



The Purple Rose Theatre Company

ESCANABA

"Everyone has a home somewhere ..."

by Jeff Daniels



The Purple Rose Theatre Company

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The Purple Rose Theatre Company
137 Park Street
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ESCANABA

by
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Originally produced by The Purple Rose Theatre Company (2009)

Jeff Daniels, Executive Director; Guy Sanville, Artistic Director;

Alan Ribant, Managing Director

The production was directed by Guy Sanville.

Escanaba premiered at The Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, Michigan, on September 25, 2009. The play was directed by Guy Sanville; the set design was by Dennis G. Crawley; the properties design was by Danna Segrest; the costume design was by Sally L. Converse-Doucette; the lighting design was by Dana White; the sound design was by Quintessa Gallinat; and the stage manager was Stephanie Buck. The cast was as follows:

BLACK JACK..... Julian Gant
ALPHONSE SOADYTom Whalen
JAMES NEGAMANEE Wayne David Parker

CHARACTERS

ALPHONSE SOADY	early sixties
JAMES NEGAMANEE	fifties
BLACK JACK	twenties, African-American

PLACE

Deep in the woods outside Escanaba, Michigan

TIME

November 14, 1922

NOTES

The Keyhole In The Door. Traditional Camp Song. 1800s.
My Place. Poem by Dick Sanville. 1995.

ESCANABA

The lights fade up on the interior of a newly built, unadorned cabin. A single, makeshift cot with an old mattress and blanket. Wood stove. Old table with one chair. A saw, hammer and nails, hinges, plane, chisel, and various other woodworking tools, including a homemade three-foot ruler. A small pile of wood with a wooden axe leaning against it. Mason jars with a yellow liquid. Sitting on one tin plate and covered over by another, is a pasty. And an old rocking chair. A gun rests against the Rocker. The door has yet to be hung in its frame.

Standing in the center of the room is BLACK JACK. A Civil War slave, he wears a bloodstained Confederate jacket with a bullet hole through the chest, ragged slave pants with a rope for a belt, sockless, and a pair of old, leather Confederate-issued boots. With great intensity, he looks about the camp, taking in every detail. He turns to the Rocker. Flicking the chair with his finger, he gently rocks it back and forth. A noise is heard outside.

Through the door opening comes ALPHONSE SOADY, carrying a bucket of sap. A fit man in his early sixties, he sets the bucket down. BLACK JACK turns and looks at him. ALPHONSE goes to pick up his hammer. ALPHONSE stops. Listens. Goes back to his hammer. Picks up a hand full of nails. BLACK JACK goes to ALPHONSE. Looks at him closely. ALPHONSE stops again. Without seeing him, he

looks right at BLACK JACK. Instantly, BLACK JACK turns and runs out the door opening.

ALPHONSE listens. Heard and felt something. Unnerved, he goes about hanging the heavy wooden door into its opening. Indentations have been chiseled into the door frame for the hinges. The hinges have already been nailed to the door. One by one, ALPHONSE places the nails in his mouth with the pointed ends sticking out. Wedging the hammer into his armpit, he picks up the heavy door. With effort, ALPHONSE muscles the door into place. Leaning against the door, ALPHONSE attempts to set the hinges in their proper alignment and nail the hinges to the frame. Like a master juggler, ALPHONSE gets the door and hinges into position. Leaning into the door to keep it in place, he removes the hammer from his armpit. As he pulls a nail from his mouth, he fumbles it, and the nail falls to the floor. As he turns to see the nail hit the floor, the heavy door falls out of its alignment. ALPHONSE sets the hammer down on the table. Takes the nails out of his mouth. Holding the nails in one hand, from his pocket, out comes his flask. ALPHONSE drinks. He returns his flask to his pocket. He picks the nail up off the floor, places it with the others, and, one by one, goes about putting the nails back in his mouth with the pointed ends out. He hoists the heavy door back into the opening, careful to make sure it is properly realigned. Without having to look, he realizes his hammer is on the table. He turns and looks at the hammer. If he reaches to get the hammer, the door will fall out of alignment. With a flexibility found in a dancer, ALPHONSE attempts to hold the door in position with his left foot and hand while reaching to the floor to pick up the hammer with his right. Stretching himself as far as he can, the hammer is an inch too far. From somewhere in

his body, he finds an extra inch of reach. His fingers touch the hammer. As he tries to flick the hammer towards himself, the door falls out of the opening. ALPHONSE removes the nails from his mouth. Holds them in one hand. With the other, he removes the flask from his pocket and drinks. He returns his flask to his pocket. Starting again, ALPHONSE puts the nails back in his mouth, the hammer under his arm, and lifts the heavy door into position. Now ready to nail, ALPHONSE realizes that while leaning against the door to keep it in position, he will not have a normal hammering motion. To hammer the upper hinge into the frame, he will not only have to use his left hand - his weaker hand - but will have to do so while using his body to keep the door in place. This will require ALPHONSE to hammer the nail up and over his right shoulder with his left hand swinging the hammer and his right hand holding the nail. ALPHONSE takes out a nail. Places it in the hole in the upper hinge. Removes the hammer from his armpit with his left hand. Spreads his legs to help his body keep the door in place. He swings the hammer and misses the nail. Not even close. ALPHONSE repositions the hammer. Cocks it. After a couple slow-motion practice swings, he swings the hammer. And misses again. While still leaning against the door, ALPHONSE places the hammer under his armpit. Takes the nail out of the hinge hole. He takes the other nails out of his mouth with one hand and, with the other, removes his flask. Drinks. Returning his flask to his pocket, he sticks all the nails into his mouth. Removes one. Fingers it into the hole of the hinge. Removes the hammer from his armpit. To get a better angle for his weak hand to hammer the nail, ALPHONSE will have to swing the hammer without looking. Blind. Flattening his back against the door, he faces straight out. With great focus and concentration, positions the

nail with his right hand and takes two slow motion, blind practice swings of the hammer. Ready to make the attempt. ALPHONSE swings the hammer and hits his finger. The pain is excruciating. His face is stone. Riding over the pain and more determined than ever, ALPHONSE resets the nail. Joggles the weight of the hammer in his hand. Fearing for his finger, ALPHONSE blindly swings the hammer at the nail ... and hits the same finger. A tsunami of pain folds across his face. Dropping the hammer, the nail, the hinge and the door, ALPHONSE bounces around the room clutching his twice-hammered appendage. Writhing in pain, ALPHONSE turns on the Rocker. Wild-eyed, ALPHONSE turns and goes back to work on the door. During the following, he collects his hammer and nails.

