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Purple  
Rose



The Purple Rose Theatre Company

# Escanaba In Love



by Jeff Daniels



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The Purple Rose Theatre Company  
137 Park Street  
Chelsea, Michigan 48118  
[www.purplerosetheatre.org](http://www.purplerosetheatre.org)

# **Escanaba In Love**

**by  
Jeff Daniels**

## *Escanaba In Love*

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Originally produced by The Purple Rose Theatre Company (2006)

Jeff Daniels, Executive Director

Guy Sanville, Artistic Director

Alan Ribant, Managing Director

The production was directed by Guy Sanville.

*Escanaba In Love* premiered at The Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, Michigan, on October 7, 2006. The play was directed by Guy Sanville; the set design was by Daniel C. Walker; the costume design was by Ivan Ingermann; the lighting design was by Reid G. Johnson; the sound design was by Quintessa Gallinat; the properties design was by Danna Segrest; and the stage manager was Katie M. Doral. The cast was as follows:

ALPHONSE SOADY .....Will David Young  
ALBERT SOADY, SR. ....Paul Hopper  
“SALTY” JIM NEGAMANEE ..... Wayne David Parker  
ALBERT SOADY, JR..... Jake Christensen  
BIG BETTY BALOU .....Charlyn Swarthout

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**CHARACTERS**

ALPHONSE SOADY	70s
ALBERT SOADY, SR.	50s
ALBERT SOADY, JR.	18
“SALTY” JIM NEGAMANEE	40s
BIG BETTY BALOU	20s

**PLACE**

Soady Deer Camp in Escanaba, Michigan

**TIME**

November 1944

# Escanaba In Love

## ACT ONE

*The interior of the Soady family deer camp, north of Escanaba, Michigan. Evening. November, 1944. Among other things, the set includes a massive mounted buck head with a huge rack of antlers, mismatched wooden chairs around a central table, an old sink with a hand pump for running water, a moth-eaten couch with one end propped up with firewood, a wood-burning stove with a fire already going strong with a pipe leading up and out the roof with a double bunk on one side of it and a single bed on the other. The bunks are made of pine trunks. The walls are adorned with drawings, a 1944 calendar, a couple of old Michigan license plates, a mounted trout on a wooden plank, and a glass jar half full of pennies with a hand written label that reads "Gas \$." The room is lit by several strategically placed kerosene lanterns. Through the single window, past a rustic porch, through some birch trees, the moonlight shines. In the dim light, camp is empty. Through a window, an OLD MAN carrying a rifle steps up onto the porch and comes through the door. In the dim light, ALPHONSE SOADY stands and surveys the camp. He looks up, eyes the buck head, then moves to the chair and sits. He lays the rifle across his lap. As he speaks, the kerosene lanterns fade up.*

ALPHONSE (to himself) I seen 'im 'fore he seen me. Da snap of a twig give 'im away. I hunkered down. Waitin'.

An' den, out he come. Big as a mountain. Wit' a rack as wide as da Superior sky. So tall his tines touched da top of da trees. Wit' da full moon shinin' down on 'im, lightin' 'is way, he snorts. Once. Twice. "Who goes dere?" I say. An' he answers, "Take me, Alphonse. Take me now." But I don't. I sit dere. Unable to move a muscle. Outta fear? No. Outta love. For dere I was, face to face wit' da Great Soady Ridge Buck. Tears fallin' down my cheeks. My lip quiverin'. My hands shakin'. Knowin' what I was about to do had to be done.

*The door opens. ALBERT SOADY, SR. enters, carrying firewood. A middle-aged man, SENIOR hustles into camp, drops the firewood next to the wood-burning stove and hustles right back out. ALPHONSE waits for him to leave. When the door shuts ...*

ALPHONSE I brung up my rifle. Put my finger on da trigger. Took a deep breat' to steady my nerves. And I said to him, "Turn to da side." And wit' a grace I'd seen in neit'er man nor beast, he turned, givin' 'imself to me. An' when I fired da shot 'eard 'cross da whole U.P., down he went, hittin' da ground, shakin' de eart' under my very feet. I lowered my rifle an' sat dere, cryin' like a baby. An' I looked up, into dawn's early light, an' as sure as I am sittin' 'ere, da moon was smilin'.

*The door opens again. SENIOR enters with more firewood and drops it next to the stove.*

SENIOR Y'know, ya was o' more use before ya lost yer mind.

ALPHONSE I don't need to lift a finger an' you o' all people should know why.

SENIOR Dere are bigger bucks out dere.

ALPHONSE I beg to differ!

SENIOR Dat's exactly what ya'll be doin'. Beggin'. Beggin' fer my forgiveness when I shoot da buck dat makes yers look like a fawn.

ALPHONSE Dere will only be one Soady Ridge Buck and

dat is dat.

SENIOR       Where dere's one, dere's anot'er.

*Incensed, ALPHONSE points the gun at SENIOR.*

ALPHONSE    Da Soady Ridge Buck is not jus' anot'er  
                  buck!

SENIOR       Easy!

ALPHONSE    Da Soady Ridge Buck is to be respected!

SENIOR       Put da gun down.

ALPHONSE    Admired!

SENIOR       Put da gun down, Gramps.

ALPHONSE    And loved! Love it 'er lose yer life!

SENIOR       Gramps!

ALPHONSE    Love da Soady Ridge Buck!

SENIOR       I love da Soady Ridge Buck! If he was alive,  
                  I'd marry 'im on da spot!

ALPHONSE    ... Kiss 'im.

SENIOR       What?

ALPHONSE    Kiss da Soady Ridge Buck.

*SENIOR looks up at a huge buck's head, mounted  
on the wall.*

SENIOR       I'm not gonna ...

*ALPHONSE cocks the rifle, rattling its chamber.*

SENIOR       All right, all right!

*SENIOR goes over. Pulls a chair closer. Stands on  
the chair. And kisses the stuffed buck's nose.*

ALPHONSE    On da lips.

SENIOR       I'm not kissin' 'im on da lips!

ALPHONSE    He likes it on da lips!

SENIOR       Jesus Crumps.

*SENIOR gives the Soady Ridge Buck a quick kiss  
on the lips. ALPHONSE lowers the rifle as SENIOR  
hops down off the chair and slams it back to its  
original position.*

SENIOR       Yer not well, y'know dat?

ALPHONSE    I know nuttin' o' da kind.

SENIOR Y'know, fer somet'in' dat happened all o' twen'y years past, ya'd t'ink ya'd gotten over it by now.

ALPHONSE A man never gets over dat what makes 'im a man.

*During the following, ALPHONSE reaches into his pocket and pulls out a penny.*

SENIOR It takes more den bein' in da right place at da right time to make ...

ALPHONSE Sssh!

SENIOR What?

ALPHONSE Listen!

*ALPHONSE and SENIOR freeze, listening.*

SENIOR ... What? What is it?

ALPHONSE *(re: Soady Ridge Buck)* I t'ought I heard 'im snort.

SENIOR Oh, fer cryin' out loud ...

ALPHONSE Cold wind blowin' outta da nort', but I could still hear 'is huff an' 'is puff. And dose eyes, borin' into me. Starin' a hole right t'rough me —

SENIOR *(silently mouthing the words)* — straight to da center o' my soul.

ALPHONSE — straight to da center o' my soul.

*During the following, SENIOR pours a clear liquid from a big jug into a mason jar.*

ALPHONSE Callin' me, tellin' me, "Alphonse Soady, if ya love me like I know ya do, ya'll take me outta dis worl' an' into anot'er." So I took 'im. Right den an' dere. *(emotional, to Soady Ridge Buck)* I had to, don't ya see? I had to shoot ya! I had no choice!

