



Three Boys in A Boat by Bungo Futtock

Concealed in the following story are the names of people associated with the school in 1979. In cryptic crossword fashion, the letters of each name appear in the right order but may be separated by spaces and punctuation – or may be buried inside a word.

For example, *Parton* is concealed in the following sentence: “For his **part, only** a Denton housemaster would be capable of that!”

A list of the names included will be found on Page 7

It was Saturday afternoon. John had decided that instead of going to watch the Staff XI defeat the 1st XI at cricket, he would go boating with Eric and Ezra, the Davit twins, so he called for them at 2 o'clock at Denton House.

"Is anyone else coming, Eric?" he asked. "Keith or Peter, for example?"

"No," replied Eric, "they're going to see the staff side win. Tons of people are going tho' I can't think why: they always win!"

"Dave? You're coming, surely?" asked John of a portly, bespectacled youth who was hiding behind an armchair.

"Certainly am not, you half-wit! Tsarist Russia is being featured on BBC2 this afternoon: I'm not missing that for anything!" snapped the owlsh figure (Dave Bireme was the school history fanatic).

"We don't want him," said Eric. "Anyway, he's swotting as somebody's got to get the history prize," he added with feeling. "Let's go before it's too late."

They set off, chattering as they went. John took his "Thermos" so that they could have a hot drink; Ezra took a bottle of lemonade purchased from the local Co-op; Eric took nothing.

"Where are your parents sending you for your holidays this year?" John enquired of Eric, the saner of the Davit brothers.

"To one of those horrible things in the States – a summer camp!"

"Bellstaff went to one of those last summer," observed John. "He hated every minute of it. I'm going to Madeira. Earnshaw Minor went there for Christmas. He said it was really luxurious, or, as he put it, "Super Civ"! All the bedrooms have showers in the hotels there – not like Denton!"

"Yes," agreed Eric, "the lack of showers in the dorms is one of quite a few ills on which the boarding house founders, tho' masses of grubby urchins would doubtless disagree!"

"Hey! Look at that kestrel!" exclaimed Ezra suddenly as they approached the lane which led to the river.

“Pshaw! Kestrels don’t look like that!” Eric sneered. “Have you ever seen a black and white kestrel?”

John laughed. “What a bish! Open your eyes, you clot! Can’t you tell a magpie from a kestrel? Honestly, the things you say!”

“Well, it was half hidden by that fern. And,” Ezra continued, “neither of you saw it until I pointed it out, so there!”

“You are an idiot, Ezra Davit!” Eric mocked. “Bet you can’t run to the gate!”

They ran full tilt to the gate at the bottom of the track, beyond which was the wooden jetty where the school boats were moored. The gate was an iron one, little used since the demise of the school rowing club. Consequently it was rather rusty and usually took some opening.

“Cor! Who made this?” gasped Eric as he wrestled with the latch.

“It tells you on the gatepost,” Ezra pointed out loftily, still smarting from his mistake about the magpie, a mistake which now he hoped to make good. “*Leys of Derby* it says here. You obviously can’t see very far. *Leys of Derby*,” he repeated as Eric seemed not to hear.

Eric glared at him. “Stop chuntering,” he said. “You’re a right plum ass!”

“I . . . Ah!” yelled Ezra as the gate suddenly jerked free. “Don’t you call *me* an ass! Look what you’ve done to my foot, you half-bake! Right on my big toe!”

“Well, you were in the way,” grunted Eric. “It wasn’t my fault: you’ll just have to hop! Kinsey hopped all the way home from Ten Acre last week!”

“Only because he was practising for the triple-jump!” Ezra retorted.

“I wish you two would stop arguing and get on with it,” complained John. “You’re wasting valuable time. Come on! We’ll use that one.” He pointed to an ancient wooden tub lying on the jetty. “Eric! Lift on the oars and help me push it into the water.”

Eric left the scowling Ezra, put the oars on as he had been directed, and helped John to get the boat into the river, the bow entering first.

“Get in,” said John to Ezra. “You can do all the hard work now, so get rowing!”

Ezra stepped gingerly into the craft and prepared to row.

Both amply satisfied with this arrangement, John and Eric sat back to enjoy the scenery as it moved gently by. So engrossed were they in looking at the field on either side that they failed to notice that Ezra was heading straight for the old mill until it was too late. As for Ezra, he was oblivious to everything, imagining himself sculling for Denton in the next House Regatta. “Look out, you fool!” shouted John but his warning was not soon enough. The rowing boat careered into the bank near the swiftly flowing race at the side of the mill. Warding off the overhanging bushes only made matters worse for the boat rocked alarmingly and the next instant, the bow taking the brunt of the impact, it struck the earthen rampart, pitching all three boys into the water.

