell him for big bucks as the ape who can talk. And Zartan too, if they can manage it!

The safari party itself is pretty weird including Schmoo's daughter whose loud whining always brings Zartan falling off a vine to her rescue; Jungle Guide Clyde who keeps getting lost; the reporter who is always shot full of arrows, and others.

Crazy costuming, zany characterization, mistaken identities, wild chase scenes, and dialogue full of puns make this play the kind of monkey business you'll want to do!

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(Flexible cast of 20 or more)

ZARTAN, The Grape Man: humanity's missing link.

TEECHA: an Oxford educated ape; friend of Zartan.

Safari Party

PROF. SCHMOO: Teecha's teacher, also from Oxford.

DAUGHTER: Schmoo's daughter; just like her mother.

CAPT. CRANKCASE: a sorry safari leader.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE: a merciful mercenary.

REPORTER: a scribe of few words.

JUNGLE GUIDE

CLYDE: Schmoo's native guide.

Pirates

TETRINA, The Terrible (*a she*): captain of the pirates
looking for \$\$\$.

SLOUGH FOOT

SAL: another buccaneer.

DEAD EYE

JACK: pirate with a patch and a posh parrot.

DASTARDLY DIRTY DAVE: pirate piker.

BERTHA BONES: "skulled" with crossbones.

BARNACLE BETH: another crusty buccaneer.

BROCK! (*voice only*): Dead Eye's parrot

Jungle residents

MAN-EATING PLANT: not big on vegetables.

WITCH

DOCTOR: leader of the Cannon Balls

CANNON BALLS: 8 to 10 loud-mouthed natives who
barbeque their "beefs."

Casting Note: With the exception of Professor Schmoo, Tetrina, Zartan, Dirty Dave, and Daughter, the parts in the play are unisex and may be played by either males or females by simply changing pronoun references in the script and some character's names. There are speaking parts for six Cannon Balls, but more may be added as necessary.

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SETTING

ZARTAN can be produced using one set with multiple levels or areas of the stage. The Jungle of Jujuba in Act I, can be easily created by using cardboard bushes and palms trees on moveable stands. The bushes can be used to screen Zartan's tree house, UR, and the Cannon Ball village, UL, when they are not needed, as well as for working props for Natives and Pirates to hide behind.

Zartan's house, in purple and green is sparsely furnished with two wicker or bamboo chairs and tables. Old gramophone style record player and records are on a table. Headphones nearby. Oxford pennant on wall. Monkey tail door bell. Barrel for stomping grapes.

To add to the effect of the Cannon Ball village of huts, various bones and skulls on raised spikes may be created out of papier-mache. Skulls can be wired with flashlight bulbs and batteries so that the eyes "glow." The large cooking kettle can be made of cardboard and painted with a ring of skulls. Back of TV may be a real set or a small flat. To simulate TV lighting, a small fluorescent flashlight can be added in front of the Natives so it appears the TV screen is shining on their faces.

If it is not possible to have a working rope for Zartan to swing on, a dummy rope may be tied to the light bars for Zartan to chase on stage.

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Deep in the darkest Jungle of Jujuba. Zartan's treehouse UR, and several native huts surrounded by skulls on raised pikes, UL, can be seen behind moveable bushes. Sound of various jungle bird calls and animals can be heard. DL is the MAN-EATING PLANT, frozen. Suddenly from behind one of the bushes we see the WITCH DOCTOR'S bear face, followed by a "forest" of spears that appear behind the other bushes. These belong to the CANNON BALLS. The Witch Doctor looks off SR and yells a command in gibberish. Cannon Balls hide. Enter PIRATES SR: TETRINA, THE TERRIBLE, a ferocious female pirate captain, followed by SLOUGH FOOT SAL, DEAD-EYE JACK who has Brock, the parrot, on his shoulder, DIRTY DAVE, BARNACLE BETH, and BERTHA BONES. ALL are a motley looking crew, armed and comically dangerous. Cannon Balls watch them from behind bushes for a few moments, then exit, unobserved by PIRATES.)

TETRINA: *(Stealthily.)* So where are they? We've been searchin' this miserable jungle all mornin' and there's still no sign of 'em. Me thought ye said that ye seen 'em over yonder from the crow's nest!

