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SYNOPSIS: An Aussie in the snows of Canada's winter: you're thousands of miles from your home Down Under, trying your best to learn to fly in the war effort. But right now, it's the battle of two cultures as you try to get a handle on the local lingo and explain yourself!

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(ONE MAN, ONE WOMAN)

SHIRLEY.........................A forty-three year old woman, married to a hospitalized WWI air veteran; her only child is training to become a Royal Canadian Air Force pilot. (23 lines)

HARRY HILLIS .............An eighteen year old Royal Australian Air Force Bomb Aimer. He has a small bottle of brandy stuffed into his pocket. He is dressed in a black RAAF uniform with his newly acquired “BA” on his chest. The cuffs at the bottom of his trouser legs have come undone. (23 lines)
SETTING:
1942. A cold September Saturday, downtown in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, outside a butcher shop.

AT RISE:
As the scene opens, Hillis is quite tipsy from celebrating his graduation and he has just relieved himself in between buildings. He is concentrating on closing his fly as he continues to patrol in front of the store. Shirley enters, laden with shopping packages, and heads for the door of the shop. The two collide.

SHIRLEY: Oh!

Her packages scatter on the ground. Throughout, they gather the packages into a neat pile.

HILLIS: 'Begging your pardon, missus. I just got caught short. Oh, but aren’t you the right little Sheilagh! (He tries to gather the packages but ends up sprawling on the ground.)

SHIRLEY: What? Young man, you’re drunk!

HILLIS: Drunk as a...what is that thing you have here? It’s kinda like a wombat in a tuxedo...

SHIRLEY: Good lord, you stink of liquor!

HILLIS: Stink. Stunk. Skunk! Drunk as a skunk! Yes, missus, guilty as charged! (Sing-songy.) One’s alright, two’s the most; three’s under the table, and four’s under the host!

SHIRLEY: You should be ashamed of yourself! I’ve a mind to report you to your commanding officer.

HILLIS: (Seriously, pleading.) No, no, please missus! Don’t do that, please! It’s not my fault, honest.

SHIRLEY: My boy’s going to be a pilot, and he’d never let himself be seen in your condition. Buck up, for heaven’s sake.

HILLIS: (He stands to attention, slightly swaying.) Flight Sergeant Harold K. Hillis, best bloody Bomb Aimer/Nose Gunner in all of No. 8 Bombing and Gunnery School, Lethbridge, Alberta.
(Firing two imaginary air guns.) A-a-a-a-a-a-a! I aims to please!
(Looking down at his open fly.) Well, I tries to aims to please... (He stuffs his shorts and shirt back in, closes the zipper and then holds out his hand to shake hands.) ...but you can call me Harry! I'm a better bomb aimer. I can drop a fully armed cookie from 5,000 feet right down a lady's brassiere. 'Not that I'd ever want to explode a lovely woman's undergarments, you understand. Let me put it a little less personal: I can drop a bomb down a chimney without getting soot on the fins.

See, missus, as for my current state, it was my mates who got me tanked up, to celebrate our graduation, see, in our local hang out. Afterwards, when it was closing time, the barkeep told me to clear the dirty glasses and put away the unused liquor. (He stifles a burp.) So far, I've put away an extra three bottles. And then, well I sort of don't remember quite what happened next – but all of a sudden, I come to and find myself here, without my mates and worse, without my trouser cuffs! Imagine. I've got this natty black Royal Australian Air Force uniform that all the girls just love to touch, and here they've gone and undone my trouser cuffs. (Wistfully.) Oh, and wasn't they some fair pair of terrific trouser cuffs, too. "Tailored especially for A/G Hillis, December 13, 1942, Town Hall Shop, Lethbridge." I remember them like it was yesterday.

SHIRLEY: Even so, it's barely one o'clock in the afternoon.
HILLIS: I know I've had a few, and I also know how few I've had.
SHIRLEY: It's wonderful that you've signed up, knowing that you may have come all this way, god forbid, to die...
HILLIS: What? No, missus. I didn't just come to Canada today! Cracky, it took us weeks to get here from down under.
SHIRLEY: (Confused.) Today? What? No, I meant...never mind. I won't report you, but you should be more careful in the future.
HILLIS: Oh, bless you, missus!
SHIRLEY: (She's ready to enter the butcher shop, but he blocks her way.) Now, excuse me, please, I want to go into this shop.
HILLIS: (He blocks her.) Oh, no, missus! Until I come face to fly with my trouser cuffs, I’m doing my bit by enforcing the war-time regulations of this establishment: keeping lovely ladies such as yourself out. You don’t dare go in this shop, missus! ’Not on this day!