ALPHONSE *(indirectly to the Rocker)* I can do t'ings.

ALPHONSE works for a bit. Then, ALPHONSE turns on the Rocker. As ALPHONSE turns, a LARGE BEING runs past the door opening and past the window. ALPHONSE grabs the door and throws it into the opening. In a panic, ALPHONSE sees his gun. Out of reach. Torn between letting the door fall and getting his gun.

A knock on the door. ALPHONSE freezes. And then, another knock.

VOICE *(o.s., on the other side of the door)* Hallo?...
Hallo?

ALPHONSE looks at his gun.

VOICE *(o.s.)* I don't mean to be a bot'er, but would you mind openin' da door? I gotta black bear on my tail an' I'd like to live to see tomorra!

ALPHONSE I gotta gun!

VOICE *(o.s.)* So do I.

ALPHONSE Ya'll drop it if ya know what's good fer ya!

VOICE *(o.s.)* Well, if'n ya don't min', I be holdin' mine

fer my own protection. An' yers, too. Again, referrin' back to da blackie.

ALPHONSE I'm comin' out shootin'!

VOICE (o.s.) I'll save ya da trouble.

Suddenly, we hear the blast of a shotgun. ALPHONSE dives for cover. The hinge, nail, and door fall to the floor. In the door opening stands JAMES NEGAMANEE. Short in stature and in his early fifties, JAMES is filthy, bloody, and his clothing is torn. His eyes are wild. In his hands is a smoking shotgun, the barrel pointed up, leaning against his shoulder. He wears a dusty, battered, sweat-stained, homemade hat.

JAMES (re: coming in) May I?

ALPHONSE quivers behind the Rocker. His hammer raised. JAMES picks up ALPHONSE's rifle.

ALPHONSE Take whatever ya want.

JAMES Anyt'in'? All righty den. Would ya be so kind as to pleasure me wit' a drink o' whiskey?

As ALPHONSE reaches for his pocket flask, JAMES tosses the rifle in ALPHONSE's direction. One hand in his pocket for the flask, ALPHONSE catches the rifle. Barely. JAMES sets his gun down, goes to the heavy door.

JAMES Help me wit' dis. (off ALPHONSE's hesitation)
Come along now! 'Fore dat blackie comes a-callin'!

ALPHONSE sets down his gun. Goes to the fallen door. ALPHONSE and JAMES set the door in the opening.

JAMES James Negamanee from Menominee.

ALPHONSE Alphonse Soady. From Escanaba.

JAMES Don't rhyme.

ALPHONSE What?

JAMES Yer moniker. It don't rhyme. If'n yer gonna have a moniker, it's best to have one wit' a little

musicality. Negamanee from Menominee. Gotta nice lilt to it. Soady from Escanaba? Lays dere like a fresh pile o' moose shit.

ALPHONSE Dat be my name an' dat's where I'm from.

JAMES Do yerself a favor an' change one of 'em. Where's my whiskey?

As ALPHONSE and JAMES lean against the door, ALPHONSE hands JAMES the flask out of his pocket. Taking the flask, JAMES walks away from the door, leaving ALPHONSE leaning against it by himself.

JAMES New camp, eh? I seen worse. I seen better, but I seen worse. *(takes a pull off the flask)*

ALPHONSE Yah.

JAMES *(re: bad whiskey)* Ya buy dis in Escanaba, Alphonse Sowdy?

ALPHONSE Soady.

JAMES Tastes like sometin' made by somebody who don't know what dey're doin'. Ain't ever tasted a drop of anytin' wort' anytin' dat come offa some store shelf er outa some tavern. Steal ya blind, dey will. Couldn't help but notice ya got yerself a nice stand o' maples off yer creek bed dere. Pails damn near fulla sap. Ya in da Syrup Business?

ALPHONSE Da family likes dey're syrup.

JAMES I like syrup, too, but it won't get me drunk. Add yerself little sweet feed, some barley an' yeast, let it set for a week, ya'll have a Sweet Sap Whiskey ya can be proud of. Where's da kitch'n?

ALPHONSE Da what?

JAMES Da kitch'n. Open yer ears. Dey're on da sides o' yer head fer a reason.

ALPHONSE Dey're ain't no kitch'n.

JAMES Yer nuttin' but a gallee on 'er maiden voyage, ain't ya? I'm not 'ere but a minute an' already I can tell dere are several 'provements dat will simply have to be made. I can write ya a list, if'n ya like. Been in damn near

every camp nort', west, an' east. Don't bot'er yerself 'bout anytin' to da sout'. Anytin' Down Below's been built by idjyits.

ALPHONSE I ain't finished yet.

JAMES Hell, ya barely gotta start. Firs' off, yer layout is all but impracticle.

ALPHONSE Nuttin' wrong wit' my layout.

JAMES Sure, if'n yer a baby in a crib. If'n yer a man makin' hissself a proper place to be, it won't do at all.

ALPHONSE Lissen, fella.

JAMES Da name is James Negamanee from Menominee! I'd be much appreciative if'n ya called me proper!

ALPHONSE I don't know you from a hole in da groun'.

