

*Wahoo*

**WAHOO**  
A Play by John Fisher

*Wahoo*

WAHOO  
A Play

Characters

JAY, ten years old; can be played by adult or young adult

MOTHER, forties

FATHER, forties

BROTHER, fourteen years old; can be played by adult or young adult but should clearly be older than the actor playing JAY

MAN, fifties (can be played by same actor who plays FATHER)

Time

1970s

Place

A house in the suburbs

The play is performed without intermission. With regards to the action scenes, they should be fun and imaginative in execution. They are a boy's effort at self-amusement. The boy is always using whatever is available to him to tell a story for himself and have fun. One of the props – the hamster – will require careful property work. The rest should at least look makeshift and homemade. Many props – like dials, buttons, binoculars, periscopes and guns - are mimed.

The Space: The playing space consists of a living room area stage right and a bedroom area stage left. Center Stage is a large open space with JAY's bedroom upstage. In JAY's bedroom is a hamster cage with treadmill, record player, etc. There is a bannister symbolizing the top of a staircase stage right.

The Sub Lingo/Mush Morton: No attempt has been made to duplicate the correct technical language used on a World War II submarine. When you're young and "playing war" you make up your own lingo. That is the "truth" of the language. The story of Mush Morton is pretty much correct, although his demise is speculation as no one really knows how ended.

Wahoo

JAY enters and speaks to the audience.

JAY

I went to a gallery and the artist had suspended models of the whole US submarine fleet from the ceiling. So it looked like you were underwater staring at all these tiny submarines, like you were a fish. He'd also listed the names of all the submarines on the wall behind the display. My two favorites are the Pampanito, because that's the sub on display in my hometown of San Francisco. And the Wahoo because... well, that's a sub with a not very nice story attached to it. A story, oddly, that I could relate to. The Pampanito was just an ordinary sub, it just sank shit. But the Wahoo... Now that's a story. Here, I'll tell it to you.

(Dramatic music from the sub movie *Run Silent, Run Deep*. JAY puts on a submarine captain's hat.)

JAY

I guess I should back up. Back then, I'm talking about when I was growing up, when I was ten, tenish, you could go to surplus stores and buy crap. I mean, you still can. But all the World War II stuff is now like sacred treasure. They keep it all locked up and under bulletproof glass, like it's actually family heirlooms or some such shit. Back then it was just a bunch of old military junk that nobody wanted. You'd go to the surplus store and it was all just laying out in bins on the floor. Everyone wanted the camping gear and the sleeping bags, the war stuff was just tired stuff that was useless. You could pick up cool shit like an officer's hat for like eight dollars. Incredible. My dad had one in his closet in a plastic wrapper, which he treated like the Holy Grail.

(FATHER enters holding officer's hat in plastic wrapper.)

When he took it out of his wrapper it was like there was this ethereal music playing, like Wagner.

(FATHER makes ethereal music as he mimes removing a hat from a wrapper.)

FATHER

(To JAY)

If I ever catch you touching this you're in big trouble: This is my officer's hat from World War II.

JAY

(To audience)

*Wahoo*

It was actually from Korea. He was in World War II like for eight days and then the Japanese surrendered so he had to come back five years later to fight the Koreans. But he never fought the Koreans. He ended up in Oxnard as a judge advocate. And it wasn't like that TV show about judge advocates where they're always jumping out of airplanes and blowing up bridges. He prosecuted stupid sailors who got drunk and drove their cars into walls. In Oxnard. That was his Korean War. When I brought this hat home he asked,

FATHER

Where'd you get that?

JAY

He was slightly annoyed. I could hear it in his voice. Like he'd fought a war to get his hat, why'd I have one? "Surplus," I told him. "It cost eight dollars." He went back to the Sports Page.

(FATHER exits. Lights change, something to delineate the story telling phases.)

JAY

So I'd buy these hats and play war. That's how I'm going to tell you this story. As a play. I bet you didn't know that's where the word play came from. This is a play because I'm playing. Get it? I just made that up. Anyway. The Wahoo was commissioned a Gato class submarine just after the start of World War II. She had been constructed in Vallejo, CA, at Mare Island shipyard. I once asked my father if we could go up to Vallejo and see the shipyard and he said,

FATHER

(Entering holding sports page)

You don't want to go up there."

JAY

I asked why. He didn't answer and my brother, who was older than me, said,

BROTHER

(Entering)

It's a ghetto.

JAY

I'd never heard of a ghetto and I asked, "What's that?" And my father said,

FATHER

You know that part of the city we drive through and your mother always makes you roll up the windows and lock the doors? It's like that.

JAY

*Wahoo*

It's weird how we accept things like that as an explanation of what something is. Anyway, my father said,

FATHER

You wanna see a submarine, we'll take you to see a submarine. But we're not going to Vallejo. Forget about it.

(FATHER and BROTHER exit.)

JAY

We never did. Never went and saw a submarine that is. Or go to Vallejo for that matter.

(He crosses to the modeling area – his bedroom.)

JAY

I built a model of her. Ships are always "her." I like that about them. I built a model of her. I loved building models. I wasn't very good at it though cause I always used too much glue. I wanted to make sure they stayed together. I also liked the glue. It made you super high and you were doing something creative, so no one could give you a hard time about it. My mother said I could only work on my models for one hour at time. "Why only one hour?" She'd heard that glue made you high so she'd come up with a rule about it, based on nothing. It was fun to ask her about her rules: "Why only one hour?" And she'd say,

MOTHER  
(Entering)

Because too much glue's not good for you.

JAY

But why one hour?

MOTHER

Jay.

JAY  
(To audience)

That was her response when she didn't have an answer beyond the initial instruction:

MOTHER

Jay.

JAY  
(To MOTHER)

*Wahoo*

Ok, so when can I resume working on it after the initial hour? (To audience) I knew she didn't have an answer to this but I knew she'd have to come up with one, to maintain authority.

MOTHER

Five minutes.

JAY  
(To MOTHER)

Five minutes? What's the point of that?

MOTHER

Ok, ten minutes.

JAY

Ten? How is that any different from five?

MOTHER

Jay.

(MOTHER exits. JAY holds up a box.)

JAY

So here's the model kit. (He holds up an unassembled model of a Gato class submarine – all the pieces still on their frame.) And here's the model. So interesting. It comes like this. All unassembled and you have to remove the pieces but they leave this little sprews. I think I made that word up. Sprews. Anyway, they leave this "screw" which you then have to file down. I borrowed an emery board from my Mom.

MOTHER

What do you want it for?

JAY

What does it matter?

MOTHER

I want to know what you want it for.

JAY  
(To audience)

She was worried I was going to start doing my nails. (To MOTHER) I need it for a model I'm making.

MOTHER

Wahoo

(Handing him emery board)

Ok. Here.

(MOTHER exits.)

JAY

So I would work for one hour at a time, with ten-minute brakes on my model of the Wahoo. Now all models come in gray but it's not precisely the color of the submarines so you had to paint them, you had to paint them the right color. And it had to be painted different shades of gray so it was very precise work. I knew my mom had these little brushes for applying polish to her nails so I asked if I could borrow one.

MOTHER  
(Entering)

Why?

JAY  
(To MOTHER)

What do you mean "why?" "

MOTHER

What are you working on up there?

JAY

A model. (To audience) She still thought I was doing my nails.

MOTHER

What kind of model?

