

THE STOVE - CAKES - Leon Mesher & Dean Heard

Scene opens on the inside of a tilt. Sam and Joe have just entered, bursting through the door, snow-covered. Each has an arm-load of wood. They threw it down, and brush off the snow.

SAM: (heading for the stove: drops wood in box; rubs hands together)
Colder than floating on a pan of ice for three weeks, out there !! Think it's time to light the fire - I'm half frozen!

JOE: By gosh, you'll need some splits, boy. Here, let me! (They both huddle by the stove, working to get a fire going. At last it lights, and they both turn away). Let's get some stove-cakes goin'. I'm hungry enough to eat a whole deer myself -- and then ask for seconds!!

SAM: Put on the kettle, too - me insides is dried right up! Haven't had any tea since early this mornin' !

(Joe busies himself with stove-cakes and kettle; Sam gets out the bedrolls). He may work with some furs, while Joe is occupied with stove-cakes. (He also pulls out a map, and spreads it on the floor, facing the audience. Both whistle a bit, to fill the silence).

SAM: How far do you think we've come today?

JOE: (finishes his stove-cakes, by placing them on the stove; then joins Sam, as they pour over the map) I'd say we come about 30 miles from Eagle River. That last brook we crossed, I saw a cat-sign. Looks to be good country round in here. Tomorrow, I'm going farther on Eagle River. How about you, Sam?

SAM: Think I'll head out towards Beaver Pond tomorrow. If I'm not back by 4:00 o'clock, you can come lookin' fer me. I'll do the same fer you.

JOE: (studying the map) You see this pond here? What's it called -- Crooked Pond! Well, when I was fifteen, me and me father went in there November and we come out December 2nd. I scalded my leg with partridge soup. I was taking soup out of the pot, see, when the partridge gave a jump! Well, I thought it was still alive, so I give a jump backwards, and I grabbed the pot as I went! I tipped it right over, bottoms-up and poured the works on my leg. It pained, boy, like I was bein' branded! Me father, he wrapped it up in clean underwear, and the next day, we headed out

SAM: That reminds me of the time me and Henry was out hunting around --- we had a couple of days on Lake Melville; we was out for caribou up in the mountains. 'Twas a beautiful day; so we decided to go on in over the mountains. We only had one deer each, and we wanted to get two each - greedy, we was - so we went on back through the mountains.

So that's all right; it come late - very late. We decided we wouldn't go back to the camp that night; we would stay where we was to. Goin' to be a beautiful night, we said. We could lie down on a couple of deer-skins, and stay all night. So that's what we done; we stamped a hole in the snow, and lied down all night, then. Not very cold. About twelve o'clock, we woke up and all we could hear was a roar of wind.

We didn't take much notice of that; we woke up next morning - we was drifted right over with snow! And we couldn't see, not the length of ourselves. Well, that was OK. We had no food, no nothing. So we had to try to get back, regardless of the weather. Twas stormy, so we got lost. And we went all that day --- couldn't see a thing - couldn't even, well, when we had to get right to each others' ear, if we had a mind to speak to each other, and then we'd have to bawl as hard as we could. Couldn't find nothing - not a stake, not a stump. We was just on the icy mountains and we was gettin' hungry. About twelve o'clock that day, it turned to rain and sleet. Then we started to get wet! And we was still nowhere. Couldn't find no way to get off the mountain!

So we went, Henry said we had to go - nothing else to do. We was wet and cold-- if we stopped, we'd perish. So we kepted at that, all day, and all the next night. That was two days, and now was comin' night, and we still couldn't get anywhere. So we kepted on going up in the mountains, up among cliffs and everywhere; we knowed any minute we could fall head over a cliff and break our necks, but we had to keep going!

Down below, we could see a dark line, like a valley or somethin', and we didn't know quite how to get there, so we strikes off down over. We fell maybe, 60,70 feet, almost straight, but we just hit the soft snow and skittered on down the mountain. Finally we stopped, and it was trees we'd seen down there, so we set to, make a fire. We still had our axe; we lost our dogs sometime that night.

We was both tired and sleepy, and we made a fire on the snow, see? Sometime that night, we lied down by the edge of the fire, and y'know what a big fire will do in the snow; it'll eat down, eh? Melt down. And I bet that night, that fire went down, oh, about 10 feet ... on the edge of the boughs where we was lyin' (and fell

solid asleep). It all caved in around the fire, and ...
HENRY FELL IN THE FIRE !!!

(Joe and Sam both chuckle)

He roused me up, callin', "Sam! Sam! I'm in the fire!!!"
So I come to my senses and here he was, down in the fire,
thrashing around, his moccassins burned and his vamps,
everything --- his socks, all --- burned. And he was down
in the fire hisself, scrabbling around tryin' to get out.
So I grabbed him by the hand and hauled him up. It took
us quite awhile to get organized; herewas Henry with no
moccassins, no feet gear. So we had to share up after that.
Henry had some of my vamps, no moccassins - just a pair
of my vamps and a pair of socks.

JOE: Speakin of fire, look at our stove-cakes !!! They
look something like Henry's moccassins!!! (Both
scramble to save their smoldering dinner. A little
charcoal rubbed on the stove surface will effectively
blacken the stove-cakes, as Joe wipes them through
it, to hold their blackened side to the audience).

(Sam's face falls; he slowly and deliberately wags
his head, then slumps down, his head resting in his
hands. He is totally disgusted and disappointed).

JOE: (putting down the stove-cakes, and picking up the
tea-kettle) Oh well! At least the tea will be good!!

- curtain -

xx It might be of interest to note that both of the "yarns"
of this skit really happened, though maybe not just in the
way described here. The first involved Dean's father, and
the second involved Leon's father (the Henry who fell in
the fire). The second story was transcribed from a tape,
on which John "Jack" Lethbridge related the tale of Henry
and the burned moccassins.