JAMES Oh, I'm a lot more interestin' den a hole in da groun', I can tell ya dat!

ALPHONSE I didn't mean no offense.

JAMES Offense taken! Hole in da groun'...

ALPHONSE I'm respectful of ya havin' to run from a blackie—

JAMES Fer my life! Runnin' fer my life, I was! Ya ever run from sometin' like dat? Yer feet'll find steps so fast, ya'll t'ink yer flyin'!

ALPHONSE I jus' wanna be left alone.

JAMES Now, am I to un'derstan' I am yer firs' ever, livin', breat'in' guest in Suey Deer Camp?

ALPHONSE Soady!

JAMES Come one, come all! To da friendliest camp in da whole U.P.! Where da door's as wide open as a Fin wit'out 'is fly button'd! Dat's why ya need a proper kitch'n. Fer entertainin'.

ALPHONSE I don't plan on doin' no entertainin'.

JAMES Ever been inside a loggin' camp? Cookin' areas twice da size o' dis whole camp. Dey cook separate, off in a back room. Can't cook in front o' everybody. Firs' off, it ain't healthy. Second off, it adds a element o' surprise. Doors fly open, out comes da cook wit' plates o' steamin' hot grub, piled high as da sky!

Make ya t'ink ya'd died an' gone to a smorgasboard!
Yer weren't plannin' on feedin' yerself wit'out a proper
kitch'n, was ya?

ALPHONSE Course, I'm gonna feed m'self.

JAMES Where?

ALPHONSE On da stove.

JAMES Can't cook a proper meal on a stove like dat.
Less'n ya eat like a bird.

ALPHONSE I ain't no bird.

JAMES Don't get fresh wit' me. I'll snap ya like a
twig. *(off ALPHONSE's look)* Oh, looky dere! He's tinkin'
he might gimme a go. Nuttin' would please me more. I
mus' warn ya, my friend. Do not un'erestimate da short
o' stature. What we lack in height, we make up fer by
fightin' dirty.

ALPHONSE Lissen, Mister.

JAMES Da name is James Negamanee from
Menominee! Commit da name to mem'ry!

*ALPHONSE stops. A stare down. Wheels turn in
ALPHONSE's head. Finally, an idea. Goes to the
door opening.*

ALPHONSE Well, next time yer in da neighborhood, be
sure to stop on by.

JAMES What's yer heritage?

ALPHONSE My heritage?

JAMES Fin? Swede?

ALPHONSE I'm a Soady.

JAMES Ya can't jus' be dat. Gotta be from
somewheres.

ALPHONSE Escanaba.

JAMES I'm meanin' yer ancest'ry. Yer roots. Yer
blood line. Yer people.

ALPHONSE I gotta uncle in Osh Kosh.

JAMES *(laughing)* Ya got...?! Oh, fer cryin' out loud!
He's gotta uncle in Osh Kosh!

ALPHONSE An' a sister in Dulut'!

JAMES *(laughing harder)* If dat don't take it all! A

uncle in Osh Kosh an' a sister in Dulut'!

ALPHONSE God.

JAMES God damn!

ALPHONSE No. God.

JAMES God?

ALPHONSE Dat's where I'm from.

JAMES Ya ain't from God!

ALPHONSE We're all from God.

JAMES Hah! Air, wind, water, an' land. Dose're de only gods I know! Menominee wit' a little bit o' da parlez-vous in me. Dat's right. Sadly, some horny French fur trapper outa Fond Du Lac yanked my Injun Gran'mot'er five times removed out into da woods an' had 'is way wit' 'er. Shameful. Da Devil an' all dat is heavenly, dat's what's coursing t'rough my veins. Anybody's lived da life I have, learns fast not to believe in t'ings dat ain't right in front o' 'em breat'in' in and breat'in' out. As my Mot'er used to say after one too many whiskeys, (*drunken French Menominee accent*) "Je swah mon-swee, macca macca hoi hoi."

ALPHONSE What's dat mean?

JAMES No idea. But I wear my Redskin heritage wit' great pride, I surely do. To be o' dose dat people'd dese hills long before you an' me? Ya ain't gonna like dis one bit, but dat ridge up dere is as much mine as it is yers.

ALPHONSE Dat a fact.

JAMES Manys da time I crossed da top o' dat beautiful height on my way to somewheres else. Lookin' down into dis very clearin'. Dat creek. Yer precious maples.

ALPHONSE Dis land has been in my family since 1860.

JAMES An' it's been in mine since ferever. But we forgive ya. White man's gotta have what he's gotta have, right? I un'erstan' dat. To be sure, it ain't no more yers den it is mine. Jus' is. An' I know every inch of it. Go on. Ask me. Ask me anytin' about it.

ALPHONSE Anytin'?

JAMES Anytin'. I guarantee, I'll give ya an answer.

ALPHONSE How many strides from da Sout' end o' dat Ridge to da Nort'?

JAMES How many strides, ya say?

ALPHONSE How many. An' I know, 'cause I walked it off m'self.

JAMES Did ya now.

ALPHONSE I did.

JAMES Markin' off yer territory, was ya?

ALPHONSE Gimme a number.

JAMES Well, firs' off, yer steppin's got more length den mine so I'd have to make allowances.

ALPHONSE I take a reg'lar t'ree foot stride when measurin'. Never varies an inch eit'er way.

JAMES How bigga foot ya got?

ALPHONSE Foot size don't enter into it.

JAMES It mos' surely does. Dat can t'row off da number o' strides by da hun'erds.

ALPHONSE grabs the homemade ruler, a short board with pencil marks.

ALPHONSE (*re: ruler*) From 'ere to 'ere is t'ree feet. I know 'cause I used dis very accurate measurin' stick to build my camp from da groun' up an' as ya can see fer yerself, it's square as can be. Hold dis.

JAMES takes the homemade ruler.