JAY

Of the Wahoo. (To audience) Nail implements, models, the Wahoo, she didn't like the sound of it.

MOTHER

What do you need a nail brush for?

JAY

For painting it gray.

MOTHER

Ok. She gave it to me, reluctantly.

(MOTHER very slowly hands him nail brush and exits, looking suspiciously over her shoulder.)

*Wahoo*

JAY

Now putting the guns on the deck of the Wahoo was very difficult and even my tiny fingers were too big. So I asked her if I could borrow her tweezers.

MOTHER

(Entering)

What on earth are you doing up there?

JAY

Nothing.

MOTHER

Tweezers are for plucking eyebrows, don't tell me you're doing nothing up there.

JAY

I'm building a model. Jesus.

MOTHER

And what do you need tweezers for?

JAY

For putting the 22 mm machine guns in place on the deck. (To audience) I guess that sounded convincing because she gave them to me. But she gave them to me with a look like she was going to check the tweezers for eyebrows.

(MOTHER has handed him tweezers but she literally backs off stage keeping a close eye on him. He holds up the completed model of the Wahoo and crosses downstage.)

JAY

In a few days I had my own Wahoo. She joined the Pacific Fleet under Lieutenant Commander Marvin G. "Pinky" Kennedy. (He makes snare drum sounds with his mouth as he suspends the sub from the ceiling on wires.) She cruised around the Japanese base of Truk for a while and then she struck out into the open sea. Pinky Kennedy was a good commander, he attacked a Jap freighter. I built a model of her and staged the battle myself. I rigged the freighter on top of an old skate and then rigged the skate to my hamster exerciser.

(He has produced a model of a Japanese freighter and a skate. These he joins and runs a cord to the hamster treadmill, which he places downstage. He removes the hamster and holds it up for the audience – the hamster should be a prop.)

JAY



*Wahoo*

This is Julius Caesar, my hamster. His cage is kinda a mess – sorry about that. Anyway, as you see, when he runs in place it operates the gear that pulls the Jap freighter. Hey, Julius. (He places JULIUS on treadmill) Ok, go ahead.

(JULIUS runs on his treadmill and the freighter is slowly towed downstage.)

JAY

Good work, Julius. Now the thing about sinking an enemy ship is achieving a good firing position. You have to spot the ship in the distance so you can line up with him and hit him square on the side of the hull as he passes. Not an easy thing to do. So as the freighter comes downstage Commander Kennedy. “Pinky,” lined up with it and achieved an optimum firing position. (He holds up three pencils, unsharpened.) He launched three torpedoes.

(He launches the three torpedoes from the Wahoo and shows their track towards the freighter.)

JAY

But remember that even if you achieve a good firing position you’re shooting at a moving target through ocean water so you have to vector it just right to hit your target.

(He shows the track of the shot – making appropriate noises for its launch and cruise. First one misses. He shows another one. It misses also.)

JAY

But he must have achieved a hit because....

(He shows the track of the third shot and it makes contact with the freighter.)

JAY

He heard underwater explosions on his Sonar.

(JAY makes explosion sounds and rocks the freighter as if it were hit. He realizes JULIUS is still running, which is no longer necessary.)

JAY

That’s ok, Julius Caesar. Thanks. JC. Thanks.

(JULIUS stops.)

JAY

*Wahoo*

Then Pinky high tailed it out of there because he was afraid of air attack. So great, a probable hit. Pinky was doing pretty well. His next sighting was a submarine tender.

(JAY replaces freighter with tender on skate and starts JULIUS running.)

JAY

But he couldn't get a good firing position on the tender. It arrived too quickly and he couldn't get ahead of it.

(This he demonstrates.)

JAY

Finally, his ultimate quarry, an aircraft carrier. Aircraft carriers are the best target, solid gold. They're the most dangerous thing afloat so if you sink one you're a big time sub ace. No one knows the name of it but he had a perfect line up on it.

(He replaces tender with model aircraft carrier – Japanese Ryuku class.)

JAY

But he hesitated.

(JULIUS has worked aircraft carrier into place. But Pinky has hesitated. JAY spins his hat backwards and looks through mimed periscope.)

JAY

(As a JUNIOR OFFICER)

"We're in position, sir." But Pinky wasn't sure. (As PINKY) "Stand by." (As JUNIOR) "Target's in position, sir." "Stand by." "Why, sir?" "I'm waiting for a better position." "Sir?" "Do what you're told. Standby" "She's getting away, sir." "Lieutenant, stand by." "Commander Kennedy, sir." "Be quiet." (To audience) He never fired his torpedoes. The carrier got away. Of course a carrier is a very dangerous target because it's full of planes. And even if you hit the carrier it can launch its planes before it sinks. And what are they all going to be looking for? You. (As JUNIOR OFFICER) "Sir?" (PINKY) "It's all right. Break off the attack. We missed her." "What should I write in the log, sir?" "Never achieved an adequate firing position." (To audience) But that's not what the Lieutenant wrote. When Pinky got back to Pearl Harbor he had a meeting with the admiral.

(FATHER enters wearing his navy hat. He plays the ADMIRAL in this scene. He is hopping mad.)

FATHER

What the blazes is your problem, Pinky?

Wahoo

JAY

Sir?

FATHER

You think this is a boating excursion? We send you out there to sink Jap ships. You achieved firing position on a Jap carrier and you didn't fire.

JAY

Sir, it-

FATHER

I don't want your excuses, you lazy son-of-a-bitch. I want you to sink Jap tonnage. I'm giving you a new Exec. Mush Morton. If you pussyfoot around out there he'll let me know. He's a fireball.

JAY

(To audience)

I just made that all up. With my father playing the authority figure. Sometimes I like to imagine real people playing the roles. It helps the reality of things. My Dad wasn't really like that as an authority figure though. When I brought home my mid-term report card he was much nicer.

(JAY hands FATHER report card. FATHER removes Navy hat and looks at it.)

FATHER

It says you're getting all Cs.

JAY

Yes.

FATHER

You're usually such a good student.

JAY

I know.

FATHER

It says you're disorganized.

JAY

I know.

FATHER

Well, you need to get organized, ok?

Wahoo

JAY

Ok.

FATHER

All right.

(FATHER exits.)

JAY

(To audience)

Well, that was easy. You see, not nearly what I was afraid of. Back to Pinky and Mush. (As MUSH, extending his hand to shake PINKY's) "Pinky." (As PINKY) "Mush." "Ok, Commander, let's sink some tonnage." (To audience) And they did. First cruise they got a freighter. And this time it went down hard.

(He has now set up freighter and JULIUS.)

JAY

I like to imagine Mush kept Pinky on track. (AS PINKY) "We're getting too close, Mush." (As MUSH) "No, we're fine, Pinky." "She has an escort." "Don't worry about that. Fire one." (As a SAILOR, holding hand to ear like he has a headset) "One away, sir." (As PINKY) "I give the orders here, Mush." (As MUSH) "Fire two. What was that, sir?" (As SAILOR) Two away, sir. (MUSH is looking at his stopwatch, making ticking sounds.) "Forty-five seconds to impact, sir." (Pause.) "One's a miss." (Pause.) "Seventy-five seconds, sir." (Pause.) "Two's a..." (JAY makes an explosion sound.) "That's a hit!"

(He makes more explosions sounds and kicks over freighter and skate as he does so. He sings and dances "Boogie-Woogie-Bugle Boy." MOTHER comes onstage and listens as if she could hear him upstairs singing.)

