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**Product Code A0848-SP**

# **The Third Horseman**

A 10-Minute Comedy  
by  
**Ross Peter Nelson**

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# The Third Horseman

by Ross Peter Nelson

## **CHARACTERS**

1W / 2M

HORSEMAN: *Male, indeterminate age. Gaunt. Dressed in black. Famine: the third Horseman of the Apocalypse.*

INNKEEPER: *Male, mid 40s.*

DAUGHTER: *Female, about 19.*

## **SETTING**

A tavern.

## **TIME**

The middle ages, sort of.

## The Third Horseman

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*(A medieval tavern or inn. INNKEEPER is tidying up.  
DAUGHTER rushes in.)*

DAUGHTER

Father, a guest approaches.

INNKEEPER

Run stoke the kitchen fires.

DAUGHTER

He looks important.

*(She exits. Offstage we hear the sound of hoofbeats as the  
HORSEMAN enters the courtyard. He dismounts.)*

HORSEMAN (offstage)

Groom! Tend to my horse. He's thrown a shoe.

*(HORSEMAN enters.)*

INNKEEPER

Good morrow, sirrah.

HORSEMAN

I will tarry here while my horse is tended.

INNKEEPER

Of course. ...

HORSEMAN

What are you staring at?

INNKEEPER

Your costume, m'lord.

HORSEMAN

You wonder why I'm always dressed in black?

INNKEEPER

Does that mean what I think it means? ... *Ring of Fire?*

HORSEMAN

The time is near.

INNKEEPER  
*Ghost Riders in the Sky?*

HORSEMAN  
They will be seen.

INNKEEPER  
*A Boy Named Sue?*

HORSEMAN  
What?

INNKEEPER  
I'm so honored to have you here. I'm one of your biggest fans.

HORSEMAN  
What are you talking about?

INNKEEPER  
*I Walk the Line*, magnificent. And *Folsom Prison Blues* sends a shiver down my spine just thinking about it. (*Sings the Folsom Prison opening lick.*) Dum-dum-dum dum dum dum down dum.

HORSEMAN  
I'm not Johnny Cash, you idiot.

INNKEEPER  
You're not?

HORSEMAN  
I am the Third Horseman.

INNKEEPER  
The third ... Of course, of course. I saw you play Clisson in '98.

HORSEMAN  
What?

INNKEEPER  
At HellFest. Didn't you open for Cannibal Corpse?

HORSEMAN  
We are not mere musicians ... we ride in and lay waste to the countryside.

INNKEEPER  
That's pretty much what happened, all right. Good times, good times.

HORSEMAN  
Bring me a flagon of ale. I need some refreshments before I join my brethren.

INNKEEPER

Right away! Loved your cover of *Don't Fear the Reaper*.

HORSEMAN

I don't sing!

INNKEEPER

You're the drummer, right?

HORSEMAN

Get me my ale!

INNKEEPER

Yes, sir.

*(He exits. HORSEMAN sits at a table. DAUGHTER enters with ale.)*

DAUGHTER

Here you go Mr. ... ?

HORSEMAN

Black. Thank you.

DAUGHTER

My father says --

HORSEMAN

Your father is an idiot.

DAUGHTER

He is not! Sometimes he does get confused. ... *(whispers)* He did a lot of drugs in the 90s.

HORSEMAN

Didn't we all.

DAUGHTER

So what are you then?

*(INNKEEPER enters.)*

HORSEMAN

I am the front man of the Apocalypse.

INNKEEPER

The Apocalypse? Great band, great sound.

HORSEMAN

Listen --

INNKEEPER

You changed your hair, though, didn't you?

HORSEMAN

How many times --

INNKEEPER

The ale is on the house, by the way. Just a token of our appreciation for all those great tunes.

HORSEMAN

I. Hate. Music.

INNKEEPER

I know? The industry really sucks these days. Nothing like it used to be.

HORSEMAN

And you. You are --

DAUGHTER

Father, I don't think he wants to talk about it.

HORSEMAN

On account of your idiocy, I will call my brothers to begin our depredations here. The conflagration that is the end of days begins at your tavern.

INNKEEPER

Oh, that's a lovely offer, but we've only got a few rooms. We couldn't handle the crowds.

HORSEMAN

Human!

DAUGHTER

Look, you must be hungry after your ride. Let us get you something to eat.

INNKEEPER

Of course, pardon me for not offering, I just got a little star-struck.

DAUGHTER

What you you like? Some bread and cheese to start out?