SHIRLEY: I want to go into this butcher shop.

HILLIS: (Hushed.) Read the sign, missus.

SHIRLEY: What? What are you talking about? Let me past.

HILLIS: It’s Saturday, missus! And the sign plainly says that you cannot go in!

SHIRLEY: What? What do you mean?

HILLIS: (Reciting the sign.) “Ladies, don’t bring your fat cans in here on Saturdays.” Now, that’s the butcher talking, not me. I’d have been a little more subtle if it was me.

SHIRLEY: But I don’t have a fat-can today.

HILLIS: Oh, I know, missus. We all like to feel that way some days. And a lady’s will is always bigger than a fella’s won’t. (Sensitively.) I’d have been more delicate about it myself.

SHIRLEY: What? Oh, for heaven’s sakes! It’s fat-cans, not fat cans!

HILLIS: No matter how you says it, they don’t want you in there when it’s a busy Saturday. Too many fat cans in there and before you know it, there’s more flesh than meat!

SHIRLEY: Oh, you idiot! Fat-cans are the cans we have in the kitchen to collect fat, meat drippings – to make explosives and glue! To help win the war? You know: “We shouldn’t throw it out, we should throw it at Hitler!”

HILLIS: (Sing-songy.) Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without!

SHIRLEY: Yes, yes, that’s right. But as for fat cans...

HILLIS: (Sensitively.) Like I said, if it was up to me, I would’ve been a little less caustic and had the sign read “keesters” or “rears” – anything but fat cans!

SHIRLEY: Oh, you idiot. Fat cans – I mean, fat-cans does not refer to ladies’ bottoms! It’s drippings! Cans of meat drippings!

HILLIS: (Flabbergasted.) No! You mean, it’s buckets of grease? Not broadbeamed Sheilaghs?
SHIRLEY: No! And won’t you know it when your aeroplane doesn’t fall to pieces for lack of glue one day, all because enough us ladies were diligent enough to look after our fat cans – I mean, fat-cans!

HILLIS: (Apologetically, offering his bottle.) Oh, beg your pardon, missus. I didn’t mean to offend. Here, have yourself a bang old swig! Genuine Emu Brandy, all the way from Adelaide. The golden champagne of Australian brandies!

They shuffle about, he staggers, but still gets in the way of her entering the shop.

SHIRLEY: (Refusing the offer.) I’d almost shake the devil’s hand before I’d touch that. I hope no one else sees you in this condition.

HILLIS: You think this is bad, you should have seen me when my Lethbridge mates had me strap on skates for hooky.

SHIRLEY: Hockey.

HILLIS: Call it what you like, but all I know is it got me more wobbled up and woozy than any ride in a kite ever did. And these Canadian boys with their snow. I got my privates so frozen it nearly changed my voice back up!

SHIRLEY: (Checking her watch and peering into the shop.) Oh now look. I hardly have enough time to stand in that line if I want to make it to visiting hours at the veteran’s hospital.

HILLIS: (Confused again.) Ah, but see, that’s just as well, ’cause anyway, it’s Saturday and they don’t want your fat can in there!

SHIRLEY: It’s a fat-can, for heaven’s sake! Fat-can, fat-can, fat-can! And I don’t have one today! (She bends over to begin picking up her packages.)

HILLIS: (He slaps her backside.) I know, missus! You’ve probably got a fair dinkum caboose most days, but not today! No fat cans on a Saturday!

SHIRLEY: (Exasperated.) For the last time, it’s a fat-can, not a fat can! And I don’t have one! Oh, never mind. I’ve had enough. I’ll just have to do without and come back next week. (She gathers up her packages and begins to exit.) I hope you’re good at what you’ve been trained to do, young man. I almost pity the enemy,
because if aggravation wins wars, you’ll surely send the Germans running! And for your information, you’d be better off drinking Canada Dry! (She exits.)

HILLIS: (Shouting after her.) I’m bloody well trying to drink Canada dry, missus. But it’s a-some big bloody country – it’s going to take me a little time to finish the job!

BLACKOUT.

THE END