MOTHER

Jay!

JAY

Oh God. She heard me. How embarrassing.

MOTHER

Jay Bay.

JAY

Jay Bay. Jay Bay. That's good. Her term of affection. (Calling back to her) What?

MOTHER

Come downstairs. I want to talk to you.

*Wahoo*

(JAY crosses to the bannister and makes a circular motion to get himself downstairs to the Living Room area – whenever he goes downstairs, he makes a huge sweeping move across the stage as if coming down a huge curving staircase.)

What? JAY

What do you do up there all day? MOTHER

Nothing. JAY

Are you still messing around with glue? MOTHER

Not today. JAY

You're going to stay inside all day? MOTHER

I guess. JAY

Well, it's not healthy. I want you to get outside. Once a day. MOTHER

Ok. JAY

And no television. MOTHER

I just watch old movies. JAY

What kind of movies? MOTHER

War movies. JAY

MOTHER

*Wahoo*

Well, that's not healthy either.

Ok. JAY

Don't you have any friends? MOTHER

No. JAY

What about Talbot? Call up your friend Talbot. MOTHER

He's in Bermuda. His parents took him to Bermuda. JAY

Well, you must have other friends. MOTHER

I don't. Can you drive me to the hobby store? JAY

No, you can walk. I'm not driving you around all day. MOTHER

It's a two-hour walk. JAY

You're not doing anything. It'll be good for you. MOTHER

Can I have some money? JAY

You have your allowance. MOTHER

I spent that. JAY

Well, you can't have more. Wait till next week. MOTHER

(She exits.)

*Wahoo*

JAY  
(To audience)

I figured out she kept money in her old purses. In her dressing room. Just money she'd put there some night when she went out and forgot about. Hey, she'd never miss it. And Mush was getting successful. I was going to need to build more tonnage to sink. Oh, yeah, Mush got command of the Wahoo. Go Mush!

(FATHER enters as ADMIRAL.)

FATHER  
Good work out there, Pinky.

JAY  
Thank you, Admiral.

FATHER  
I think you need a rest. We're sending you state side. Desk job.

JAY  
(To audience)  
Poor Pinky.

(FATHER removes hat and crosses to living room area where he sits with MOTHER.)

JAY  
(To audience)  
Of course the key to Mush's success was intelligence. The US intelligence service was excellent. It broke the Japanese codes. I too was an excellent spy. I had to be. I couldn't have anything interfering with my operations. I had to find out what the enemy was planning. So I'd listen to my parents talk at night, over cocktails.

(He sits at the top of the stairs, clinging to the bannister, listening to his parents. MOTHER and FATHER sit in living room nursing cocktails through the following.)

FATHER  
What does he do up there all day?

MOTHER  
He builds models.

FATHER  
He should be outside. Jesus the weather is beautiful this summer.

MOTHER

*Wahoo*

He's happy. So long as he's not taking drugs or getting syphilis.

FATHER

He's ten years old? How would he be getting syphilis?

MOTHER

I just wish he wouldn't pick his nose. He gets that from you.

FATHER

Oh for Christ's sake. I've got dried snot up there. There's no other way to get it out.

MOTHER

Use your handkerchief. That's why I wash them.

FATHER

I need a fingernail. Jesus, are we going to argue about this again? Doesn't he play soccer?

MOTHER

What?

FATHER

Doesn't he have soccer practice?

MOTHER

Soccer's in the fall.

FATHER

What about Baseball?

MOTHER

Baseball's in the spring. And he's not very good at it. Other kids tease him. You'd know that if you were a coach.

FATHER

I'd love to be a coach. You know why I'm not? I'm too busy. Too busy working my ass off to pay the mortgage on this place.

MOTHER

Oh, is that what you're doing?

FATHER

Yes, it is.

MOTHER



*Wahoo*

Is that what you're doing in the city till two in the morning on Monday night?

FATHER

Yes.

MOTHER

Oh, ok, I see.

FATHER

You want to talk about this?

MOTHER

No. I don't.

FATHER

Cause I'm happy to talk about it.

MOTHER

Drop it.

FATHER

I am.

MOTHER

(The same way she says, "Jay")

Paul.

FATHER

He should get outside. We pay all this money to live in the country, for Christ's sake.

MOTHER

His brother sits around here all day also.

FATHER

He sits around here reading. He's a math wiz. He's doing something with his time.

MOTHER

He's a nerd.

FATHER

He's not a nerd. (Pause.) What's a nerd?

MOTHER

I had my bridge ladies over and he was slouching when he met them. Slouching. He gets that from you.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

Oh, Jesus.

MOTHER

Paul, you slouch. It's disgusting. It's because you're over weight.

FATHER

I'm not over weight.

MOTHER

Paul. You are.

FATHER

And you have the biggest ass I've ever seen.

MOTHER

Your kids slouch and pick their nose because they see you do it.

FATHER

And if they end up with fat asses we'll know where that came from.

JAY

(To audience)

They could go on like this for hours.

FATHER

You want another one?

MOTHER

I'm going to bed. You drink too much.

FATHER

And you don't drink enough.

MOTHER

That's just stupid.

FATHER

You're stupid.

(Pause.)

MOTHER

He goes into my dressing room.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

When you're in it?

MOTHER

No, not when I'm in it.

FATHER

How do you know?

MOTHER

Things are different. Not the way I remember them. Misplaced.

FATHER

What does he do in there?

MOTHER

I have no idea.

FATHER

Does he put on your dresses?

MOTHER

I don't know.

JAY  
(To audience)

This is so unfair. I steal money, I don't put on dresses. I steal money. But I can't even defend myself.

FATHER

How do you know it's not his brother? Maybe he goes into your dressing room.

MOTHER

No, he wouldn't do that.

FATHER

How do you know?

MOTHER

He's too much of a nerd.

FATHER

What's a nerd?

MOTHER

*Wahoo*

It means uncool. His brother is a nerd.

FATHER

You're saying wearing dresses is cool?

MOTHER

I'm saying it's at least creative, his brother isn't creative, he takes after you.

FATHER

You mean he's smart?

MOTHER

I mean he'd never do something as much fun as put on a dress.

FATHER

Well, what do you want to do about it?

MOTHER

What can we do about it? I'm not going to say anything.

FATHER

Well someone should.

MOTHER

You're his father.

FATHER

It's not like talking to him about his report card.

JAY  
(To audience)

I'm not wearing dresses!

FATHER

You should leave a note on one of the dresses saying, "I know what you're up to – stop it!"

MOTHER

That's ridiculous. Besides, what if he doesn't see the note?

FATHER

Put it on the most popular dress.

MOTHER

The most popular dress?

*Wahoo*

FATHER

The one he likes to wear most.

MOTHER

There isn't one he likes to wear most. I'm sorry I brought it up.

FATHER

Why did you bring it up?

MOTHER

I just... he's borrowed my tweezers and nail file and some other things. I was getting concerned.

FATHER

You loaned him tweezers?

MOTHER

He said it's for making models.

FATHER

Christ, he should look like Farrah Fawcett with all that. He's just a sloppy little kid.

MOTHER

Would you take an interest in him if he looked like Farrah Fawcett?

FATHER

That's just gross.

MOTHER

Never mind. I don't even know why I brought it up.