DEAD-EYE: But I swear that they came this way, Tetrina!

PARROT VOICE: *(NOTE: Dead Eye should move shoulder as if voice were coming from the stuffed parrot on his shoulder.)* "But I swear they came this way, Tetrina. Brock!"

TETRINA: Aye, and you swore that they had a treasure map, too! But if ye be wrong, it'll be the plank for ya'.

PARROT: "It'll be the plank for ya'. Brock!"

TETRINA: *(To PARROT.)* And you too, Brock, you saucy bird!

DEAD EYE: But Cap'n, why else would a British yacht with a bunch a' land lubbers be cruisin' the Gold Coast? I say they be lookin' for gold doublets -

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TETRINA: That's doubloons ya' scurvy sea scum! An' ye best not be blubberin' through yer blowhole, ye one-eyed wombat!

BONES: But, Cap'n, we've searched for hours and found nothing!

TETRINA: *(Roaring.)* Well search again! They can't be far! I told ya to stay on their trail as soon as they left the ship. I told Dead Eye to keep both his eyes on 'em an' not let 'em outa' his sight.

DAVE: But Cap'n, he only has one eye! He lost the other one the last time you told him to keep an eye out for trouble.

TETRINA: Eh? Shiver me timbers, so he did! Well, search on, you slimy swabbies. There'll be no supper for the like o' all of you until we find a treasure! *(Threatening DEAD EYE.)* An' fer yer sake, mate, we'd better find it soon, 'cuz I'm beginnin' to think that yer not playin' with a full deck!

SAL: *(Taking TETRINA aside and pointing to DEAD EYE'S head.)* Ever since he fell outa' the crow's nest the other day, he's been actin' strangely, Cap'n! Me thinks maybe some of his "cookie" is missing!

TETRINA: *(Aside.)* His cookie's crumblin', eh? Ya' don't say! *(SAL agrees.)* Wal, mebbe walkin' the plank's too good fer him. Meebe we should macaroon him on an island!

SAL: Hey, that's a good one, Cap'n! Cookie ... Macaroon! Macaroon his cookie on an island? Har! Har! Get it, mateys?

(PIRATES laugh hysterically until TETRINA cuts them off.)

TETRINA: *(Not understanding HER misnomer, threatening.)* Silence! One more peep outa' any of you sea snakes an' I'll macaroon the whole buncha' ya! Now then, spread out an' keep a sharp watch. Sal, you look over there; Dead Eye, go climb that tree and post a lookout. Barnacle, you an' Dirty Dave an' Bertha Bones follow me!

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(PIRATES fan out on stage and begin search. One PIRATE wanders too close to the domain of the MAN-EATING PLANT who makes a few unsuccessful grabs at Pirate with his "leaves.")

BARNACLE: *(After a search.)* Hark, mateys! Over yonder they come!

TETRINA: Quick! Hide you fools! Let's see if they reveal the map.

(PIRATES hide in undergrowth and watch the next scene. Only their heads are visible above the bushes. Their necks swivel back and forth in unison as they eavesdrop on the safari group, disappearing behind bushes and reappearing in unison at strategic points in the following conversation. Enter SL: a safari party consisting of DR. SCHMOO, his DAUGHTER, CAPT. CRANKCASE, SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, a REPORTER, and CLYDE THE JUNGLE GUIDE, dragging luggage.)

CRANKCASE: Steady lads! It can't be too much farther now! Give us an update according to your map, Jungle Guide.

CLYDE: *(Broken English, examines map which has a large hole in it.)* Hmm! Me not know! Map very unclear.

SCHMOO: *(Tottering old man, carrying Oxford pennant.)* I say, Captain Crankcase, must we set such a deadly pace? This heat is oppressive for such a senile old man.

DAUGHTER: *(Snobbish, fixing hair.)* And these bugs are ravishing my ... ouch! ... ravishing beauty! *(Swats.)* Ouch! Don't you have any bug spray, Captain?

CRANKCASE: Bug spray you say? In the jungle? Nonsense! I have something better! A swat team.

DAUGHTER: A SWAT. team? In the jungle?

CRANKCASE: But of course, my dear girl. This man has been trained to trash ten mosquitoes a minute. Soldier, attention! *(SOLDIER salutes awkwardly.)* About face! Commence swatting!

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