ALPHONSE I'm gonna plant my foot. From da tip o' my toe to da heel o' my boot will be t'ree feet on da nose.

JAMES If ya say so.

ALPHONSE I know so. Mark dat board right dere. Dat's my jumpin' off point.

JAMES Ya get but da one shot.

ALPHONSE I don't need but one.

JAMES What's da bet?

ALPHONSE Manly pride.

JAMES Gotta put up more den dat!

ALPHONSE All righty den. Name it.

JAMES You name it.

Wheels turn. Finally:

ALPHONSE Got it.
JAMES Lemme 'ear it.
ALPHONSE If it's t'ree feet on da nose, ya leave.
JAMES An' if it ain't?
ALPHONSE Ya congratulate yerself, den ya leave.
JAMES I do not accept dose terms.
ALPHONSE Dose are da terms.
JAMES No, sir!
ALPHONSE Take 'em er leave 'em!
JAMES I will sit in dis very spot 'til I 'ear better terms!
ALPHONSE Jesus Crumps.
JAMES I hereby counter dose terms wit' terms o' my own!
ALPHONSE Fine! What are dey? Tell me!
JAMES If it's t'ree foot on da nose, I leave.
ALPHONSE An' if it ain't?
JAMES Dis is my camp.
ALPHONSE I do not accept dose terms.
JAMES Take 'em er leave 'em.
ALPHONSE I ain't bettin' my camp.
JAMES Yer do one said he knew what a t'ree foot
stride was.
ALPHONSE I mos' certainly know a t'ree foot stride, but
I ain't puttin' my camp up as spoils.
JAMES Guess some o' us aren't so sure 'bout
ourselves as we t'ought.
ALPHONSE I'm sure 'bout m'self.
JAMES Not from where I sit.
ALPHONSE Ya lissen to me, Mister—
JAMES James Negamanee from Menominee!!
ALPHONSE —I'm nuttin', Negamanee from wherever da
hell yer from! I'm nuttin' if not da mos' accurate strider
in all o' Escanaba! I take great personal pride in my
capability to take a step wit'in a hair eit'er way o' da
mark, an' don't ya ferget it!
JAMES Pride cometh before da falleth of thy campeth.
ALPHONSE Get outa da way.
JAMES Ya sure now?

ALPHONSE Count me off.

JAMES I'd t'ink twice, if I's you!

ALPHONSE Count me off, I said!

ALPHONSE is in position.

JAMES Dis would be one.

ALPHONSE takes a deep breath.

JAMES Follow'd by two.

Like an Olympic pole vaulter at the start of his jump, ALPHONSE sways back in place, then ...

JAMES Culminatin' wit' ... t'ree!

... rolls on his first foot. His second foot goes straight out and down, landing into the floor. His arms out to steady himself, ALPHONSE balances on his first toe and second heel.

JAMES Don't move! Lemme get da board down!
Gotta get a proper measurement!

Going down to his hands and knees, JAMES moves behind ALPHONSE to measure the stride. As he does, ALPHONSE steps away and picks up JAMES' shotgun.

JAMES What're ya walkin' away fer? I didn't get da board down!

ALPHONSE points the shot gun at JAMES.

ALPHONSE It's t'ree foot. Right on da nose. Now get out.

JAMES May I make a remark?

ALPHONSE cocks the shotgun.

JAMES It's importan'.

ALPHONSE One.

JAMES Life er deat'.

ALPHONSE Two.

JAMES Ya hold a gun like a woman.

ALPHONSE stops.

JAMES I'm jus' sayin'. Fact, if'n I was to expound on

dat t'ought, I would wager you was a man who spent mos' o' 'is day an' nights aroun' women. Say, a wife. A daughter. Maybe more den one little gallee. How do I know dis? By da manner in which ya hold yer firearm.

ALPHONSE I ain't holdin' it any such way.

JAMES Oh, it's in such a way, no doubt 'bout dat.

ALPHONSE I'm holdin' da gun!

JAMES Didn't say ya wasn't.

ALPHONSE Jus' like I's taught.

JAMES By yer Mot'er?

ALPHONSE My Fat'er, t'ank ya very much! One hand 'ere an' one hand dere!

JAMES Barrel up.

ALPHONSE Barrel up.

JAMES Butt down.

ALPHONSE Butt down.

JAMES Chamber out.

ALPHONSE Chamber what?

JAMES Out. Offa yer hip.

ALPHONSE has the gun resting flush against his hip.

JAMES Dat way when ya shoot, da hammer don't get caught in da fluff o' yer skirt.

ALPHONSE looks down. Sees. Moves the gun away from his hip.

JAMES I got more tips, if'n yer interested.

ALPHONSE points the gun at JAMES.

JAMES No? Alrighty den. Go ahead an' shoot me. Ma'am.

JAMES laughs. ALPHONSE cocks the gun. JAMES freezes. Finally:

ALPHONSE Fer yer information, I gotta son.

JAMES Do ya now.

ALPHONSE Spittin' image.

JAMES An' where would he be? Not helpin' 'is one

an' only fat'er build da family camp, I know dat.

ALPHONSE Copper Harbor. Workin' a mine.

JAMES Copper Harbor. Got me a gallee in Copper Harbor.

ALPHONSE I gotta wife.

JAMES Well, dat don't make ya high an' mighty.

ALPHONSE Didn't say I was.

JAMES Show me a man who don't have a tulip in every town, an' I'll show ya a man dat stays home.

ALPHONSE I like stayin' home.

JAMES Don't know what yer missin'.

ALPHONSE Oh, I t'ink I do.

JAMES How 'bout little'uns? Homebody like you mus' have a house full. 'Sides, da miner fer a son. Mus' have a gallee er two. Lemme guess. Man like you? I'm gonna take a stab an' say, ya got ... one. (*off ALPHONSE's look*) Two? (*off ALPHONSE's look*) T'ree?