*Emotional, ALPHONSE holds back tears. SENIOR holds out a jar of Sweet Sap Whiskey.*

SENIOR I know.

ALPHONSE Ya know why?

SENIOR 'Cause ya loved 'im.

ALPHONSE 'Cause I loved 'im, dat's right, eh? Sometimes,

ya gotta kill da t'ings ya love.

SENIOR Don't tempt me.

ALPHONSE Huh?

SENIOR I said, drink dis.

ALPHONSE Dat won't make me feel better.

SENIOR No, but if ya drink enough of it, ya'll pass out  
an' den I won't have to listen to ya no more.

ALPHONSE (*emotional*) Oh, geez.

SENIOR C'mon, now. Get a hold o' yerself, eh?

ALPHONSE I can't help it! My emotions are incontinent!

SENIOR Gramps, if ya can't be in camp wit'out cryin',  
I'm gonna have to put ya in da truck and take ya back  
home.

ALPHONSE No!

SENIOR It's not fun fer da rest o' us if all ya are is a  
sad sap.

ALPHONSE I wanna stay here!

SENIOR Den promise me ya won't spend da week  
bawlin' like a baby who lost 'is bottle. Dis year's deer  
camp has to be da best ever. An' why is dat? Huh? Tell  
me why dat is?

ALPHONSE Junior.

SENIOR For Albert Junior, dat's right. Not fer you.  
Not fer me. Fer 'im. We're gonna send 'im off to Europe  
wit' not'in' but good memories.

ALPHONSE An' a buck!

SENIOR Oh, Junior'll get 'is buck. Don't ya worry  
'bout dat.

ALPHONSE Junior always gets 'is buck!

SENIOR Dat he does.

ALPHONSE You don't, t'ough.

*SENIOR places the mason jar in ALPHONSE's hand.*

*ALPHONSE hands SENIOR a penny.*

SENIOR Yer right. Sometimes, I come up a little  
short.

ALPHONSE Ya come up a little short a lot.

SENIOR Not a lot.

ALPHONSE Quite a bit.

SENIOR Jus' fer da record, I gotta nice eight pointer two years ago.

ALPHONSE More like a two pointer eight years ago.

SENIOR Whatever an' whenever, I got it, eh? Dat's de important fact to remember. Now, are ya gonna behave or do I have to take yer gun away?

*Challenged, ALPHONSE quickly brings his gun up.*

*SENIOR drops the penny in the jar marked "Gas \$."*

ALPHONSE Nobody touches my gun! Dis gun shot da great Soady Ridge Buck!

SENIOR Fine! I'm just, all —

ALPHONSE Da last shot dis gun ever —

*Again, ALPHONSE is pointing his rifle at SENIOR.*

SENIOR — I'm sayin' is, okay, put it down. Put it down.

ALPHONSE — shot an' ever will shoot was to fell da greatest buck in da history o' bucks and no one ot'er den me will ever finger dis trigger again!

SENIOR Put da gun down!

*The sound of an old truck lumbering to a stop somewhere outside the cabin.*

SENIOR It's Junior!

ALPHONSE Junior!

*SENIOR throws open the door and instantly slams it shut.*

SENIOR Salty Jim!

ALPHONSE Salty Jim?

SENIOR Salty Jim!

*ALPHONSE aims his gun at the door.*

ALPHONSE Dat piece o' crap takes one step inside dis camp, I'll shoot 'im where he stands.

SENIOR Yer not shootin' Salty Jim!

ALPHONSE I'll shoot ya, too, if'n ya don't get outta da

way.

SENIOR He's an idiot. You wanna go to prison fer shootin' an idiot?

ALPHONSE Prison, my boney ass! Dey'll t'row me a parade!

SENIOR All right, dat's it. Gimme da gun. Gimme da gun, Gramps.

ALPHONSE No.

SENIOR Ya've lost yer gun privileges. Hand it over.

ALPHONSE Nobody touches dis gun. Dis —

SENIOR Gimme it.

ALPHONSE — gun shot da Soady Ridge Buck!

*SENIOR grabs the barrel of the gun. ALPHONSE hangs on. A tug of war. A VOICE from outside the door.*

VOICE (o.s.) Hallooooo!

SENIOR Gimme it!

*SENIOR rips the gun out of ALPHONSE's hands.*

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Halloooo!

*ALPHONSE starts to cry.*

SENIOR (re: crying) Don't!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Is dis da Soady Deer Camp?

SENIOR ... No!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Dat's not how it goes.

SENIOR I know it's not how it goes but dat's how it's gonna go for you!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Yer s'posed to say —

SENIOR I know what I'm s'posed to say an' I ain't gonna say it!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) "Ya found 'er!"

SENIOR Salty Jim!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Halloooooooo!

SENIOR I said I'm not sayin' it!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) Is dis da Soady Deer Camp?

SENIOR We're not speakin', Salty Jim!

SALTY JIM (o.s.) We're what?

SENIOR I said we're not speakin'!  
SALTY JIM (o.s.) We're speakin' right now.  
SENIOR In life!  
SALTY JIM (o.s.) We're speakin' in life right now.  
SENIOR Salty Jim.  
SALTY JIM (o.s.) 'Less dis is somet'in' else. Is dis  
somet'in' ot'er den life? 'Cause if it is, I musta died an'  
gone to deer camp!

*SENIOR throws open the door. "SALTY" JIM  
NEGAMANEE stands there with a bedroll. A man  
short of stature but big with self-esteem, SALTY JIM  
has crossed eyes and walks with a kind of half-limp/  
half-skip. He wears a sailor's cap on his head which  
flops grotesquely to one side, as if the spine in his  
neck were made of rubber.*

SENIOR Where da hell's my boat?  
SALTY JIM It's in da process of bein' fixed.  
SENIOR Ya been fixin' it fer almost a year!  
SALTY JIM It's a long process. Hey, Old Man. I 'eard ya  
died, eh?  
ALPHONSE Maybe I did.  
SENIOR I paid ya up front! Cash!  
SALTY JIM Ya want it done right er not at all?  
SENIOR Not at all, t'ank ya very much.  
SALTY JIM Well, it's too late. Once I start somet'in', I  
have to finish it. Dat's jus' da way I am.  
SENIOR How'm I s'posed to fish?  
SALTY JIM Like everybody else, Albert. Ya stand next to  
da water an' as soon as ya see one ya like, ya shoot it.  
ALPHONSE Dat's how Albert Junior bagged da Great  
Soady Rainbow.

*ALPHONSE refers to a large, thirty inch Rainbow  
Trout mounted on the wall. The fish has a bullet  
hole through its side. SALTY JIM takes off his cap.  
Ignoring SENIOR, SALTY JIM speaks to ALPHONSE.  
During the following, SALTY JIM reaches into his  
pocket and pulls out a penny.*

SALTY JIM He wasn't even lookin', was he?  
ALPHONSE Had 'is eyes closed tight.  
SALTY JIM Showin' off, he was!  
SENIOR Yer not welcome in dis camp, Salty Jim.  
ALPHONSE Jus' standin' next to da water's edge. Next  
t'ing ya know, quick as a cat, up goes 'is gun, he's aimin'  
into da water ...  
SALTY JIM Boom! Up it goes!  
ALPHONSE An' 'fore it can hit da water, Albert Junior's  
got 'is net out an' he's catchin' it like a grizzly grabbin' a  
donut.  
SENIOR I mean it.  
SALTY JIM I wouldn't've believed it if I hadn't seen it wit'  
my own eyes.  
ALPHONSE I seen it, too!