JAY

(To audience)

Intelligence report – enemy suspicious but no discernable reaction in site. Response is ambiguous. Strategy - continue with operations till further notice. Action – leave purse in mother's closet open to make obvious you're a thief and not a drag queen.

(BROTHER enters living room. He is slouching.)

BROTHER

Hey.

FATHER

Hi.

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Stand up straight please.

(He stands up straight and rubs his nose.)

MOTHER

And stop picking your nose.

BROTHER

I wasn't picking it. I was rubbing it.

MOTHER

You should never touch your nose in public.

BROTHER

Jeez.

FATHER

Don't talk to your mother that way.

BROTHER

All I said was "Jeez."

FATHER

I want you to take that bucket of balls and practice batting with your brother.

BROTHER

He's a dweeb.

FATHER

What's a dweeb?

MOTHER

It's like a nerd. He's not a dweeb.

FATHER

You practice with him for an hour every day.

BROTHER

He's the nose picker.

FATHER

That's enough.

MOTHER

Now go upstairs.

*Wahoo*

(He starts to exit.)

MOTHER

Good night.

BROTHER

Good night.

(She makes a flat hand gesture to him.)

MOTHER

Up!

(He stands up straight and exits. He gets to the top of the stairs and sees JAY.)

BROTHER

What are you doing?

JAY

Nothing.

BROTHER

Spy.

JAY

I wasn't doing anything.

BROTHER

I'm telling Mom and Dad. Weirdo.

(BROTHER exits.)

JAY

Dangerous waters.

(He stands and talks to audience.)

JAY

Mush Morton had a glorious first voyage. He was determined. He never looked for the love of his men. He only wanted their respect. And he knew he'd get it with harsh discipline and success.

(MOTHER, FATHER and BROTHER all enter and line up like SAILORS at attention. They all wear surplus sailors or officers hats.)

*Wahoo*

JAY

As his men cruised north to the Yellow Sea he conducted training exercises; he was brutal.

(He begins pacing and talking to his SAILORS.)

JAY

You men are soft. Pinky was a very nice commander. I am not. I will exercise you till you bleed with confidence. I don't want you thinking in battle, I want you doing. You will become robots. When a Japanese vessel appears you will turn into carnivorous animals of instinct. You will have one thought: Kill, kill, kill. And for now; drill, drill, drill.

ALL

Aye, aye, Cap'n.

JAY

Dive drill!

(The ACTORS all run to dive positions.)

JAY

Stand-by to crash dive.

ALL

Standing by.

JAY

Dive! Dive!

(The ACTORS all spin dials and depress levers, then lean forward as if the sub is diving.)

JAY

Surface drill! Surface! Surface.

ALL

Surface.

(More dial spinning. ACTORS angle themselves up as if sub is surfacing.)

JAY

Attack drill. Battle stations for torpedo attack.



*Wahoo*

ALL

Battle stations.

(ACTORS all assume contorted positions for firing of a torpedo.)

JAY

(Depressing firing button)

Fire one.

(ACTORS press their own buttons to fire torpedo. They all make the whooshing sound of a released projectile.)

BROTHER

One away.

JAY

(Ditto)

Fire two.

(Ditto.)

BROTHER

Two away.

JAY

Surface for deck gun action.

(ACTORS scramble through surfacing maneuver and then crawl through hatches to get to deck guns – FATHER and BROTHER manning the main batteries, MOTHER on 22 mm.)

FATHER

Forward battery ready, sir!

BROTHER

Aft battery ready, sir!

MOTHER

22 millimeter AA gun ready, sir!

JAY

Deck gun attack on enemy!

(They begin firing their weapons, making appropriate noises. JAY looks through binoculars.)

*Wahoo*

JAY

And if the deck guns don't work we'll use Molotov Cocktails.

(ACTORS begin assembling Molotov cocktails. As they execute these repeated maneuvers and JAY calls out the orders, he stands petting JULIUS)

JAY

Finally the Wahoo arrived in the Yellow Sea. Mush was like a kid in a candy shop. There were targets everywhere! I couldn't afford all the models so I took to cutting them out of construction paper and drawing them.

(CAST sits and cuts out paper models of ships, which they affix to boards and set up around the stage. JAY still paces holding JULIUS and surveying the work. He puts on the *Run Silent, Run Deep* music on his record player.)

JAY

Well thank God, I didn't like all that glue and tweezers.

(The ships are now finished and in place.)

JAY

I set them up in our carport where there was space.

(He puts JULIUS back in his cage and moves about the stage positioning the various ships. The other ACTORS have exited. BROTHER enters with a bucket of baseballs. Lighting changes.)

BROTHER

I'm supposed to help you with your batting.

JAY

I don't want your help.

BROTHER

Good. I don't want to help you. You know, that rat of yours doesn't look right. You should take him to the vet.

JAY

Leave Julius alone.

BROTHER

Those don't look like ships. They look like shits.

JAY

Wahoo

Go away.

(BROTHER steps on one.)

JAY

Get the fuck away from me!

BROTHER

Dweeb.

(BROTHER exits.)

JAY

(Repairing the ship)

That's ok. A lot of the Japanese shipping was very old. It kind of looked like it had been stepped on. I used the baseballs for torpedoes and one day in August I recreated Mush's attack on Yellow sea shipping.

(ACTORS enter and assume their torpedo attack positions. JAY crosses to JULIUS.)

JAY

Julius Caesar was sad because he felt left out. That's all right, Caesar, you can be my second in command. (He places JULIUS on his shoulder.) You sit here.

JAY

The first freighter Mush spotted was the Zogen Maru. (As MUSH) Fire one!

(They go through their firing motions.)

BROTHER

One away, sir!

(JAY roles a baseball at Zogen Maru and hits it, knocking it down. They all cheer.)

JAY

The second was the Kogan Maru. (As MUSH) Fire two!

BROTHER

Two away, sir!

(JAY roles it gently such that it doesn't knock over the ship.)

JAY

*Wahoo*

This one hit but the freighter didn't sink. Faulty torpedoes. (As MUSH) Rats! Fire three!

BROTHER

Three away, sir!

(Again, a gentle role, which doesn't knock her over.)

JAY

Two torpedoes and she kept steaming. Double rats! Then she got the Nhozen Maru and Nittzu Maru. Fire four. Fire aft one.

BROTHER

Four away. Aft one away, sir

(JAY rolls balls at two ships and knocks them both down.)

JAY

Then the Katyosan and Takkaosan. One, two.

BROTHER

One away. Two away, sir.

(They are both knocked down.)

JAY

But the Takkosan was actually more exciting then that. (To MOTHER) Set her back up again.

(MOTHER sets Takkosan back up.)

JAY

The Torpedoes were faulty so he surfaced and used his deck gun. (As MUSH) Surface for deck gun attack!

(All go through the surface drill while JAY sets the cutout ship back up again.)

JAY

Deck gun attack. Commence firing!

ALL

Commence firing!

(They all begin throwing small rocks at Takkaosan. It still stands.)

*Wahoo*

Close range. JAY

Closing range. ALL

(They all begin walking towards Takkason and throwing rocks. Still it stands. Finally JAY just kicks it over and they all cheer and run back to the “conning tower” – the area around JAY.)

JAY  
Mush was getting frustrated with his torpedoes so he took on the next two freighters through surface attack. (As MUSH) Surface attack!

Surface attack! ALL

(They do the rock attack on another cutout ship, kicking it over in the end.)