ALPHONSE Six.

JAMES reaches for something to steady himself.

JAMES Well, if dat don't explain da meanin' o' everytin', I don't know what does.

ALPHONSE It don't explain nuttin'.

JAMES Hell, it don't! Da solitary life yer buildin' fer yerself? Out in da middle o' nowheres? Yer a man on da run from all t'ings feminine. It's in yer eyes. Yer hunched shoulders. Yer cranky demeanor. Is dat what yer runnin' from? Ya didn't answer my question.

ALPHONSE I ain't answerin' nuttin'! Yer no longer welcome! Now go!

JAMES Where?

ALPHONSE Back wherever ya come from!

JAMES An' where would dat be?

ALPHONSE Wherever ya last was!

JAMES All righty den. I'll be on my way. (*goes to the Rocker*) Strictly speakin', I was las' over dere, but dis looks more comfer'ble. (*sits in the Rocker*)

ALPHONSE Get outa dat chair.

JAMES Yer own personal?

ALPHONSE Out!

JAMES Y'know, what I like mos' 'bout rockers?
Rockin' back an' fort', back an' fort'. Like yer always
returnin' to where ya jus' was. Like what's 'is name?
From da bible. Who da hell am I talkin' about?

ALPHONSE I dunno.

JAMES Sure ya do.

ALPHONSE Lazarus.

JAMES Lazarus! Dat's it! Now I'm dead, now I'm not!
Wouldn't dat be da way to go, knowin' ya was comin'
back?

ALPHONSE ... Yes. Yes, it would.

JAMES Course, it would.

*Suddenly, a host. ALPHONSE goes to the stove.
Uncovers the tin plate to reveal the pasty.*

ALPHONSE Dat would be a fine t'ing to know. Knowin' I
knew dat, I wouldn't have to know nuttin' else. 'Ere.

*The pasty on a tin plate, ALPHONSE hands it to
JAMES.*

JAMES Why, dat's right kind o' ya, my friend. Don't
min' if I do.

ALPHONSE Da pleasure is all mine.

JAMES Got some ketchup?

ALPHONSE No ketchup.

JAMES Can't eat it wit'out ketchup. Might as well e't
me a bowl o' mud offa my boot.

ALPHONSE Dat partic'ler pasty's made to be e't wit'out
condiments o' any kind.

JAMES Ya don't say.

ALPHONSE Don't wanna drown da flavor, do ya?

JAMES I do like t'ings of a flavorful nature.

ALPHONSE Oh, it's flavorful. No doubt about dat.

JAMES *Bon appetite!*

*JAMES eats a forkful of pasty. ALPHONSE watches.
Like an experienced food critic, JAMES savors the*

taste.

ALPHONSE Well?

JAMES Dis is ... dis is by far, wit'out a doubt, da finest pasty I ever e't. As promised, I got m'self a rainbow o' flavors explodin' all over da inside o' my mouth! What may I ask is in dis?

ALPHONSE Jus' yer run o' da mill pasty.

JAMES My friend, dis is no run o' da mill pasty. No, sir. Dis pie's got itself a little zippety doo-dah. It surely does.

ALPHONSE My own recipe.

JAMES An' a fine one, it is! An' where may I ask does a man da likes o' you come up wit' a delicacy such as dis?

ALPHONSE I'm a cook.

JAMES A cook, ya say?

ALPHONSE Da House O' Escanaba.

JAMES Down by da pier? Fancy.

ALPHONSE Seem to have a knack.

JAMES My friend, ya got yerself a gift.

ALPHONSE It's just kinda knowin' what works wit' what.

JAMES It's more den dat. I suffer'd t'rough many a meal cooked by dose dat shoulda been taken out into a field an' shot.

ALPHONSE Not too gamey?

JAMES I like it gamey. I would be what ya would call a connie-sewer o' gaminess. Surely, dere's a secret ingredient.

ALPHONSE If it ever got out ...

JAMES My friend, sometin' dis fine needs to be shared! I'll offer ya dis: ya tell me what makes dis pasty da best pasty ever e't, an' I promise to tell ever'body from 'ere to St. Ignace to stop in to Da House O' Escanaba an' e't 'til dey can't see dere shoes! How 'bout dat?

ALPHONSE We could use da business.

JAMES Ya got yer carrots. Yer rhutabagas. Yer chunks o' meat, o' course. What am I missin'?

ALPHONSE It's hard to see proper.

JAMES I can't look any harder den I am.

ALPHONSE walks over to a half-filled mason jar with the yellowish liquid. JAMES is peering deeply into his pasty, surveying the ingredients with his fork.

JAMES It's not some fancy spice outa yer wife's spice rack, is it? Not to say, usin' a store bought product is wrong, but as a man o' da woods—

ALPHONSE stands over JAMES. With the half-filled mason jar.

JAMES —dat would taint de enjoyment outa you havin' created sometin' wit' yer own ...

JAMES sees the mason jar.

ALPHONSE *(re: jar)* Bear piss.

JAMES Bear ... ?

ALPHONSE Piss. *(off JAMES' look)* Gives it a little zippety doo-dah.

JAMES looks down into his pasty.

ALPHONSE It's da most requested *entrée* at Da House O' Escanaba.

JAMES How does a man go about extractin' a jar o' piss from a bear?

ALPHONSE Well, firs' ya gotta build yerself a big cage. Metal floor wit' a hole in da middle dat goes down to a pan un'erneath yer floor. Den, ya toss some raw meat inside, leave da door open, an' wait. Soon enough, a blackie'll fin' its way down from da ridge, wander in, an' feast. Dat's when ya shut da door an' start fillin' yer trough fulla water. Make 'im drink 'til he's so bloated he's 'bout to blow up. When he pisses it out, it lands on yer floor, funnels down t'rough yer hole an' into yer pan. Ya slide yer pan out, pour da piss into yer jars, den let yer jars set out in da sun fer a good week er so. Come time to make yer pasty, while it's still hot, ya sprinkle da top o' wit' ...