*SALTY JIM drops a penny into the "Gas \$" jar.*

SALTY JIM We bot' did! (to SENIOR) Albert, did you  
see it? Oh, dat's right! Ya weren't dere, were ya? Or  
were ya? (to ALPHONSE) Was he wit' us? I can never  
remember.  
SENIOR Out. Now.  
ALPHONSE Dey only made one o' dat boy.  
SALTY JIM Dat may be, but everybody in Escanaba  
knows yer da one dat taught 'im everyting he knows.  
ALPHONSE I shot da Soady Ridge Buck.  
SALTY JIM An' dey only made one o' dose.  
ALPHONSE Dere'll never be anot'er.  
SENIOR Salty Jim.  
SALTY JIM May I pay my respects?  
ALPHONSE Please do.

*With great seriousness, SALTY JIM grabs a chair.  
SENIOR stops him.*

SENIOR Yer not doin' not'in'!  
SALTY JIM Lemme up dere!  
SENIOR No!  
SALTY JIM I wanna kiss da buck!  
SENIOR Yer not —

*SENIOR swipes the chair away from SALTY JIM.*

- SENIOR — kissin' not'in'! Not in dis camp!  
SALTY JIM How long I been comin' to dis camp, eh?  
SENIOR Too damn long!  
ALPHONSE Hun'erds an' hun'erds —  
SALTY JIM Hun'erds an' hun'erds o' years. An' ya t'ink  
—  
ALPHONSE — o' years.  
SALTY JIM — yer gonna stand dere an' tell me what's  
what? Who in da hell ya t'ink yer talkin' to, eh?  
SENIOR I know exactly who I'm talkin' to! Dat's why  
I'm talkin' da way I'm talkin'!  
SALTY JIM You ever been strung up in a fishnet wit' yer  
neck broke off da coast of St. Ignace, screamin' fer yer  
life —  
SENIOR Aw, don't start in wit' dat again.  
SALTY JIM — tinkin' da worst, knowin' if ya survive, and  
I mean "if" —  
SENIOR Jesus Crumps.  
SALTY JIM — you will never, an' when I say never I mean  
never be da same as ya were fer as long as ya live? An'  
dat's somet'in' I wouldn't even wish on da likes o' you!  
No man should have to suffer like I suffer. No man.  
SENIOR Ya can't walk 'cause o' da accident, I'll give  
ya dat, but yer mem'ry is gone 'cause o' da drink, an' ya  
damn well know it!  
SALTY JIM Lemme tell ya somet'in' about alcohol, my  
friend.  
ALPHONSE (to SENIOR) Ya shoulda let me shoot 'im.  
SALTY JIM I will take loss o' mem'ry due to my sustained,  
daily inebriation over da pain o' what happened to me  
of which I remember next to not'in', sad to say. Y'know,  
sometimes ... sometimes, I wish they'da jus' cut me  
loose. Let me fall into da water an' sink all da way down  
to da floor o' da Greatest Lake of 'em all. At leas' den,  
I'd be at peace. I would know I was where I belonged.  
For I am a —  
SENIOR & ALPHONSE Man O' Da Sea.

SALTY JIM — Man O' Da Sea, dat's right. I'm not like eit'er o' you. I don't live off da land. Don't believe in it. Yer land-based animal can't hold a candle to a Great Lake fish of any kind. Fer a diet o' fish, fish, an' not'in' but fish is de essential staple necessary in keepin' a man sharp. Ain't dat right, Old Man?

ALPHONSE Ya'd ferget yer ass if it wasn't attached.

SALTY JIM Y'know, dere are plen'y o' ot'er camps I could go to.

*Quickly, SENIOR gets up and opens the door.*

SALTY JIM Camps dat would worship da ground I walked on!

SENIOR Den start walkin'.

*A stand off. SALTY JIM turns to ALPHONSE.*

ALPHONSE Ya didn't fix da boat, Salty Jim.

*SALTY JIM grabs his bedroll.*

SALTY JIM (to SENIOR) Takes a helluva man to be jealous of 'is own flesh an' blood.

SENIOR What'd you say?

SALTY JIM Ya 'eard me.

*SENIOR slams the door shut.*

SENIOR I am proud o' my son.

SALTY JIM As you should be.

SENIOR As far as I'm concerned, Albert Junior is da next great Soady in a long line o' Soady greatness. An' don't ya ferget it.

SALTY JIM I'm da one dat brought it up.

SENIOR An' I'm da one dat brought 'im up! Dat boy is da greatest t'ing I ever done! If I never bag anot'er buck, I'll die happy! An' if you must know, my wife was a terrible shot!

SALTY JIM Well, he musta got it from somewheres.

ALPHONSE Certain t'ings tend to skip generations.

*SENIOR grabs SALTY JIM and slams him up against the wall. Calmly, ALPHONSE watches.*

SENIOR        Salty Jim Negamanee, if ya wanna set foot  
inside dis camp ever again, ya bring back my boat fixed  
up proper. Ya hear me?

SALTY JIM     I'm aware of yer concerns.

*Roughly, SENIOR lets SALTY JIM go. Grabs his  
broom. Sweeps.*

SALTY JIM     Wit' all due respect, it is my expert opinion  
dat yer boat don't belong on da water. Proper.

SENIOR        It has sentimental value.

SALTY JIM     Dat may be, but da body is rottin' from de  
inside out, yer oars are warped beyon' repair, an' yer  
plankin' on da starboard side is bowin' away from da  
bracin' so far da nails are poppin' out. Ot'er den dat, it's  
ship shape.

SENIOR        Someone tol' me dey could fix it.

SALTY JIM     I can fix damn near anyt'in' but dat don't  
make me Jesus o' Nazaret'. Ya wanna fix somet'in', fix  
yerself over to Gladstone an' buy yerself a new boat.

SENIOR        No.

SALTY JIM     Dey gotta nice new model on display. All  
maple plankin', cast iron oar holders, cloth seats ...

SENIOR        I said "no."

ALPHONSE     Fixin' dat boat ain't gonna bring 'er back,  
Albert.

*Without looking up, SENIOR's cleaning slows.  
ALPHONSE and SALTY JIM exchange a look.  
Finally:*

SALTY JIM     Could dat woman fish? Da fish used to jump  
right onto 'er hook.

ALPHONSE     She had da gift, no doubt about it! Ain't a  
man er woman alive dat can put a line in da water an'  
come close to doin' what yer Coretta could.

SALTY JIM     Actually, I know dis gal up in Ironwood ...

ALPHONSE     No, ya don't.

*As SENIOR sweeps:*

SENIOR        I courted 'er in dat boat. Took me months,

but one day, I got up all da courage I could an' I walked up to 'er, an' I said, "Coretta? Would ya do me de honor o' goin' fishin' wit' me?" She said, "Ya got yer own boat?" I said I did. "A little rowboat. Built fer two."

SALTY JIM "Built fer two," I like dat.

ALPHONSE Dat's good. Dat's very good.

SENIOR She nodded 'er head an' out we went. We'd jus' sit in dat boat fishin' away. Jus' da two o' us. Her, pretty as porcelain, an' me, da luckiest man alive.

ALPHONSE She was a beauty, dat's fer sure.

SALTY JIM A keeper.

SENIOR I used to impress 'er wit' my special trout fly. Tied it myself. Called it da —

ALPHONSE Screamin' Eagle.

SENIOR — Screamin' Eagle, dat's right.

SALTY JIM Dat's a —

*SALTY JIM reaches into his pocket for another penny.*

SALTY JIM — nice fly, dat.

SENIOR Simple, but ...

ALPHONSE Worked like a charm. Here.

*ALPHONSE tosses SALTY JIM a penny.*

SENIOR Dubbed a mix o' t'ree parts buck fur —

SALTY JIM Offa da flank, if I'm not mistaken.