Surface attack! JAY

Surface attack! ALL

(They do the surface attack on the other cutout eventually kicking it over.)

JAY  
Mush was hungry for targets. He’d sink anything: freighters, destroyers, sampans, fishing trawlers, sailboats, and he never gave up even when his weapons did. Later the same day he spotted a fishing trawler. He didn’t trust his torpedoes on such a small target so he launched a surface attack.

(They all commence throwing rocks. Then one at a time they cry out in pain and grab their shoulders.)

Fore gun jammed. BROTHER

Aft gun jammed. FATHER

Tower 22 mm AA gun jammed. MOTHER

*Wahoo*

JAY

Mush then issued Molotov Cocktails to the crew and closed range to distance zero.

(JAY hands out matchbooks to others. They set fire to the various cutouts.)

JAY

It was an orgy of destruction, a Gethsemane of hate, an apocalypse of fire. He was Mush Morton!

(Music swells and ACTORS all continue to yell, throw Molotov cocktails, and make explosion sounds. Blackout on this scene of devastation. Lights back up on JAY center stage.)

JAY

The enemy was too quiet. I needed an intelligence update. I listened at the stairs.

(Lights up on MOTHER and FATHER sipping cocktails in Living Room.)

FATHER

What happened with the great dress caper?

MOTHER

The great dress caper?

FATHER

Did you get him to stop wearing your dresses?

MOTHER

Oh, I was wrong.

FATHER

He wasn't going in there?

MOTHER

He was but he was just stealing money from my purses.

FATHER

Oh. Well, thank God for that.

MOTHER

Yes, it was a big relief.

(Pause.)

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Of course I wish he wasn't a thief.

FATHER

Look, he's not a transvestite. Quit while you're ahead.

MOTHER

Yes, I'm grateful.

FATHER

I do have a question for you.

MOTHER

What's that?

FATHER

About him.

MOTHER

Ok, well shoot.

FATHER

Shoot?

MOTHER

Go ahead.

FATHER

Has he started masturbating?

MOTHER

What kind of a question is that?

FATHER

I'm curious. Has he started masturbating?

MOTHER

How would I know that?

FATHER

I bet you do know. Mothers know these things.

MOTHER

Well I don't. It's disgusting. (Pause.) Yes.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

Yes what?

MOTHER

Yes, to your previous question.

FATHER

What was that?

MOTHER

You know what your question was. Come on.

FATHER

How often?

MOTHER

I'm not answering that question.

FATHER

So you know.

MOTHER

I'm not answering that question either.

FATHER

It wasn't a question. It was a statement. You know how often.

MOTHER

This isn't a courtroom. Leave me alone.

FATHER

A lot?

MOTHER

I don't know. (Pause.) Yes.

FATHER

Yes, a lot?

MOTHER

Paul.

(Pause.)

FATHER

How do you define a lot?



*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Just a lot.

FATHER

Well, you're such a prude "a lot" to you might be once a month.

MOTHER

I'm not going to talk to you if you're going to insult me.

(Pause.)

FATHER

More than once a month?

MOTHER

Yes. A lot more than once a month. Are you satisfied?

FATHER

Once a week?

MOTHER

Paul. He's a preteen.

FATHER

What's that mean?

MOTHER

It means his stuff... his... whatever it's called... It means it's racing. There's a lot of it.

FATHER

His hormones.

MOTHER

If you like.

FATHER

You can say it, dear. You can say the word.

MOTHER

All right, his hormones a lot.

JAY

(To audience)

Their intelligence is a lot better than we thought.

*Wahoo*

(Pause.)

How did you know? MOTHER

I saw him. FATHER

You saw him? MOTHER

Well I didn't see him. But I saw him. FATHER

Doing what? MOTHER

I saw him climbing up a tree. FATHER

So what? MOTHER

It took a long time. FATHER

What are you talking about? MOTHER

It took him a long time to climb up the tree. And he wasn't getting anywhere. He was straddling it but he wasn't really getting anywhere. FATHER

I don't know what you're talking about. MOTHER

Well, I'm not going to say anything more. It's embarrassing. FATHER

Was it here? On our property? MOTHER

It was down at the schoolyard. FATHER

MOTHER

*Wahoo*

Oh, God.

FATHER

It was late. I don't think he thought anyone was looking.

MOTHER

Was he naked?

FATHER

No, he wasn't naked. Nevertheless...

MOTHER

Why didn't we have these problems with his brother?

FATHER

It's not a problem. It's natural.

MOTHER

But Paul Jr. never seemed to do it.

FATHER

He's just too smart to get caught. How did you know anyway?

MOTHER

Know what?

FATHER

That he was masturbating?

MOTHER

A mother knows these things.

FATHER

How?

MOTHER

It would get very quiet.

FATHER

When?

MOTHER

Random times. Throughout the day.

FATHER

Throughout the day? So it is a lot.

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Paul. I'm not going into it. Also, I do the laundry. That's how I know.

FATHER

What's that mean?

MOTHER

Paul, I do the laundry. That's all I'm going to say.

FATHER

So how many times a day? I'm just curious.

MOTHER

Are you jealous?

FATHER

Oh, for Christ's sake.

MOTHER

Is this a competition?

FATHER

Never mind.

MOTHER

You should talk to him.

FATHER

About what?

MOTHER

About it being natural.

FATHER

Don't they teach him that in school?

MOTHER

I guess. I sign something every year.

FATHER

What do you sign?

MOTHER

You know. A little paper that says it's ok.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

You sign a paper that says it's ok for him to masturbate.

MOTHER

No, it's a paper that says its ok for them to talk about sex ed.

FATHER

Sex ed. I wish I had that growing up.

MOTHER

Oh, you didn't need it.

FATHER

What's that supposed to mean?

MOTHER

It means you were a natural. You knew where everything went.

FATHER

I'll take that as a compliment.

MOTHER

You should talk to him about how it's a private matter. He shouldn't be climbing up trees. Not in public. We have plenty of trees on our own property. He can climb up those trees. Trees around here. But not just anywhere, not around town.

FATHER

Ok, I'll say exactly that to him. Very well put.

MOTHER

Well, you should say something. Tell him to do what he wants on our own property.

FATHER

Maybe that's why his grades are slipping. All the masturbation.

MOTHER

Do you think so?

FATHER

I was joking. Of course it's not the masturbation.

MOTHER

But that does tire him out, maybe it saps his energy.

FATHER

It's not the masturbation. It was a joke.

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Well, it's not funny.

FATHER

Of course it's funny. Don't tell me what's funny.

MOTHER

Oh, what are you now? Bill Cosby?

FATHER

Bill Cosby?

MOTHER

Are you Rodney Dangerfield all of a sudden?

FATHER

Bill Cosby's black.

MOTHER

What's that got to do with anything?

FATHER

I'm not black.

MOTHER

I was saying you think you're some great comedian like Bill Cosby.

FATHER

But he's black.

MOTHER

Oh, never mind.

FATHER

It's just a bad comparison.

MOTHER

You're right. Rodney Dangerfield's much better. He's fat.

FATHER

I'm not fat.

MOTHER

You have a gut like a whale.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

And you have the biggest ass I've ever seen.

MOTHER

You have a lot to compare it to? What did you say to him?

FATHER

About what?

MOTHER

About his report card.

FATHER

I said that the teachers all said he was disorganized.

MOTHER

Ok.

FATHER

So I told him to get organized.

MOTHER

That's it?