As if garnishing an entrée, ALPHONSE sprinkles some bear piss on top of JAMES' pasty.

ALPHONSE ... jus' a little bit o' piss. Kinda like oregano.

JAMES Ya wouldn't happen to have sometin' to wash dis delectable dish down wit', would ya?

ALPHONSE picks up the mason jar of bear piss. Holds it out to JAMES. A challenge.

JAMES You firs'.

ALPHONSE After you.

JAMES I insist.

ALPHONSE Yer my guest.

JAMES All righty den. But I should warn ya ...

JAMES takes the mason jar of bear piss.

JAMES ... I never drink alone.

JAMES drinks the bear piss. His face is on fire. His gut is turned inside out. Through it all, he maintains the façade of tasting something delicious. Through his revulsion, he shouts out in celebration:

JAMES A toast! To yer new camp!

ALPHONSE It ain't finished.

JAMES Finished shminished! Yer a hung door away from dis ship sailin' outa port! To da Worl' Famous Sorry Deer Camp!

ALPHONSE Soady!

JAMES May all dose dat cross its t'reshold be graced wit' a joy, safe from all danger, an' free o' any an' all curses, strangeness an' unexplainable occurences! (*hoists jar*) Boomadeeboom!

JAMES gulps several swallows. With bear piss dripping from his chin, he extends the mason jar to ALPHONSE.

JAMES As a fellow man o' da woods an' a descendat o' da Menominee Nation, I dare ya to share wit' me dis sacred toast. Christen yer camp, my fine culinary friend, an' all will be well!

A challenge. Silently, ALPHONSE takes the mason jar. He takes a sip. JAMES reaches out and hoists

the bottom of the jar. Piss pours into ALPHONSE's mouth. Instantly, he runs outside to vomit.

JAMES I hereby annoint dis camp a proper camp!

JAMES goes back to finishing his pasty. Through the following, ALPHONSE can be heard, sporadically upchucking.

JAMES *(through mouthfuls of pasty)* Dere is nuttin' a man o' da woods needs more den 'is own camp. It is da true home o' any man wort' bein' called as such. 'Specially, one wit' so many gallies in 'is life. Many have forsaken a life such as yers. It takes courage to venture into da darkness o' da Superior forest, make yerself a place ya can call yer own, where no one can tell ya how to be, where everytin' is yers, jus' as ya want it, never to change, always as ya left it. To enter da sanctuary o' yer own camp is to enter yer own soul. It is de essence o' you. A man's camp is where dat man is a man. Where he becomes hisself. His true self.

Outside, ALPHONSE groans. JAMES eats.

JAMES Never had a camp m'self. Too much on da move. I run like da wind. In all directions. But I can feel sometin' in dis place. Even t'ough it's brand new, dere's a spirit here. Sometin' beyond me. An' you. It's a good spirit, I believe. T'ough, ya never know fer sure. Spirits can turn on ya, jus' like dat. Gotta be careful. A man who ain't careful usually ends up bein' breakfast for a blackie. Speakin' o' which, ya don't hear any heavy breat'in' out dere, do ya? Snorts o' any kind?

ALPHONSE steps into the camp. His shirt is wet with vomit. He sags into a seat.

JAMES *(re: jar of piss)* Hair o' da dog?

ALPHONSE glares at JAMES.

JAMES Now dat dis place o' yers has been suitably blessed, ya need to know dere are a number o' t'ings missin'. T'ings dat must come to pass 'fore dis can be

called a proper camp. Would ya like to know what dose t'ings might be?

ALPHONSE No.

JAMES Fer starters, ya need a log book. Somet'in' wit' which to write down all dat occurs. Met a trapper up in da Hurons. Had blackie hides—

ALPHONSE is getting something.

JAMES —coverin' every inch o' 'is camp walls. An' right dere on a table by 'is bunk was a book 'bout dis t'ick, full o' writin'. Every hunt, every stay, every single solitary t'ing dat ever happened inside dose walls was chronicled in dat sacred tome fer da rest o' time.

ALPHONSE sets a Log Book on the table.

JAMES Well, dere's hope fer ya yet. Min' if'n I take a gander?

Nothing from ALPHONSE. JAMES picks up the Log Book.

JAMES Impressive leat'er bindin'. (*opens the book: blank pages*) It's empty!

ALPHONSE Yeah.

JAMES Nary a page has a word on it!

ALPHONSE Ain't t'ought o' nuttin' to write yet.

JAMES Ya met me! How 'bout writin' dat? Manys da man woulda filled dese pages wit' tales o' my presence! Well, it appears I's gonna have to take it upon m'self to make de first entry.

ALPHONSE No!

JAMES It has to to be done.

ALPHONSE I said no!

ALPHONSE grabs the Log Book. A threat.

ALPHONSE Ya so much as make a mark in dis...

JAMES Ya'll what?

ALPHONSE turns away. Replaces the Log Book.

JAMES Well, if dat don't jus' kick my curiosity up a notch.

A silence. Two men sitting. Finally, JAMES lifts himself to the side and farts.

ALPHONSE I would greatly 'preciate it if'n ya did what ya jus' did outside.

JAMES In a proper camp, what jus' occur'd would not only be "'preciated," but highly encouraged.

ALPHONSE Outside.

JAMES lifts his left and farts again. ALPHONSE gets a whiff.

JAMES Ya know what ya need?

ALPHONSE Smellin' salts?

JAMES Gas Money.

ALPHONSE Gas? I don't need no gas.

JAMES lifts his leg. With his leg still up in the air:

JAMES Ever' time a man flutters 'is butter, he drops a penny in a jar. 'Fore ya know it, ya'll be a rich man. An' surely ya got yerself a tune.