Ezra, a confirmed non-swimmer, sank fast on entering the turbulent stream; John floundered for the bank; and Eric, although a stronger natator, found himself sucked downwards by the relentless undertow. All seemed lost.

At that moment, however, a figure appeared on the bank above the struggling lads. Cuthbert Bartholomew Cholomondley, the water-bailiff (known as “CB” to his friends) had seen their plight and come to rescue them.

“CB”, rid easily of his boots and jacket, plunged unhesitatingly into the torrent and surfaced almost immediately, gripping the luckless Ezra by the scruff of the neck. He thrust him up onto the bank, then returned to collect Eric. John had reached the side under his own steam and was trying to catch the painter before the boat vanished.

Ezra sat where “CB” had dumped him somewhat unceremoniously and miserably contemplated what had happened. If he had had his way he wouldn’t have been there anyway, for two

good reasons: first, even splashing in puddles held untold terrors for him and second, more to the point, boating made him sick (irksome, to say the least). Only his fear of Eric's jibes at his expense had forced his alteration of mind.

He became aware that John was trying to say something.

"I . . . I . . . c . . . can't hold this any m . . . more. T . . . Tie it t . . . to . . . that t . . . tree s . . . stump," he managed to say through chattering teeth, handing Ezra the sodden piece of hemp.

Ezra did so as "CB" emerged from the flood a second time with Eric.

"Is he alright?" asked Ezra anxiously.

"Of course he is," "CB" replied. "A little water never hurt anyone. Now: whose idea was this?"

Two accusing fingers pointed. "John's!"

"Only the three of you in the boat, I hope! Well, you're lucky the water is no higher than it is now. Ebb tide's due soon. You really would have been in deep water if it had happened half an hour later!" "CB" chuckled at his own joke and Ezra managed a faint smile. Eric sat up and coughed some water out his lungs.

"Well, I'd better get you back to school," "CB" continued. "The van's up there. I'll see to the boat while you get yourselves dry. You'll find some old material in the back to dry on: use the brown serge!"

Anticipating their being unable to open the back doors of his ancient Morris 1000 van, "CB" squelched up the bank, collected his jacket and boots, and shepherded them to the vehicle.

"I'm afraid you'll have to put up with the smell or sit on top," he grinned as an overpowering stench of rotting fish assailed their nostrils. Its effect, however, was that of *sal volatile*! Ezra recovered his spirits sufficiently to be able to appreciate the sun striking through the spray below the weir.

"Look," he said to Eric. "It's just like a prism. It has all the colours of the rainbow."

"I'd rather look at a hot bath," Eric muttered. "And I've lost my "Thermos"!"

“Why do they have locks on canals?” asked Ezra suddenly and seemingly irrelevantly.

“Because water doesn’t flow uphill! *Ipsa facto*, you idiot!” retorted Eric. “Why don’t you shut up and . . .”

“CB” opened the driver’s side door and got in.

“The boat’s safe,” he said cheerfully as he started the engine. “You would have had to pay, needless to say, if you had lost it. Feeling better, laddy? So, now we get you home to face the music. I’d say I performed quite a feat, hero that I am, getting you lot out of that mess. ‘Thank you, “CB”: all hail the deliverer!’” he added before *they* could say anything.

“Thank you very much, sir,” said John fervently. “We really are grateful for what you did, especially for saving the boat like that. It is definitely to you that we owe it!”

“*Zeloso* as old Crotchet would say, eh? ‘With fervour’.” “CB” chuckled again as he put the van into gear and it began to move forward. “Think nothing of it, boys; think nothing of it. It’s all in a day’s work to me – all in a day’s work.”

Back at school they were greeted by another of their chums, a fellow boarder called Griff.

“It h . . . Soak me!” he exclaimed. “I was going to say it has been a lovely day for cricket but you three are wet through! What *have* you been doing? You look like a wet womble, you do,” he said to Ezra. “I thought you *hated* water but you seem to have been swimming with your clothes on! Isn’t that a bit extreme, even for you?”

Ezra gave him the hardest stare he could muster under the circumstances and then the sodden trio made for the showers, the comfort of hot water . . . and dry clothes. Never was there a better example of their being . . . all in the same boat!

The following names can be found in the story

Baker Ball Bishop Bowen Brunt Campbell Clifton Cooper
Cullingford Davey De Winton Downward Dyson Evans Farley
Feather Fernandez Field Gass Gear Goodley Griffiths Hawkes
Hopkins Johnson Kirk Lane McBride Massiah Mellors Millward
Moore Moretti Moss Payne Percival Phillips Rae Rees
Rowbotham Salter Sergeant Shepherd Smith Stevens Stone Swift
Thomas Thorpe Twombly Ward Webb Weitzel Willson Witts
Wood (1)Wood (2)

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