SENIOR — offa da flank, dat's right. One part white rug fiber dat I cut outta de underside o' Gramma Soady's

—

ALPHONSE Yer Gramma's livin' room rug.

SENIOR — livin' room rug —

ALPHONSE I still got dat rug.

SALTY JIM It's a nice rug.

SENIOR — an' one part rabbit hair from da inside o' de ear. Dub up da length o' da hook shank, pick it out to give it a untidy look.

ALPHONSE All ya need.

SALTY JIM When it comes to fishin', whatever works is whatever works.

*SALTY JIM drops two pennies into the "Gas \$" jar.*

SENIOR We used to pull in trout after trout wit' dat fly. Only one t'ing. As good as she was, Coretta couldn't take out da hook.

SALTY JIM Yer kiddin'.

SENIOR Nope.

SALTY JIM (to ALPHONSE) An' to t'ink he still married 'er.

SENIOR Almos' didn't. One time, she caught a baby rainbow. No bigger den dis. (re: *four inches long*) An' I said, "Ya can do dis one." An' she fought me an' fought me an' as stubborn as I was, I wouldn't give in. I said, "If ya don't take dat hook out, I'm gonna t'row 'im back wit' it still stuck in his lip." She called me all sorts o' names which, fer Coretta, was unheard of.

ALPHONSE Pure as snow, she was.

SENIOR So I took dat fish, cut da line, an' tossed it right back into Soady Creek. She didn't speak to me fer over a mont'. I finally went over to 'er house in da middle o' da night, fell to my knees outside 'er bedroom window, an' begged 'er to forgive me.

SALTY JIM Did she? 'Cause sometimes, women say dey do, but deep down dey don't.

SENIOR She hung onto it fer awhile, but ya could tell even t'ough I was back in 'er good graces, what I did an' how she felt about it still hung in de air like a cloud dat could spit rain at any time.

SALTY JIM Dere ya go.

ALPHONSE Say no more.

SENIOR Dose was da las' harsh words we ever spoke.

SALTY JIM Did she ever learn to take da hook out?

SENIOR No. An' I never asked 'er to, nei'ter. Findin' love is like catchin' a trophy trout. Once ya get it in da boat, ya best get it in yer net as fast as possible 'cause it can slip outta yer hands quick.

*SENIOR stops sweeping. Holding back tears. SALTY*

*JIM goes to SENIOR.*

SALTY JIM Well, while I regret I am wit'out yer boat, I am happy to say I bear gifts of a nautical nature. Could I interest ya in a strap o' homemade jerky made o' Nort'ern Pike?

ALPHONSE Nort'ern Pike?

SALTY JIM Caught fresh outta da Little Bay de Noc jus' las' week!

SENIOR Sounds tasty!

ALPHONSE Well, don't jus' stand dere! Gimme a strap!

*SALTY JIM hands ALPHONSE a strap of jerky.*

SALTY JIM Dere ya go!

SENIOR Over here now!

*SALTY JIM tosses a strap to SENIOR.*

SALTY JIM My pleasure! An' don't worry, dere's plen'y more where dat came from!

*SENIOR holds up his jerky.*

SENIOR (a toast) To Coretta. Da great adventure o' my life. May she rest in peace.

ALPHONSE To Coretta.

SALTY JIM To Coretta.

*SENIOR, SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE all bite into their jerky. The only sound is that of three grown men chewing. As their jaws work, their faces fall into deep, concentrated study, analyzing the texture and taste of SALTY JIM's artistry. Little by little, these seasoned, tough, weathered outdoorsmen begin to soften. With each subsequent chew, their willpower cracks, until ALPHONSE, SALTY JIM, and even SENIOR vainly attempt to control a culinary rapture as glorious as anything the human body can possibly experience. Finally:*

SENIOR ... Salty Jim? If dere's a better taste in dis worl', it has not been in my mout'.

SALTY JIM T'ank ya, Albert.

SENIOR           Gramp?

*ALPHONSE is looking down into his blanket covered lap.*

ALPHONSE       I believe dere's somet'in' stirrin' in my loins.

SENIOR           Dat would be somet'in' else.

SALTY JIM       Perhaps not.

SENIOR           No, dat's definitely somet'in' else.

ALPHONSE       Anybody wanna take a sauna?

SALTY JIM       No!

SENIOR           No!

SALTY JIM       Wonder if Junior passed 'is physical, eh?

SENIOR           Course, he passed 'is physical. He's a Soady.  
He's made o' iron.

SALTY JIM       Da Navy can be very stringent when it comes  
to da qualifications of its would be sailors.

SENIOR           Well, dis may come as a surprise, Salty Jim,  
but Albert Junior's not joinin' da Navy.

SALTY JIM       I beg yer pardon?

SENIOR           Ya 'eard me.

SALTY JIM       He has to join da Navy.

SENIOR           An' why is dat?

SALTY JIM       'Cause it's da Navy, dat's why! Jesus  
Crumps, ya want 'im to be where de action is, don't  
ya?

SENIOR           Dat's why he's not joinin' da Navy.

*Quickly, SALTY JIM is up on his feet.*

SALTY JIM       What da hell is dat s'posed to mean?

SENIOR           Don't take it personal.

SALTY JIM       You dare to say dat to me in my presence?  
Me, bein' a Man O' Da Sea dat I am!

SENIOR           Lake Superior is not a sea, Salty Jim.

SALTY JIM       It's da closest t'ing to it! Lemme tell ya  
somet'in' about da water, my friend. Anybody an' dere  
idiot bro'ter can pick up a gun an' walk in a straight line  
— left, right, left right — but when it comes to winnin'  
wars an' goin' down in history, it's da men on da water  
who get da job done.

SENIOR Albert Junior is a sharpshooter, Salty Jim.  
Ya put a gun in 'is hands an' da war is over. Ain't dat  
right, Gramp?

ALPHONSE (*re: his crotch*) It's still stirrin'.

*Outside the camp, the sound of a truck pulling up,  
honking its horn over and over. A big, loud arrival.*

SALTY JIM Speak o' da devil!

SENIOR He's here, Gramps! Junior's here!

ALPHONSE Halloooo!

SENIOR Halloooo!

SALTY JIM Halloooo!

*Like dogs howling at the moon, SALTY JIM, SENIOR  
and ALPHONSE continue their "Hallooooos!". As  
their "howling" builds, the door bursts open and  
ALBERT SOADY, JR. stands there. Jolsen never  
filled a spotlight better.*

JUNIOR Is dis da Soady Deer Camp?

SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE Ya found 'er!

JUNIOR Da world famous Soady Deer Camp?

SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE Da one an' da same!

JUNIOR An' is dat Alphonse Soady's Sweet Sap  
Whiskey I see?

SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE Ya might be so lucky!

*JUNIOR's clothes are thoroughly disheveled. A little  
drunk, his smile fills the room.*

JUNIOR Lucky? Who you callin' lucky? You callin'  
me lucky, Salty Jim?

SALTY JIM Not me!

JUNIOR Was it you, Pop?

SENIOR Wasn't me!

JUNIOR Great Grampa Alphonse?

ALPHONSE My loins are stirrin'!

JUNIOR (*laughing*) Well, so are mine! Stirrin' wit'  
luck 'cause I am lucky! I'm da luckiest man in da whole  
U.P.!

*With great joy, JUNIOR breaks into an ad-libbed*

*Irish folk song. The others laugh and clap along, stomping their feet.*

JUNIOR (singing)

I ... am ... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as ...  
I ... am ...

*Dancing a jig, JUNIOR grabs a mason jar of Sweet Sap Whiskey and jigs some more. As if conducting a choir, JUNIOR leads SENIOR, SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE in song.*

JUNIOR, SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (singing)

... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as ...