INNKEEPER

I don't mean to brag, but we're famous for our mutton. People comes from miles around.

HORSEMAN

*(Stands.)*

Are you mocking me?

INNKEEPER

You're not a vegetarian are you?

DAUGHTER

If you are, we do a nice lentil curry.

HORSEMAN

I am Famine!

INNKEEPER

Of course you are, you've been riding all morning.

HORSEMAN

I said Famine, not famished.

INNKEEPER

He's like Madonna and Sting. Only needs one name.

HORSEMAN

Famine is not merely my name. I am the living embodiment of hunger. Starvation. Want. Emptiness. Desolation.

INNKEEPER

I understand. Just tell us what you want to eat and we'll fix it right away.

*(Suddenly desolate, collapses into his chair.)*

HORSEMAN

It's hopeless.

DAUGHTER

What's wrong?

INNKEEPER

Let me get that bread and cheese.

*(INNKEEPER exits)*

HORSEMAN

There can be no food for me.

DAUGHTER

Of course there can. Our pantry is full.

HORSEMAN

You don't understand. I am a herald of the apocalypse. Wherever I go, famine follows.

*(INNKEEPER returns with two baguettes covered with mold and some cheese wrapped in cloth. He sets the cheese down and puts the bread in front of HORSEMAN.)*

INNKEEPER

Here, let me cut you a slice. ... Oh, this one's no good.

*(He sets one baguette aside.)*

Wait, there's some mold on this one, too, let me cut it away.

*(He cuts a chunk of bread off and sets it aside.)*

Oops. There's a little more.

*(He cuts another slice off.)*

Wait. Let me get this bit.

*(He cuts away a slice and throws it away, then another, and again until no bread remains.)*

I'm so sorry, it was fine this morning.

HORSEMAN

There's no point.

INNKEEPER

Daughter, serve him up some *fromage de campagne*.

DAUGHTER

Yes, father.

*(She unwraps the cheese, screams, and drops it.)*

INNKEEPER

What's wrong?

DAUGHTER

It's crawling with maggots.

INNKEEPER

I'm sorry, your grace. Nothing like this has happened before. Please, just a moment.

*(He runs out to the kitchen.)*

HORSEMAN

It's useless.

DAUGHTER

Has this happened before?

HORSEMAN

Everywhere.

DAUGHTER

When did you last eat?

HORSEMAN

It's been millennia. When I ride across the land, wheat fields shrivel behind me in unseasonable heat. Populations burgeon, littering the countryside with too many mouths to feed. Evil barons shuttle crops into secret storehouses and hoard corn while their vassals starve.

*(INNKEEPER returns with two eggs in one hand, and a bowl in the other. [N.B. The eggs look whole, but have had ink or dye injected.] )*

DAUGHTER

Oh, you poor man.

INNKEEPER

I went straight to the henhouse for fresh eggs.

HORSEMAN

No, please don't.

INNKEEPER

Nonsense. I'm sure you could use some protein.

*(He cracks the eggs and opens them into the bowl with a great flourish. Black goo runs out of the shells. All three turn away and retch. DAUGHTER takes the bowl and runs it off stage with her nose held. INNKEEPER falls to his knees.)*

INNKEEPER

Forgive me.

*(DAUGHTER returns.)*

DAUGHTER

There's nothing left.

INNKEEPER

I have never failed to show hospitality to a guest before.

DAUGHTER

Father, it's not your fault.

INNKEEPER

I am unworthy of being called an innkeeper.

HORSEMAN

Peace, my friend. She is right. Starvation is my doom. You have shown good intent. I will not blame you.

DAUGHTER

Is there anything we can do to ease your burden?

INNKEEPER

This is awful.

HORSEMAN

I am not of your kind, so it does not weigh quite as heavily on me.

DAUGHTER

But to never be able to eat.

INNKEEPER

Never. Not even mutton?

HORSEMAN

It has its compensations.

INNKEEPER

What could that possibly be?

HORSEMAN

The attentions of many women.

INNKEEPER

You're taking about groupies, aren't you.

HORSEMAN

You've heard of the Dior? Of Prada and Versace?

INNKEEPER

You know, I stopped listening after Pantera broke up.

DAUGHTER

The fashion designers?

HORSEMAN

Yes. They keep me on retainer.

INNKEEPER

You design clothes?

HORSEMAN

No.

INNKEEPER

I mean, that's a decent cloak, but it's nothing I'd call *haute couture*.

DAUGHTER

The models.

HORSEMAN

Yes.

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
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