

Low Orbit Ribs

By Keith Eckert

Characters:

General Ross, male, commander of the Canadian Air Force Base

Lieutenant Jones, his aide

Airman Cooper, one of Ross' underlings

Airman Smith, another soldier

(Other than General Ross, the other characters can be female or male.)

Time & Location:

Present Day

General Ross' office, Canadian Air Force Base in Credence, BC

THE PLAY OPENS TO TYPICAL OFFICES NOISES. THERE IS A KNOCK AT A DOOR.

JONES: Excuse me, General Ross.

ROSS: What is it, Lieutenant Jones?

JONES: Per your instructions, I've brought Airman Cooper.

ROSS: Ah yes, come in, Cooper. Stay with us Lieutenant. Now Cooper, I want you to look at the fire out the window, there – look at it! It's completely out of control. It didn't occur to you, airman, that using rocket fuel instead of propane would send my precious barbeque ribs – not to mention my grill – into low orbit?

COOPER: Yes, sir!

ROSS: The tragedy of it all! Those Kansas City ribs!

JONES: Three airman were seriously hurt, sir.

ROSS: Don't bother me with details, Lieutenant Jones! Do I look like a details person? In my job, do I need to know every piddly thing that happens around this base? Where were they last seen?

JONES: In the infirmary, sir.

ROSS: Not the dang-blasted airmen, airman, I mean the ribs and the grill!

JONES: Soaring somewhere above Eugene, Oregon.

ROSS: That hippie hangout – ugh! Do you think we should try to them blow them up?

JONES: Eugene, Oregon, sir?

ROSS: No, you idiot! My ribs – the grill! We've got other plans for Eugene, Oregon.

ROSS BEGINS LAUGHING TO HIMSELF SINISTERLY AND DOESN'T HEAR WHAT JONES SAYS NEXT.

JONES: I'm assured they will burn up in re-entry in a day or so.

ROSS: What?

JONES; I was assured they will burn up in re-entry in a day or so.

ROSS: Airman Cooper, you are going to be doing every crappy job on this base for the next 10 years, you're going to be a friend with every latrine, an intimate with every urinal, a cousin of every toilet –

JONES: Excuse me, sir. Can I speak to you in private for a moment?

ROSS: Uh, yes.

OFF MIKE: THE SOUNDS OF WHISPERING.

ROSS: (CONTINUED) Really?

MORE WHISPERING.

ROSS: (CONTINUED) No!

MORE WHISPERING.

ROSS: (CONTINUED) Jiminy crickets! Well, Cooper, I'm told that due to our new agreement with Soldiers and Pie Crust Makers Union of North America Amalgamated, I am only allowed to promote people. Therefore, due to gross negligence, dereliction of duty, stupidity, and an utter disregard for a general's meat, I am promoting you to corporal.

COOPER: Yes sir!

ROSS: Don't let it happen again or I'll make you sergeant!

COOPER: Yes sir!

ROSS: Good. Now that we've cleared that up, you're dismissed.

COOPER: Thank you, sir.

SOUND OF COOPER LEAVING, THEN A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

SMITH: Pardon me, general. I'm just taking your extra chair.

ROSS: Hold up there, Airman -- where are you taking my chair?

SMITH: I'm going to throw it on the fire.

ROSS: Throw it on the fire -- what?!

SMITH: Throw it on the fire, *sir*!

ROSS: That's better, Airman. Now why are you putting it on the fire? I want the fire out.

SMITH: You do? Then we hadn't accurately judged your intentions for the fire. You want the fire *out*.

ROSS: Yes, of course. I want the fire out.

SMITH: Ah, I see. You won't reconsider, sir? It's a very nice fire.

ROSS: Most definitely not! I want that fire out!

SMITH: I see. So we need to find the anti-fire fire crew. We got the pro-fire fire crew out there.

ROSS: We have a pro-fire fire crew?

SMITH: Yes, sir. I'm the chief – chief of the pro-fire fire crew. I'll get the anti-fire fire crew chief, sir.

ROSS: Yes, well I'm glad I cleared that up.

SMITH: So your chair, sir, I guess you want me to push it all the way back there?

ROSS: Oh, I'm not made of stone, Airman. Go ahead and throw it on the fire. But nothing else!

SMITH: Thank you, sir! Most generous, sir!

SOUND OF AIRMAN SMITH EXITING.

ROSS: Just look at the fire, lieutenant. Hmm. It is very nice.

OFF MIKE: THE SOUND OF TRUCKS PULLING UP OUTSIDE AND SOME INDISTINCT SHOUTING.

ROSS: (CONTINUED) Ah, here comes the anti-fire fire crew, I presume. A smart looking group. Makes you proud to serve in the Canadian Air Force.... Uh, Jones, make a note for me.

JONES: Yes sir.

ROSS: The flame thrower that looks like a fire extinguisher.

JONES: Yes sir?

OFF MIKE: THERE'S A LOUD WHOOSH AS IF THE FIRE SUDDENLY GOT MUCH LARGER. A MAN – OR MEN – CAN BE HEARD SCREAMING ALONG WITH SOUNDS OF CONFUSION AND YELLING.

ROSS: Yes, that's a bad idea.

JONES: A *bad* idea. Got it, sir.

ROSS: Now Jones, we need to make sure no one finds out about this.

JONES: Yes, sir.

ROSS: Good.

JONES: Yes sir. I'll have everyone killed who knows anything about it.

ROSS: Good – what? What did you say?

JONES: I said, I'll have everyone killed who knows anything about this.

ROSS: For Christ's sake, airman, we don't need to kill everyone! Just tell them not to talk about it with anyone. Tell them it's some kind of new secret anti-terrorist artery-clogging weapon system.

JONES: But general!

ROSS: But what?

JONES: Well, I joined the air force to kill people, and, dang it, I haven't killed anyone yet. And I've been in this air force five years.

ROSS: Look Jones, you joined the Canadian Air Force. What did you think we do? We haven't killed anyone since the big one in '68. You should have joined with the states. They're always killing someone or something.

JONES: But think how effective it would be to kill everyone. No one would ever hear about this. Very tidy.

ROSS: No, no, no! Now I understand where you're coming from – you'd think that joining the air force would have you killing people right and wrong, but no. The armed forces ain't what it used to be. But on the bright side, society is on the verge of complete collapse and soon we'll be cracking open each other's skulls to eat the sweet, nutritious brains.

JONES: Thanks for cheering me up, sir.

ROSS: That's what leaders are for, Jones.

JONES: But you won't change your mind?

ROSS: Absolutely, positively not! ...How would you do it?

JONES: Oh, quite neatly, General. I'd poison the wine coolers during movie night

ROSS: Ah. And the movie?

JONES: The Love Bug, of course.

ROSS: The Lindsay Lohan version?

JONES: Don't mock me, sir.

ROSS: That's very interesting, Jones. Killing everyone who knows anything about this. Of course, that wouldn't include me! Ha ha!

JONES: I – I guess not, maybe.

ROSS: Uh, yes, yes. But no – no killing, let's make that perfectly clear. No killing. No killing at all! Uh, you'd better write that down, too.

JONES: Yes sir.

ROSS: Are you writing that down? *No* killing.

JONES: Yes sir.

ROSS: Good. Tell me Jones, is there a psychological test for officers?

JONES: Yes, sir.

ROSS: Apparently, the standards are very low.

JONES: Yes sir.

ROSS: That's what I thought. You're dismissed.

SOUND OF LIEUTENANT JONES LEAVING. FADE OUT OF OFFICE SOUNDS.

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