SENIOR (singing)

He ... is ...

*SENIOR stomps his foot and claps faster. Picking up the tempo, SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE clap and stomp along. JUNIOR takes up their challenge and dances faster, drinking the Sweet Sap down in big gulps.*

JUNIOR, SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (singing)

... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as —

SALTY JIM One more!

*JUNIOR grabs SALTY JIM.*

JUNIOR What're ya tryin' to do? Kill me?

SALTY JIM Yes! (singing)

He ... is ...

*Laughing, SENIOR, SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE*

*stomp and clap along now at breakneck speed.  
JUNIOR jigs and drinks right along with them.*

JUNIOR, SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (*singing*)

... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as — he ... is ...

*And faster.*

JUNIOR, SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (*singing*)

... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as — he ... is ...

*And faster.*

JUNIOR, SENIOR, SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (*singing*)

... lucky, ya see, and lucky to be  
'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!  
Oh, what a world dis world could be  
If everyone could be as lucky as ... me!

*In a big finish, JUNIOR drinks the last drop of Sweet Sap and collapses. Everyone cheers and applauds, filling the camp with laughter. Clutching his heart, JUNIOR rises up, calling out:*

JUNIOR Is dere a doctor in camp?!

SALTY JIM No, but dere's more Sweet Sap!

SENIOR Y'know, I was beginnin' to t'ink ya weren't comin', eh.

JUNIOR Well, after my physical, I kinda stopped off at da Porcelain Bus to celebrate.

SALTY JIM Did ya pass it?

SENIOR Did he pass it! Course, he passed it! (*to JUNIOR*) Ya passed it, didn't ya?

JUNIOR Oh, I passed it, all right.

SENIOR What'd I tell ya? Wit' flyin' colors, I'll bet!

JUNIOR Well ...

ALPHONSE Ya can't win a war wit'out a Soady in it! It's a

fact! Look it up!

SENIOR Did dey put a rifle in yer hands? 'Cause if dey put a rifle in yer hands, dey'll make ya a General in no time!

JUNIOR Not right off da bat, no. Firs' t'ing dey did was tell me to take off my clothes.

SALTY JIM ... Take off yer what?

JUNIOR Clothes.

SENIOR Ya mean, ya was buck naked?

JUNIOR Yah.

ALPHONSE What kinda war is dis?

JUNIOR Dey seemed to t'ink it was pretty important, so I took 'em off and put 'em in dis basket dey gimme and den —

*During the following, JUNIOR reaches into his pocket, pulls out a penny, and drops it into the "Gas \$" jar.*

JUNIOR — I carried it into dis ot'er room and got in line wit' a whole bunch o' ot'er naked men wit' baskets. We musta stood in line fer a good two, t'ree hours.

SENIOR An' ya was naked da whole time?

JUNIOR Yah.

SALTY JIM Well, dat's de Army for ya.

JUNIOR Luckily, dere were dese big windows wit' da sunlight streamin' in an' a good t'ing, too, 'cause it helped keep me warm. When I got up to da Doctor, he said, "Ya ready fer yer Hearin' Test?" An' I said, "Sure am." An' he says, "Good. Go see de Eye Doctor." So I went an' stood in anot'er line. When I got up to de Eye Doctor, he says, "Can ya see me?" An' I said, "Sure I can see ya." An' he says, "Good. Go stand over dere." An' he points me towards anot'er line. So I go stand in dat until finally, after anot'er hour, I see da Regular Doctor. He looks in bot' my ears, down my t'roat, an' den he stares down at my feet.

SENIOR What's wrong wit' yer feet?

JUNIOR Dat's what I said. "What's wrong wit' my

feet, Doc?” An’ he says, “I can’t see da sun.”

SALTY JIM Da sun?

JUNIOR Under my feet. See, if yer arches aren’t high enough, dey won’t take ya.

ALPHONSE What?!

SENIOR Not’in’ wrong wit’ yer arches.

JUNIOR Dat’s what I told ‘im, but da Doc shook ‘is head an’ said, “Son, ya won’t be able to march very far wit’ feet like dat.” An’ he starts writin’ somet’in’, so I stopped ‘im an’ I said, “Doc, da way I can shoot, I don’t plan on havin’ to move much.”

SALTY JIM Holy wha! Dat’s a good —

ALPHONSE Atta boy! Dat’s a Soady answer if I ever ‘eard one!

SENIOR Dat’s my boy! Dat’s tellin’ ‘im!

SALTY JIM — one, dat is! “Don’t have to move much!”

JUNIOR An’ den he looks at me, he looks at me real serious like, an’ he says, “Spread yer cheeks, Boy.”

ALPHONSE Geez Louise.

JUNIOR An’ I said, “Okey dokey, but ya ain’t gonna find any sunlight up dere!”

*Everyone laughs.*

JUNIOR Well, I don’t need to tell you, he didn’t much like dat. I could tell ‘cause he gotta little rough wit’ whatever he was probin’ me wit’ back dere. If I didn’t know better, I’d say he was minin’ fer ore.

SENIOR So dey took ya?

*JUNIOR comes to attention. Salutes.*

JUNIOR Private Albert Soady, Jr., 197th Michigan, reportin’ fer duty, sir!

*Everyone cheers.*

SALTY JIM He’s gonna end da war all by hisself!

ALPHONSE Ya remember what I taught ya, don’t ya?

JUNIOR I sure do.

ALPHONSE Ya bring yer gun up.

JUNIOR I know.

ALPHONSE Ya put yer finger on da trigger.

JUNIOR Great Grampa, please.

ALPHONSE Go on.

*JUNIOR mimes holding a rifle, slipping his finger on an imaginary trigger.*

ALPHONSE Take a deep breat' to steady yer nerves.

*JUNIOR takes a slow, deep breath ...*

SALTY JIM BOOM! Dere goes Hitler!

ALPHONSE Ya do dat, dey'll put ya right up front! Ain't dat right, Albert?

SENIOR Dat's right.

ALPHONSE 'Cause dat's where ya wanna be. Right up close. Right where de action is.

JUNIOR Oh, I know. De Enlistment Officer tol' me if I'm as good as I t'ink I am, I'll end up in a Special Sharpshooters Unit where I can pick off Krauts like berries offa bush.

SALTY JIM He's better den he tinks he is. Ain't he?

SENIOR Yes, he is.

*A shared look between a proud father and his son.*

JUNIOR T'anks, Pop.

*Finally:*

ALPHONSE Well, don't jus' stand dere like a couple o' women, go get yer gun! Ya can't shoot no deer wit'out a gun, I don't care how good ya are!

SENIOR Yah, we gotta ridge to hunt tomorrow.

ALPHONSE Salty Jim, hop out to Private Soady's truck an' bring in 'is belongings.

SALTY JIM (*saluting*) Yes, sir!

*As SALTY JIM hops out, JUNIOR stops him.*

JUNIOR No, dat's all right. Leave 'em out dere.

SENIOR What're ya talkin' about? Ya gotta clean yer barrel. Make sure it's sightin' right.

JUNIOR Oh, it's sightin' good. No doubt about dat.

ALPHONSE When has dis boy ever needed to sight his

rifle, eh? He could shoot a buck blindfolded!

SALTY JIM Wit' his hands tied behind his back!

ALPHONSE Standin' on his head!

SENIOR I ain't questionin' his abilities. I'm jus' sayin' if da sightin's off, it —

*SENIOR drops a penny in the "Gas \$" jar.*

SALTY JIM It sounded to me like you was questionin' his abilities ...

SENIOR — don't matter who da hell's pullin' — da hell I was! De only —

JUNIOR Pop, it's okay.