ALPHONSE Huh?

JAMES A song. Sometin' of a musical nature dat separates dis destination from all ot'ers.

ALPHONSE I don't sing.

JAMES Well, yer lucky I stopped by. As a singer o' songs in camps all across de Upper Lakes, I hereby anoint dis ramshackle of a shack wit' a little diddy all its own!

ALPHONSE Get offa dere!

JAMES is standing on top of the table.

JAMES *(singing)* Oooooooh ...

ALPHONSE Jesus Crumps.

JAMES We left da parlor early
Da clock not even nine
And by some great misfortune
Her door was next to mine,
An' like Christopher Columbus
I had oceans to explore
So I took my position

By da keyhole in da door.

Ooooh ...

Like a thief I did commence
Down upon my bended knee
I waited dere in silence
Oh, I waited patiently
She slipped off 'er dress
An' dropped it on da floor
An' I saw 'er stoop an' pick it up ...
T'rough da keyhole in da door

ALPHONSE All right.

JAMES *(singing)* Ooooh ...

Up before da fire
'Er pretty feet did warm
Wit' nothin' but 'er shimmy on
To hide 'er graceful form
Would I take off dat shimmy
Oh I'd ask fer nothin' more
It's a fact I saw 'er tu-lip
T'rough da keyhole in da door.

ALPHONSE T'ank ya very much.

JAMES *(singing)* Ooooh ...

Down upon da pillow
She laid 'er little head
De angels dey was o'er 'er
'Til darkness 'pon 'er spread
I knew da show was over
Fer I could see no more
A telescope is nothin', boys ...
To a keyhole in da door!

ALPHONSE Dat's enough!

JAMES I gotta 'not'er one.

ALPHONSE No!

JAMES It's called "Da Whore Wit' Da Curly Hair."

(singing) Oooooooh ...

ALPHONSE I said, no!

JAMES stops.

ALPHONSE Not in my camp!
JAMES Is it da nastiness dat puts ya off?
ALPHONSE I don't need no song. I got sometin' else.
JAMES Do ya now.

ALPHONSE opens his wallet. Takes out an old, yellowed piece of paper with some handwritten stanzas on it.

JAMES Somet'in' dat distinguishes dis camp from
all ot'ers?
ALPHONSE It does.
JAMES Well den, da stage is yers.
ALPHONSE I don't need no stage.
JAMES Sure ya do. Up ya go.
ALPHONSE I'm not gettin' up on no table.
JAMES Ya gotta mark de occasion special.
ALPHONSE It's my table an' I ain't gettin' up upon it.
JAMES Yer shimmy's showin'.
ALPHONSE My what?
JAMES Shimmy. Dat t'ing yer wearin' un'er yer skirt.

Insulted again, ALPHONSE climbs up on the table. JAMES sits. A rapt audience of one. ALPHONSE fumbles with the old, yellowed piece of paper.

ALPHONSE It's a poem.
JAMES A poem, you say. Well, dat's even better.

By any stretch of the imagination, ALPHONSE is not a public speaker.

ALPHONSE Called "My Place."
JAMES A fine title, if dere ever was one.

ALPHONSE readies himself. Finally:

ALPHONSE *(reading)* A place to call yer own
A place to be alone
Ya make promises
Ya mean to keep
A special place to fin' yer deep.
A place to tend yer time

To keep ya 'way from da damnin' frost
A magic place to suffer da loss
To lose it is a crime
To give it
Is sublime.

ALPHONSE folds the paper. Gets down off the table. Places it back in the Log Book.

JAMES Write dat yerself, did ya?

ALPHONSE Fat'er.

JAMES Min' if I put it to music?

ALPHONSE I'd rat'er ya didn't.

JAMES Make a nice camp song.

ALPHONSE It's fine da way it is.

Silence. After a bit, JAMES starts to hum. ALPHONSE looks at him.

JAMES Suit yerself.

Suddenly, the distorted, surreal sound of a Half-Bear, Half-Man. ALPHONSE hits the floor. Crawls for his gun. As the growl-moan-cry echoes across the ridge, the LARGE BEING runs past the door opening. Skilled, JAMES grabs his gun and goes for the door opening.

ALPHONSE What da hell was dat?!

JAMES Mighta been dat blackie.

ALPHONSE Blackies don't run like dat! An' dey sure as hell don't sound like dat!

JAMES Whatever it was, it is no longer.

ALPHONSE 'Ere. *(grabs the door)*

JAMES Too late fer dat.

ALPHONSE Late, hell. Grab it.

JAMES Dere ain't a door in da worl' strong enough keep dat outa 'ere.

By himself, ALPHONSE tries to hang the door.

ALPHONSE I don't wanna see da likes o' dat ever again, t'ank ya very much.

JAMES Best leave it open. Dat way da next time, we'll see it comin'.

ALPHONSE I don't wanna see it at all!

JAMES Dat weren't no blackie. Dat was sometin' not o' dis worl'. Usual'y, t'ings like dat happen on ya so fast, ya don't get but a snap o' yer fingers. Best to 'ear da change in da wind. Rustlin' of da leaves t'rough da trees. Jus' 'fore everytin' goes quiet as quiet can be... an' den ... (*yells*) ... Boomadeeboom!

ALPHONSE jumps a foot. The door falls into camp.

JAMES laughs.

JAMES Little jumpy, are ya?

ALPHONSE What da hell's wrong wit' you?!

JAMES Can't be a man o' da woods wit' heebie jeebies like dat! Ya gotta get yerself some good luck, my friend.

ALPHONSE I don't need no luck! What I need is my door hung! Dat's what I need!

JAMES Might I suggest a rack? Manys da camp at where I've gusted dat has itself a lucky rack up o'er dere door head. A rack dat says, "In dis place resides a man o' da woods who's got hisself a bad case o' da heebie jeebies so leave 'im da hell alone."