FATHER

Yeah, he said he would.

MOTHER

He needs help. Can't you... well, you used to do homework with him.

FATHER

That was years ago.

MOTHER

Couldn't you do it again?

FATHER

Christ, I have enough on my plate. I don't have time for homework.

MOTHER

Fine. I'll do it with him.

FATHER

Good, you might learn something.

*Wahoo*

(BROTHER is entering slouched and rubbing nose. Just before he is visible to parents, he stands up straight and puts his hands in pockets.)

Hello. BROTHER

Good evening. How are you? MOTHER

Ok. BROTHER

Take you hands out of your pockets. MOTHER

Why? BROTHER

You shouldn't walk around with your hands in your pockets. It's dangerous. What's that green thing? In the garage. MOTHER

It's a helium canister. BROTHER

Why do you have it? MOTHER

It's for a science experiment. BROTHER

Well, please get rid of it, those things are dangerous. MOTHER

No, they're not. BROTHER

Yes, they are. They blow up. MOTHER

Where did you get that? BROTHER

In that movie. What was the move we saw, where the canister blew up? MOTHER



*Wahoo*

FATHER

*Jaws.*

MOTHER

They blow up.

BROTHER

That's compressed air. This is helium.

MOTHER

Isn't helium what was on the Hindenberg? We saw that movie also.

BROTHER

That's stupid.

FATHER

Don't talk to your mother that way.

MOTHER

Get rid of it, please.

BROTHER

Ok.

MOTHER

And stand up straight.

(BROTHER exits upstairs and JAY hides from him as he passes, returning to listen more when BROTHER has exited.)

MOTHER

You know, you say something to him like "get organized" and it means nothing, nothing. It means you did nothing. Don't make fun of me because I actually want to help him.

(Pause.)

FATHER

I'll have his brother check his work, his math work.

MOTHER

Ok.

FATHER

You want another?

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

No. I'm going to bed.

JAY

Intelligence: troubling. Action: move operations outside of the house to woods in back yard. Avoid all operations in schoolyard. Spies everywhere. God, how embarrassing. Never mind. Intelligence is never embarrassing. What did you learn? That's what's important. Take what you learned and act on it. God, how embarrassing.

(JAY rises and crosses with a piece of paper to BROTHER who is sitting at his desk working on calculator.)

JAY

Daddy said I was supposed to show you my math homework.

BROTHER

Ok.

JAY

Here it is.

(He sets it down. BROTHER doesn't look at it. Pause.)

JAY

Well?

BROTHER

What?

JAY

Is it all right?

BROTHER

Yes, it looks fine.

JAY

He says you're supposed to help me with it.

(Pause.)

BROTHER

It's fine.

(Pause.)

*Wahoo*

JAY

Can I go?

BROTHER

Do whatever you want.

(JAY walks downstage.)

JAY

Mush returned to Pearly Harbor from his first patrol with a broom strapped to his periscope. It meant the seas were swept clean of Japanese shipping!

(FATHER enters as ADMIRAL and shakes JAY's hand.)

FATHER

Good work, Mush. Damn good work!

JAY

Thanks, Admiral.

FATHER

Those Molotov Cocktails were a damn fine touch.

JAY

Grant me a wish, Admiral?

FATHER

Anything, Mush.

JAY

Sea of Japan. Send me to the Sea of Japan – the Happy Hunting Ground. Targets like a funfair shooting gallery.

FATHER

Too dangerous, Mush. The water's too shallow and we can't protect you there. Sorry. (Pinning medal on him) For distinguished service in the face of the enemy – the Navy Cross. You threw everything at them but the kitchen sink, Mush. Damn Good!

(They turn and face the cameras. They make the old fashioned flash noises. JAY puts on old record of "Anything Goes." MOTHER enters wearing WAVE hat and they dance about the stage. She exits and he continues dancing alone, singing along. BROTHER enters and calmly turns off music.)

JAY

*Wahoo*

What are you doing?

BROTHER

It's too loud, fathead.

JAY

Get out of my room.

BROTHER

You want me to tell Mom you stole her records?

JAY

I didn't steal anything.

BROTHER

You're an idiot.

(BROTHER comes over and punches JAY in the shoulder.)

JAY

Owe.

(BROTHER exits. JAY crosses to JULIUS.)

JAY

Julius, you're back in business.

(He places JULIUS on treadmill but JULIUS doesn't move.)

JAY

Are you tired, Julius? Ok. You can be my second in command. I like to imagine you as my crew. You're my A-Team. Sit here.

(He places JULIUS on his shoulder.)

JAY

This was a cold time for Mush. He was assigned to the North Pacific, the forbidding Kuril Islands.

(He puts on his ski jacket, gloves, scarf, ski goggles and wool hat. On top of the wool hat he places his Navy cap.)

JAY

(As he sets up the cut out ships)

*Wahoo*

He decided the solution to the torpedo problem was to just fire more torpedoes. For his fifth and sixth cruises he fired three and four torpedo spreads at all targets. This meant his cruise would have to be shorter but he got excellent results.

JAY

Fire one, fire two, fire three. (Doing a high pitched hamster voice for JULIUS) "One, two, three away, sir!"

(JAY makes whooshing noise and walks to target then stomps on it violently. This he does for three targets.)

JAY

On the Shinzu Maru he fired a spread of torpedoes, none of them hit. Shortly after firing them his sonar picked up something approaching his sub. (In JULIUS' voice) "Something's coming at us, sir." (As MUSH) "What's that?"

(BROTHER enters holding torpedo/pencil. He crosses towards JAY, making beeping sounds as if charting the approach of a torpedo on sonar. When he gets to JAY he knocks him down and begins punching him in the shoulder as before. JAY shields JULIUS.)

JAY

Owe. Why are you doing this?

BROTHER

Why were you in my room?

JAY

I wasn't. There's nothing I want in your room.

BROTHER

You were in my stuff.

JAY

I wasn't.

BROTHER

Don't lie to me.

JAY

Owe.

BROTHER

Stay out of my room.

(One last punch, then the BROTHER exits.)

*Wahoo*

JAY

Jesus. I wasn't in his room. I swear. I might be a criminal and a weirdo but I don't go in his room. Owe. (As he speaks he puts JULIUS away.) Well, the stray torpedo missed Mush. But he was hopping mad.

(FATHER enters as ADMIRAL.)

FATHER

Now listen Mush, don't come in here hurling accusations.

JAY

I was chased halfway across the North Pacific by one on my own torpedoes.

FATHER

It was probably a Jap torpedo.

JAY

No, it wasn't, sir. It was one of my own.

FATHER

Oh, come on, Mush.

JAY

I'm puckerred, sir.

FATHER

Well if the torpedoes are as bad as you say they are...

JAY

Yes?

FATHER

It probably wouldn't have exploded. You need a break, Mush. Some time with that girl of yours. I'm giving you shore leave. In San Francisco.

(FATHER exits. Immediately when he gets offstage we hear the MOTHER's voice – she and FATHER are obviously in the middle of an argument off stage. JAY listens.)

MOTHER

(Off)

I want to know where you've been.

FATHER

(Off)

*Wahoo*

I play dominoes. At the club.

MOTHER

You don't play dominoes at the club.

FATHER

I do.

MOTHER

Where have you been?

FATHER

I've never been unfaithful to you, Darleen.

MOTHER

Bullshit. Bull fucking shit, Paul.