SENIOR — t'ing I question is why da hell yer still on dis earth! Dat's de only t'ing I question!

JUNIOR I didn't bring it.

SENIOR What're ya talkin' about, ya didn't bring it?

JUNIOR My gun.

SENIOR Why not? How ya gonna hunt if ya don't have ...

JUNIOR I ain't goin' huntin' tomorrow.

SENIOR What? Course, yer goin' huntin'. You an' me, up on da Ridge, jus' like always.

JUNIOR Sit down.

SENIOR I don't wanna sit down.

JUNIOR Oh, I t'ink dis is somet'in' ya should be sittin' fer.

SENIOR Ya got somet'in' to say to me, look me in da hairy eyeball an' say it while I'm standin'.

*JUNIOR fidgets. Finally:*

JUNIOR I'm not goin' huntin' wit' ya tomorrow, Pop. I'm goin' to Battle Creek.

SENIOR Battle Creek?

SALTY JIM Downstate?

ALPHONSE Dere ain't no deer down dere!

JUNIOR I ain't gonna be huntin' for deer. Dey're musterin' me down to Fort Custer first t'ing in da mornin'. Run me t'rough my Basic Training, den it's off to Europe.

SENIOR           Dat fast?  
JUNIOR           Uncle Sam wants me, Pop.

*SENIOR turns away.*

JUNIOR           I'm eighteen years old. Ya said it yerself, I'm  
                    a man now. An' any man who can shoot as good as me  
                    is wasted runnin' around da woods chasin' bucks.

SALTY JIM       Ya might wanna t'ink about da Navy. Wars  
                    are won er lost on da sea.

JUNIOR           I can't shoot Hitler from no boat, Salty Jim. I  
                    gotta be on dry land. Close enough to see da whites of  
                    'is eyes. *(to SENIOR)* I t'ought dis is what ya wanted me  
                    to do, Pop. I t'ought ...

SENIOR           Course, it is. I tol' ya, I couldn't be prouder.  
                    It's jus' ... *(raises his mason jar)* A toast!

ALPHONSE       A toast!

SALTY JIM       A toast!

*All mason jars are hoisted. With great importance,  
SENIOR makes his toast.*

SENIOR           Wit' all due respect to Grampa Alphonse an'  
                    his heroic slayin' o' da Great Soady Ridge Buck ...

*Everyone gestures towards ALPHONSE, who  
accepts their acknowledgement as a king would  
from his court.*

SENIOR           ... here's to my son, Private Albert Soady, Jr.,  
                    who carries on da great tradition o' Soady greatness.  
                    May he kill all dose before dey kill 'im firs'.

SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE   To Junior!

*Everyone drinks. SALTY JIM raises his mason jar.*

SALTY JIM       *(a toast)* To da United States Navy! May dey  
                    be dere da second after Junior bags Hitler!

SENIOR, ALPHONSE & JUNIOR   To da Navy!

*Everyone drinks. ALPHONSE raises his mason jar.*

ALPHONSE       *(a toast)* To da Great Soady Ridge Buck!

SENIOR           Oh, fer cryin' out loud ...

JUNIOR & SALTY JIM       To da Great Soady Ridge

Buck!

*Everyone drinks.*

JUNIOR Now, I'd like to make a toast.

SENIOR Junior's makin' a toast!

ALPHONSE Junior!

SALTY JIM (*singing*)

He is ... lucky, you see and lucky to be!

*ALPHONSE joins in.*

SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (*singing*)

'Cause lucky for you is lucky for me!

SENIOR All right!

SALTY JIM & ALPHONSE (*singing*)

Oh, what a world dis world could be,

If —

SENIOR Dat's enough o' dat! Let —

ALPHONSE & SALTY JIM (*singing*)

— everyone could be as ...

SENIOR — da boy say 'is piece already, eh!

*SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE quiet.*

SENIOR Go ahead, Son.

*JUNIOR raises his jar.*

JUNIOR To my new wife!

*JUNIOR drinks. SENIOR, SALTY JIM and ALPHONSE freeze, their mason jars stuck in mid-air. Finally:*

SENIOR ... Yer new what?

JUNIOR Wife.

SENIOR By "wife", ya mean ...?

JUNIOR Wife.

SENIOR Meanin' ...?

JUNIOR Wife.

SALTY JIM As in "woman"?

JUNIOR What o'ter kind o' wife is dere?

ALPHONSE Did he say "wife"?

SALTY JIM He said "wife".

SENIOR Hold on a second.

JUNIOR She's a great gal, Pop. Yer gonna love 'er.  
She's da spittin' image o' Ma. Only differ'nt.

SALTY JIM I didn't even know ya was in love.

JUNIOR Oh, it happened very fast.

SENIOR So fast ya couldn't tell me 'fore now?

JUNIOR Pop, when it comes to love sometimes  
ya aren't in total control o' t'ings. Leas', dat's my  
experience.

SENIOR Is dat a fact?

JUNIOR Oh, yah. It was whaddayacallit ... dat t'ing  
dat happens when ya can't keep yer hands off each  
ot'er from da moment ya meet?

SALTY JIM Beastiality?

*Everyone looks at SALTY JIM.*

JUNIOR Love at firs' sight.

SENIOR Ya fell in love wit' dis woman da moment ya  
saw 'er?

JUNIOR Yup. In fact, I'm startin' to t'ink I was in love  
wit' Big Betty 'fore I even met her.

SENIOR Big Who?

JUNIOR Big Betty.

SENIOR Her firs' name is Big an' her last name is ...

JUNIOR No, Betty's her firs' name. Well, sorta 'er first  
name. Big Betty Balou. I t'ink it's French. Er, Canadian.  
Maybe it's Canadian. Don't know why she calls 'erself  
"Big", t'ough. She's no bigger den dis, but ...

SENIOR Salty Jim.

*SENIOR is holding out his mason jar. Quickly, SALTY  
JIM fills SENIOR's jar with more Sweet Sap.*

SENIOR How long have ya known ...

JUNIOR ... Big Betty?

SENIOR Yah.

JUNIOR Oh, let's see. I met her, when was it?  
Tonight.

SENIOR Tonight?!

JUNIOR Well, earlier tonight.

SENIOR Ya've known dis gal all o' one night?!

JUNIOR I tol' ya, it was love at firs' sight.  
ALPHONSE She musta been some sight.  
JUNIOR Oh, she's a sight, all right.  
SENIOR Firs', ya waltz in tellin' me ya've jus' spent da better part o' yer Army physical paradin' aroun' buck naked, den I find out we ain't goin' huntin' toget'er 'cause ya gotta go downstate, den 'fore I can even catch my breath', I find out my only son is not only gettin' married, he's already walked down de aisle!  
JUNIOR We didn't have to walk nowhere, Pop. We got married right dere in da bar.  
SENIOR You got married in a bar?!  
JUNIOR Not jus' any bar. Da Porcelain Bus.  
SENIOR I gotta sit down.  
JUNIOR I was hopin' ya'd be happy for me, eh? I mean, here I am, I'm in love for da firs' time in my life — okay, so it's a little on da quick side, but when ya know, ya know, right? Leas' dat's how you tol' me it was wit' you an' Ma.  
SENIOR Dat was differ'nt.  
ALPHONSE Da hell it was. I barely knew Coretta. Next t'ing I knew I was payin' fer a weddin'.  
SENIOR I didn't meet Coretta at da Porcelain Bus, I can tell ya dat! (to JUNIOR) So when do I get to meet my new daughter-in-law?  
JUNIOR I'll go get 'er.  
SENIOR What?  
JUNIOR She's out in da truck.  
ALPHONSE She's what?!