ALPHONSE I'll get right on dat.

JAMES I assume ya hunt.

ALPHONSE Course, I hunt.

JAMES Usually da cook stays back. Lets ot'ers do da dirty work.

ALPHONSE I said, I hunt.

JAMES Ever shot anytin'?

ALPHONSE Course.

JAMES Such as?

ALPHONSE What're ya, doubtin' me?

JAMES No, I jus' don't believe ya. Again, referrin' back to da way ya held a firearm.

ALPHONSE Ever shot a trout?

JAMES A trout?

ALPHONSE A trout.
JAMES Ya shot a trout?
ALPHONSE I did.
JAMES Why da hell would ya shoot a trout?
ALPHONSE 'Cause any ol' fool can hook one, but to shoot
one? Right outa da river? As dey're slippin' 'tween da
rocks an' logs an' all dose dark pools fulla shadows?
JAMES Ever shot a black fly?
ALPHONSE A black fly? Ya shot a black fly?
JAMES Right 'tween de eyes.
ALPHONSE Dat's a flat out lie.

JAMES picks up ALPHONSE's Log Book.

JAMES (re: Log Book) Shall I write it down ferever
an' ever?

ALPHONSE grabs the Log Book from JAMES.

ALPHONSE Gimme dat!

*ALPHONSE replaces the Log Book in its original
spot.*

ALPHONSE Black fly.

JAMES Trout.

*The door propped into its frame, ALPHONSE peers
out into the darkness.*

JAMES I must say, a camp wit' no racks on display
would suggest not only a luckless establishment but a
establishment inside o' which resides a severe lack o'
buck shootin' at all.

ALPHONSE Ya gonna ask me outright?

JAMES Ask ya what?

ALPHONSE Y'know what.

JAMES Da t'ought did cross my min'.

ALPHONSE Ya askin' me?

JAMES If I was to ask sometin', dat would be da
sometin' I would ask.

*ALPHONSE is still. JAMES watches him closely.
Finally:*

JAMES We don't have to talk of it.

ALPHONSE I don't wanna talk of it.

JAMES All righty den.

ALPHONSE All righty den.

A silence. Two men in a camp. Not speaking.

JAMES T'ough of a curious nature, I shall not seek to know.

ALPHONSE stares at JAMES. Looks away. Another silence. Finally, ALPHONSE reaches into his pocket. The flask. Hands it to JAMES.

ALPHONSE Fat'er read books. Da great books, he called 'em. Melville. Hawthorne. Feneemore Cooper. Course, da bible. He was always quotin' dis an' dat. When he went off to fight in da War 'Tween Da States I was but a boy o' four. 'Fore he left, he tol' me, "I shall return."

JAMES Like Lazarus.

ALPHONSE "An' when I do," he said, "you an' me will hunt Soady Ridge. So save dat firs' buck for me."

JAMES Man'll remember his first buck long after he forgets his firs' love.

ALPHONSE I know a fella up to Marquette servin' time 'cause he confused da two. Couple years went by. We got letters once in a while. Always endin' wit', "Tell Young Alphonse to save me dat buck." Den one day, a letter come an' in it he wrote how he'd got shot. Wounded. Antietam. Clean t'rough da hip. Could barely walk. When he come home, it was all he could do to get outa da house. Every year, 'bout a month 'fore the leaves'd turn over, he'd rest up. Never leave 'is chair. T'ough, often as not did dat jus' rockin' hissself back 'n' fort'. I'd come down an' say, "Is it today, Fat'er? Are we gonna get me my buck today?" An' he'd look up at me, t'rough a pain I can only imagine, an' he'd say, "No, son. Not today. Tomorrow. We'll go up to da ridge tomorrow." An' tomorrow would come an' den da next day, an' da next, 'til winter'd come an' den anot'er year'd passed. Finally, in da middle o' da night, I 'eard sometin' movin'

downstairs. I come down an' dere he was, standin' by da door, his huntin' vest fulla shells, holdin' a rifle in each hand, an' he looks at me an' says, "Let's go get us a buck." Up to da ridge, we went. Showed me how to hold da gun. Barrel up. Butt down.

JAMES Chamber out.

ALPHONSE An' we sat dere, jus' me an' 'im, waitin' 'til da mornin' light. An' jus' as da sun come up, dere he was. Appearin' outa da mist like he was gift wrapped, jus' fer me. Fat'er nodded. I brought my gun up, took a deep breat' to steady my nerves, pulled da trigger ... an' missed 'im by a mile. Buck run off faster den da shot dat shoulda kill'd 'im. Looked up at Fat'er. Pain in 'is eyes. From 'is wound, maybe. From my missin' so bad. But he jus' smiled, an' said, "We'll get anot'er chance, boy."

JAMES An' did ya?

ALPHONSE He died da followin' Spring. I hunted. 'Ere an' dere. Jus' never up on da ridge.

JAMES So ya shot some bucks.

ALPHONSE I shot some, but dey weren't dat one.

JAMES Fate.

ALPHONSE Fate?

JAMES My bein' 'ere. My happenin' upon dis establishment in da manner I did.

ALPHONSE Why is it everytin' spins back to you?

JAMES Jus' does. Why I'm 'ere. It's why I'm anywhere. Everywhere.

ALPHONSE Yer wherever ya are 'cause yer a vagrant wit' nowhere else to go.

JAMES While true, I am also where I am to help dose do what is necessary. It's all comin' clear to me now.

ALPHONSE Yer not helpin' me do nuttin'.

JAMES I have only begun to assist ya, my friend, whet'er ya want it er not. Do not question dose t'ings aroun' me dat occur. Accept dem fer what dey are.

ALPHONSE Such as?

JAMES I was born wit' de ability to draw in bucks.