FATHER

It's not bullshit.

MOTHER

It is.

(Silence. We hear shoving sounds. They get louder and louder – the sounds of bodies thumping against walls and furniture. It shouldn't sound like FATHER is beating MOTHER, it should sound like they are shoving each other with all their might and falling. Then we hear a door slam. A moment passes and we hear a sports car start up and drive off, fast.)

JAY

Mush was concerned about the low quality of his torpedoes. He complained to the Admiral. (No one enters to play the ADMIRAL so MUSH does it himself. As ADMIRAL) "A bad lover blames his tool, Mush." (To audience) So Mush was determined to prove the torpedoes were bad. He took his sub and the admiral's adjutant out to the Island of Kaho 'Olawe off Maui. He was loaded with a full compliment of Mark 14 torpedoes. He would fire them against the sheer walls of the island. (MUSH) "All right, adjutant, are you watching this?" (As ADJUTANT) "Yessir. I am." (As MUSH) "Fire one." (As SAILOR with hand to ear piece) "One away, sir." (MUSH) "Fire two." (SAILOR) "Two away, sir." (MUSH) "Fire three." (SAILOR) "Three away, sir." (MUSH) "Fire four." (SAILOR) "Four away, sir."

(JAY crosses to the wall of this room and pounds four times on the wall saying "Dud!" after each pound.)

JAY

Wahoo

(As MUSH)

“Four launches, four duds. Do you believe me now?” (As ADJUTANT) “Could just be bad luck, Commander.” (As MUSH) “Fire five.” (SAILOR) “Five away, sir.” (MUSH) “Fire six.” (SAILOR) “Six away, sir.” (MUSH) “Fire seven.” (SAILOR) “Seven away, sir.” (He stops acting.) This is not fun. (He lies down on bed.) I can’t sleep.

(He crosses to stage left and listens at the same place where he listened to MOTHER/FATHER argument. We hear MOTHER’s groggy voice off-stage. She has obviously been asleep and heard him approach.)

Paul? MOTHER  
(Off)

No. JAY

Who’s there? MOTHER

It’s me. JAY

What do you want, Sweetie? MOTHER

Where’s Daddy? JAY

Your father’s gone away. On a business trip. MOTHER

Where? JAY

Chicago. MOTHER

Ok. Can I sleep with you? JAY

No. Go back to bed. MOTHER

JAY



*Wahoo*

I can't sleep.

MOTHER

Go back to your room.

JAY

How am I supposed to fall asleep?

MOTHER

Lay in bed. Eventually you'll fall asleep.

JAY

I keep thinking of things.

MOTHER

Go lay in bed.

JAY

I can't sleep in there. Can I sleep in here?

MOTHER

No.

JAY

Can I sleep in your chair?

MOTHER

What chair?

JAY

The one at the foot of your bed?

MOTHER

No. Go to your own room.

(He crosses back to his room and immediately becomes the ADMIRAL, picking up a piece of paper and waving it about.)

JAY

(As ADMIRAL)

"I read your report, Mush." (MUSH) "Yessir." (ADMIRAL) "I will forward it to the department of naval ordinance." (MUSH) "Thank you, sir." (ADMIRAL) "And before some newspaper gets wind of you doing anything else crazy like firing missiles at a dessert island I'm sending you home. Mandatory R and R. Two weeks, Mush, that's an order!" (MUSH) "Goddammit, sir, I'm just trying-"

Wahoo

(We hear pounding on the wall, then BROTHER's voice.)

BROTHER  
(Off)

Shut up in there! I'm trying to sleep, you freak!

JAY

Shut up, yourself.

BROTHER

I hear another sound out of you I'm coming over there and punching you. Shut up!

(JAY lays down on bed, can't sleep. He now makes quiet exploding noises. Drifts off. Lights change to indicate it's morning.)

JAY

Next morning. Another boring day. So I went downstairs and got some records. (Crossing downstairs to Living Room) More sacred objects, things of my mothers this time. Mush went home to his girl. He tried to lose himself in romance.

(He returns to his room and puts on a record – it is an early recording of Ethel Merman singing "I Get No Kick From Champagne." He dances with himself as if he were a couple, arms around his own neck.)

JAY

(As WOMAN in MUSH's arms)

"Mush, don't go out on another patrol. Please." (MUSH) "Come on, Trish. I'm the sub ace of all time. It's my duty to go out and sink Japanese freighters." (TRISH) "Oh, Mush. Touch me. Touch me in special places. Touch me like there will never be a tomorrow." (MUSH) "I leave in the morning, Trish." (TRISH) "That's why I want it never to come. I want to be lost in your arms. Oh, Mush."

(MOTHER enters and crosses to bottom of stairs.)

MOTHER  
(Calling upstairs)

Jay? Jay?

JAY

What?

MOTHER

What are you doing up there?

JAY

Nothing.

*Wahoo*

What do you mean nothing?  
MOTHER

I mean I'm doing nothing.  
JAY

I'm coming up there.  
MOTHER  
(Mounting the stairs)

Jesus.  
JAY

Here I come.  
MOTHER

Leave me alone.  
JAY

(MOTHER enters his area.)

What do you do up here all day?  
MOTHER

Nothing.  
JAY

Nothing?  
MOTHER

Leave me alone.  
JAY

Well, we're not going to have a bunch of lazy kids sitting around the house doing nothing all the day. (She notices the music playing.) Are these my records?  
MOTHER

I don't know.  
JAY

Did you ask if you could use these?  
MOTHER

No.  
JAY

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Who said you could borrow my records?

JAY

No one.

MOTHER

Do you like musicals?

JAY

They're the only records you have.

(She turns off the record player.)

MOTHER

Well, I want you to go outside today.

JAY

Why?

MOTHER

Because you mope around here too much. Go outside. Go for a hike.

JAY

I don't want to.

MOTHER

I don't care.

JAY

I want to stay here.

MOTHER

Well, you're not going to. From now on the house is closed from noon to four. You can go outside and get some exercise.

JAY

Get some exercise?

MOTHER

It's a new rule. Exercise from two to four.

JAY

I thought you said noon to four.

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Go outside. Go for a hike.

JAY

Hike? Where?

MOTHER

I don't care. Go up to the lake, but go.

JAY

Jesus.

MOTHER

Right now, out.

(JAY puts on his jacket. It starts to rain. He crosses downstage.)

JAY

Mush was no good out of his sub. He was bred for action and shore leave was torture. He didn't want romance, he wanted action. He felt like he was on a lonely shore, drenched in rain, standing beside a muddy lake, melancholy, sad.

(JAY stands looking out at lake. A MAN in his fifties enters wearing a fishing hat, rain jacket and holding an umbrella. This character is not a character in JAY's imagination, he is real. He walks up to JAY.)

MAN

Hello.

JAY

Hi.

MAN

How are you?

JAY

Good. How are you?

MAN

I'm all right. Do you come up here a lot?

JAY

Sometimes.

MAN

I like it up here by the lake. It's so peaceful when it's raining. No one else around.

*Wahoo*

JAY  
Yes.

(JAY starts to move away.)

MAN  
You going to walk around the lake?

JAY  
Uh-huh.

MAN  
Do you mind if I walk with you?

JAY  
No.

(They walk.)

MAN  
It's wet today.

JAY  
Yes it is.

MAN  
Do you have a girl friend?

JAY  
Um, no... Not yet.

MAN  
Why not?