*ALPHONSE cocks his rifle.*

SALTY JIM No!

*SALTY JIM grabs ALPHONSE's rifle.*

SENIOR Put it down! Lemme handle dis! Junior, gettin' married on da same night ya met somebody is one t'ing, but bringin' dat somebody to camp ...  
ALPHONSE Not jus' somebody! A woman!  
SENIOR I said, I'll handle it!

JUNIOR Fine! Ferget it!  
SENIOR Where ya goin'?  
JUNIOR To Battle Creek! I gotta war to win!

*SENIOR steps in front of the door, stopping JUNIOR.*

SENIOR Now hold on! Da bot' of yas! While I know da history o' dis camp is dat No Women Are Allowed ...

ALPHONSE Dis camp was built under dat provision!

SENIOR I know! But yer grandson, yer married grandson, is going off to war in da mornin'. Da leas' we can do is meet da bride, don't ya t'ink?

SALTY JIM Is she pretty?

JUNIOR 'Course.

ALPHONSE How pretty?

JUNIOR She's beautiful.

ALPHONSE She's not from downstate, is she?

JUNIOR No. Da Soo. I t'ink she's from da Soo.

SENIOR Ya don't know?

JUNIOR I jus' met 'er tonight.

ALPHONSE All right, bring 'er in. But if she's not up to snuff, out she goes!

JUNIOR Before I do, dere's one t'ing ya should know.

SENIOR What's dat?

JUNIOR She's a little ... how can I put dis?

SENIOR Delicate? Say no more. Yer mot'er was like dat. "Coretta," I'd say, "ya are as frail as a wounded quail."

JUNIOR Betty's more like a, what ya'd call ...

SENIOR What?

*Before JUNIOR can answer, the door bursts open. There stands BIG BETTY BALOU. BIG BETTY is a wild young woman in man's clothes. In desperate need of a bath, her pants are soiled from weeks of wear, her boots covered with mud, and a torn leather vest covers a shirt twice her size. Her personality and overall demeanor can barely fit in the state*

*of Michigan. She carries a gun in one hand and a quarter full bottle of whiskey in the other.*

BIG BETTY If I'd wanted to spend my weddin' night in a truck, I'da gone out on Route 2 an' stuck my thumb out!

JUNIOR I'm sorry, I was jus' ...

BIG BETTY A day late an' a dollar short, dat's what ya are! Don't make me wait like dat again!

JUNIOR I won't.

BIG BETTY Promise Big Betty.

JUNIOR Promise.

*BIG BETTY pinches JUNIOR's cheek.*

BIG BETTY Yer cute. Yer stupid, but yer cute. Who da hell are dese people?

JUNIOR Welcome to Soady Deer Camp!

BIG BETTY How come dey're here?

JUNIOR Remember? Firs', I wanted to introduce ya.

BIG BETTY Oh, dat's right! Shows ya where my mind's at, eh? Dat'll have to wait, I guess. Not long, t'ough. Big Betty don't like to wait. Especially, fer dat!

*BIG BETTY reaches down into the back of her pants and scratches herself ...*

JUNIOR I un'erstand. (re: SENIOR) Honey? Dis is my Pop. Albert Soady, Sr.

*... and then shakes a stunned SENIOR's hand.*

BIG BETTY Can I call ya Pop, Pop?

*Incapable of speaking, an open-mouthed SENIOR just stares at BIG BETTY. And his hand. Quickly, JUNIOR moves BIG BETTY towards ALPHONSE.*

JUNIOR An' over 'ere is my Grampa Alphonse.

ALPHONSE Great!

JUNIOR Great Grampa, sorry. (to BIG BETTY) He likes people to put da word "great" in front —

ALPHONSE I shot da —

JUNIOR — o' da firs' part. I know, I'm tellin' 'er, eh?

ALPHONSE — Great Soady Ridge Buck! An' don't ya forget it!

BIG BETTY (to ALPHONSE) Ya ever caught a trout wit' yer bare hands?

ALPHONSE Can't say dat I have.

BIG BETTY Well, when ya do, I'll let ya talk to me. (re: SALTY JIM) Who's dis fruit basket?

JUNIOR Dis would be "Salty" Jim Negamanee.

BIG BETTY I hope ya got a couple punches in!

SALTY JIM Do I know you?

BIG BETTY Prob'ly!

*BIG BETTY slaps SALTY JIM on the upper arm, causing his head to flop over onto the other shoulder.*

JUNIOR Salty Jim was in a terrible boatin' accident

...

BIG BETTY Speakin' of water, point me to da two holer. I gotta bladder so full o' beer, it's backin' up into my t'roat.

JUNIOR Sure. Right dis way, Honey.

*JUNIOR leads BIG BETTY to the door.*

BIG BETTY Whatever it is yer drinkin', pour me a jar, eh? Ya mighta gotta head start on me, but when I catch up I'll drink ya all under da table!

JUNIOR (re: two holer) Jus' to yer left dere.

*BIG BETTY goes off.*

BIG BETTY (o.s.) If I'm not back in five minutes, come an' get me. An' when ya come, don't be wearin' no clothes!

JUNIOR (calling off, laughing) Okay, Honey!

*JUNIOR shuts the door.*

JUNIOR Whatta pistol, eh?

*JUNIOR looks up to see ALPHONSE, SALTY JIM and SENIOR staring at him.*

SENIOR Sit down.

JUNIOR           What?  
SENIOR           Sit.  
JUNIOR           I t'ink I'd rat'er stand.

*With one move, SENIOR yanks JUNIOR down into a chair.*

SENIOR           What da hell ya t'ink yer doin'?  
JUNIOR           I'm in love. What's it look like?  
SENIOR           Wit' dat?!  
ALPHONSE       She's prob'ly got more hair under 'er pitters  
                  den I do!  
JUNIOR           She's part French.  
SALTY JIM       Which part?  
JUNIOR           Da part where all da hair is!  
SENIOR           Yer not tinkin' straight, son.  
JUNIOR           I'm in love, Pop. I'm not s'posed to t'ink  
                  straight.  
SALTY JIM       I'm gettin' drunk.

*SALTY JIM goes about refilling his mason jar.*

ALPHONSE       (to SENIOR) Ya shoulda had "da talk."  
SENIOR           Stay outta dis.  
ALPHONSE       I'm jus' sayin', when ya don't talk about what  
                  yer s'posed to talk about when yer s'posed to talk about  
                  it, next t'ing ya know yer in a situation.  
SENIOR           Albert, listen to me. Ya gotta admit dat ...  
JUNIOR           ... Big Betty?  
SENIOR           Big Betty is a bit on da rough side.  
JUNIOR           So was Ma. 'Member how big 'er hands was  
                  an' how she used to walk down da street like she owned  
                  it?  
SENIOR           Yer mot'er was pretty as porcelain.  
JUNIOR           Oh, yah, but she was more at home in de  
                  outdoors den she was anywheres else. Dat's what I  
                  love about Betty. Okay, so maybe Ma wasn't so ...  
SALTY JIM       Manly?  
JUNIOR           Yer talkin' about my wife.  
SENIOR           Salty Jim.  
SALTY JIM       I was jus' makin' an observation, eh.

JUNIOR           Yah? Well, maybe ya'd like to make it to 'er face?

SALTY JIM       I don't t'ink so, no! Somet'in' 'bout dat gal tells me she can hold 'er own, eh!

JUNIOR           Dat's right! Y'know why? 'Cause —

SENIOR           All right!

JUNIOR           — she'd kick yer butt all da way to Wisconsin!

SALTY JIM       I don't doubt it fer a second!

SENIOR           Dat's enough! Da bot' o' yas!

JUNIOR           Pop, whatever Ma was, ya put a fishin' pole in 'er hands and holy wha, dere wasn't a man in all o' Escanaba dat could match 'er fish fer fish.

SENIOR           Dat may be, but yer mot'er had ot'er qualities dat ...

JUNIOR           ... Big Betty.

SENIOR           Big Betty is sorely lackin'.

JUNIOR           Like what?

SENIOR           Well, firs' of all, she could cook.

JUNIOR           Big Betty can cook.

SENIOR           Is dat a fact?

JUNIOR           Oh, yah. She was in charge o' chow up to a minin' camp east o' Gwinn fer a couple years, anyway. I t'ink dat's what she said.

SENIOR           How 'bout wit' a needle an' t'read? Yer mot'er was da best dere was when it come to usin' a needle an' t'read.

JUNIOR           Big Betty makes 'er own clothes. Dey may be outta wolverine pelts and grizzly innards, but ...

SENIOR           What about 'er scent?

JUNIOR           'Er scent?

SENIOR           Yer mot'er smelled like a woman.

JUNIOR           Betty smells like a woman. Not dat I know what a woman's s'posed to smell like, but when I imagine what dat kinda smell might be, I t'ink o' Big Betty.

SENIOR           Well, I gotta whiff o' 'er. An' I hate to tell ya, but dat's not a woman's smell.

JUNIOR           What're ya sayin'?

SENIOR           I'm sayin' da smell I smelled was not a womanly smell.

JUNIOR           What kinda smell was it?

SENIOR           (to ALPHONSE) Does she smell like a woman to you?

ALPHONSE       I los' my sense o' smell years ago, but she jus' brought it back.

JUNIOR           Pop, don't she remind ya o' Ma?

SENIOR           No!

JUNIOR           Not da smellin' part.

SENIOR           Not any part!

JUNIOR           Well, she does me. When I laid eyes on 'er, I said to myself, "Dis gal is all mine." Dat's why I entered da contest.

SENIOR           Da what?

JUNIOR           Da contest. At da Porcelain Bus. I won 'er.

SENIOR           Dere was a contest at da Porcelain Bus?

JUNIOR           A kissin' contest. Big Betty was takin' on all comers. Fer two bits, da man dat kissed 'er da best got to marry 'er.

*SENIOR reaches for something to steady himself.  
ALPHONSE and SALTY JIM burst out laughing.*

ALPHONSE       Holy wha! I knew it!

SALTY JIM       Now dat's a new one!

SENIOR           Albert.

JUNIOR           No, Pop. Ya don't understan'! I won!

SENIOR           Oh, I'm sure ya did.

*ALPHONSE and SALTY JIM are laughing hard.*

JUNIOR           No, I'm serious. Man after man laid down dere money, stepped up to da table, and laid one on 'er. When it was my turn, I knocked back a stiff one, put down my two bits, grabbed 'er face in bot' my hands, an' put my tongue so far down 'er t'roat I almos' choked myself. An' as I was gaggin', I looked in 'er eyes an' dat's when I knew. If dat ain't love, I don't know what is.

SENIOR Well, I hate to break it to ya, but dat's not love.

JUNIOR Pop, when ya know, ya know.

SALTY JIM When ya know, ya know!

SENIOR Ya don't know not'in'.

ALPHONSE Ain't dat da trut'!

JUNIOR You knew.

SENIOR Dat was differ'nt.

JUNIOR How?

SENIOR It jus' was! Yer mot'er an' I was in love.

JUNIOR So are we.

SENIOR I didn't win yer mot'er in some bar room kissin' contest, eh! Dat's not how love happens!

JUNIOR So how does it happen? No, tell me. I wanna know. I'm about to go off an' fight da Germans an' as good as I am wit' a gun in my hands, I may not come back.

SENIOR Hey.

ALPHONSE Enough wit' dat, eh.

JUNIOR *(to ALPHONSE)* Well, it's da trut'. *(to SENIOR)* I don't want to go off an' fight nobody wit'out havin' what you an' Ma had.

SENIOR What yer mot'er an' I had was special.

JUNIOR I know. All I wanna do is fall in love. Jus' one time. I wanna feel what it's like to want to be wit' somebody else. An' Betty is da firs' gal dat's made me feel dat way. An' who knows, maybe she'll be da las'.

SENIOR Don't say dat.

JUNIOR It could happen.

SENIOR I don't wanna hear dat kinda talk! Yer a Soady an' dat's dat! Yer comin' home an' dat's all dere is to it!

JUNIOR I wanna go havin' been wit' a woman, Pop.

*Everyone stops.*

SENIOR Ya've never been wit'? ...

*JUNIOR shakes his head.*

ALPHONSE What about Hazel Mae up to Ishpeming?

Two bits an' a pint an' she'll take care o' business.

SALTY JIM I know a gal over in Naubinway ...

SENIOR Shut up. Dat bot' o' yas. (to JUNIOR) It ain't de end o' da worl' to not have been wit' a woman in dat way.

JUNIOR It is if yer goin' off to war.

*SALTY JIM pulls off another strap of jerky and hands it to ALPHONSE.*

SENIOR (to JUNIOR) Fallin' in love is one t'ing, son, but fallin' in love fer da right reasons is anot'er. Yer mot'er an' I, we had somet'in' ya don' find by lookin' fer it. It jus' happens.

JUNIOR It jus' happened to me an' Betty, too.

SENIOR Dat may be, but ya got admit, dere were some extenuatin' circumstances involved in bringin' da two o' yas toget'er.

JUNIOR An' if it hadn't been fer Salty Jim, you an' Ma wouldn'ta found each ot'er.

SENIOR Dat's got not'in' to do wit' not'in'.

JUNIOR Salty Jim? Did you sell my Pop da boat dat he courted my Ma in?

SALTY JIM Leave me outta dis.

SENIOR It's jus' a boat!

JUNIOR Den get rid of it. T'row it in da junk pile like ya have everyt'in' else. Ya can't t'ough, can ya? 'Cause Ma is still in dat boat. Isn't she, Pop?

*SENIOR looks away.*

JUNIOR Wit'out dat boat you an' Ma wouldn't o' been you an' Ma. Well, da same goes fer me an' Betty. If I hadn't won dat contest by jammin' my tongue down 'er t'roat at da Porcelain Bus, we wouldn't be who we are, neit'er.

*The door opens. BIG BETTY enters carrying a worn duffel bag and a bed roll.*

BIG BETTY Dat jus' might be da finest two holer I have ever had da pleasure o' droppin' a duker in. Where do

ya want me to put dese, Honey?

JUNIOR Oh. Uh ...

SENIOR What da hell are dose?

BIG BETTY What da hell's it look like? (to JUNIOR) D'ya tell 'em yet?

SENIOR Tell us what?

BIG BETTY Where's dat tongue o' yers?

JUNIOR Las' time I looked it was still inside my mout', eh!

BIG BETTY Well, what good's it doin' in dere?

*BIG BETTY grabs JUNIOR by the ears and kisses him. They fall onto the couch.*

SENIOR Tell us what?

*Through the kissing ...*

JUNIOR Well, now dat ... now dat me an' Betty ... now dat we're married an' all ...

SENIOR Yah?

JUNIOR Pop, don't make me spell it out fer ya, eh?

*The kissing is so deep, someone could choke.*

ALPHONSE What da hell dey doin', eh?

SENIOR What's it look like dey're doin'?! Dey're on deir honeymoon!

*SALTY JIM steps forward.*

SALTY JIM Here? In deer camp?!

*Stunned, all three men stare at JUNIOR and BIG BETTY, making out like there's no tomorrow.*

ALPHONSE Holy wha!

*The lights fade out.*

## END OF ACT ONE