JAY  
Well... I haven't tried very hard to get one.

MAN  
Do you have sex with girls?

JAY  
I... No, not yet.

MAN  
What do you like to do?

*Wahoo*

I don't know. JAY

Well, I like sex. MAN

Ok. JAY

Are you going to keep walking around the lake? MAN

Yes. I am. JAY

Well, I'm going to go up this way. Do you want to come with me? MAN

Um... No, I think I'll just keep going this way. JAY

Are you sure? MAN

Yes, but thanks for asking. JAY

Ok. I'll see you later. MAN

(MAN exits.)

JAY  
It was pouring that day. I was outside because my mother ordered me out. Why was he outside? I walked. Mush must have had dark moments like this. Moments when he wasn't sure of himself. Or maybe he didn't. Maybe confident people never do. Or maybe they just ignore them. This is ridiculous. It's pouring down rain. This isn't healthy for me. It's dark up here in the rain. No one's up here, except that guy. I'm going home. I don't see what this is accomplishing.

(He walks to exit and suddenly the MAN has entered and is blocking his way.)

Hey. MAN

*Wahoo*

Hi. JAY

You headed home? MAN

Yeah. JAY

I had to move my car because they're going to lock up the parking lot. MAN

Oh, yeah, that's a good idea. JAY

I'm going back up. MAN

Ok. JAY

Did you mind what I said before? What we talked about. MAN

No, I didn't. JAY

Ok. Good. Just between you and me, right? MAN

Yeah. JAY

Ok. I'll see you later. MAN

(MAN exits. MOTHER has entered behind JAY.)

Did you have a nice hike? MOTHER

No. JAY

MOTHER



*Wahoo*

Where did you go?

JAY

The lake.

MOTHER

Did you see anyone you know up there?

JAY

No. It was raining.

MOTHER

Well, that's good. You got some exercise.

JAY

When's Dad coming home?

MOTHER

I don't know. Thursday.

JAY

I thought you didn't know.

MOTHER

I do. Thursday.

(She exits.)

JAY

Thursday. Ok. So maybe everything's all right. Doesn't feel all right, but maybe it is. Mush felt like maybe he'd gone too far. Maybe he should just try to be a normal officer, unambitious, hard working, obedient.

(JAY puts on his record, quietly. He lies on his bed listening. MOTHER enters with a glass of wine and sits in living room. BROTHER is in his room playing with calculator. JAY gets up and crosses to top of stairs and listens. He crosses downstairs and stands at bottom of stairs. FATHER enters with suitcase. JAY looks at him.)

FATHER

How are you?

JAY

Fine.

FATHER

*Wahoo*

Is your mother home?

JAY

Yeah.

(MOTHER crosses from living room.)

MOTHER

Oh, hi. I didn't expect you till this weekend.

FATHER

Yeah, well...

MOTHER

Come in. I'll fix you a drink.

FATHER

Thanks.

(They exit.)

JAY

So Mush was back with this crew. He didn't get his wish, the Sea of Japan. But he was back with his men, where he belonged. The killer back with his tribe, amongst the geese. Sort of a mixed metaphor but... He gathered his crew around him.

(The FAMILY return to his side, reluctantly. They all wear their navy caps.)

JAY

They were in awe of him, they worshipped him. He was the most famous fighting captain in the history of the US Navy and he was their hero. They'd follow him to the ends of the earth, to hell and back. To hell itself. And that's where he took them. To hell. On their fifth patrol they spotted the Boyu Maru. (AS MUSH) "Take us to periscope depth, Mr. Tansey."

MOTHER

Periscope depth.

JAY

(Looking through periscope)

There she is. Like a sitting duck. Troop transport. (To BROTHER) Identification.

(BROTHER looks through periscope.)

BROTHER

*Wahoo*

Boyu Maru. Probably 4000 soldiers on board. Headed for New Guinea. To fight MacArthur.

JAY

Ready one through four tubes.

FATHER

Tubes one through four ready, sir.

JAY

Fire one.

FATHER

One away.

(They make whoosh sounds.)

JAY

Fire two.

FATHER

Two away.

JAY

Adjust angle three points.

MOTHER

Angle adjust. Three points. Complete.

JAY

Fire three.

FATHER

Three away.

(Whoosh.)

JAY

Fire four.

FATHER

Four away.

(Whoosh. JAY looks at his stopwatch and makes the ticking sound.)

JAY

*Wahoo*

Forty-five seconds.

MOTHER

One a miss.

JAY

Fifty seconds.

MOTHER

Two a miss.

JAY

One minute, ten seconds.

MOTHER

Three a-

(BROTHER makes a huge explosion sound. They all cheer. Now the crew begins scrambling through their hatches to get to their deck guns.)

JAY

Surface. Let's see what we've done. (To the audience) And this is my favorite part of the Mush Morton story. He was so thorough. He surfaced and found the sea full of Japanese from the Boyu Maru. They were floating in life jackets, clinging to wreckage, some were in small boats. Thousands of them. Adrift.

(They are all standing and looking around in awe at all the men floating in the water.)

BROTHER

Wow.

MOTHER

Yeah, big wow.

FATHER

Poor devils.

BROTHER

Yeah, they'll probably drown.

MOTHER

If the sharks don't get them.

JAY

We can't count on that, Mr. Lefferts.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

Yes, Captain.

JAY

Man your guns.

(All take up gun positions.)

JAY

Open fire.

FATHER

On what?

JAY

The enemy, Mr. Lefferts.

MOTHER

But...

JAY

Do as you're told, Mr. Tansey. Actually... (Pointing at BRORTHER and FATHER) You two play Japanese in the water.

(FATHER and BOTHER take off hats. JAY makes machine gun sounds and fires at FATHER and BROTHER, now playing soldiers in the water. They make blood-curdling sounds as they are all riddled with machine gun fire.)

MOTHER

Some of them were waving white flags.

(FATHER waves handkerchief. MUSH shoots him. BROTHER swims to MUSH's feet.)

MOTHER

Should we take him prisoner?

JAY

You want the son-of-a-bitch? I don't.

MOTHER

(To audience)

By his own estimate Mush killed six thousand men that way. It took hours.

Wahoo

JAY

(Machine gunning insanely)

I hate Japs! Fucking hate them! What they did to us at Pearl Harbor! They can go to hell!

(The other actors exit leaving him alone shooting survivors in the water.)

JAY

Fucking Nips, take that! Take it! Take it you slant eyed nip bastards! Take it Nip fuckers!!!!

FATHER

(Off stage)

Jay! Jay!

JAY

(Startled)

What?

(FATHER enters dressed in jeans and work shirt. He holds a metal rake. He has obviously been working in the garden.)

FATHER

What are you doing?

JAY

Fooling around.

FATHER

I don't want to hear you talking that way.

JAY

Sorry.

FATHER

Using words like that.

JAY

I hear you swear all the time.

FATHER

You don't.

JAY

I do.

Wahoo

FATHER

Don't talk to me like that. Don't you ever talk to me like that. Anyway, that's not what I'm referring to. I don't want to hear you using racial slurs like that. Ever. Do you understand me?

JAY

Yes.

FATHER

Ok.

JAY

(To audience)

God, how embarrassing. (He takes off his hat.) I was eleven then. Playing war in my back yard. I had no idea anyone could even hear me. And the words were authentic. It's what people said back then. What Mush probably said. And I knew it was a bad word. I knew it. I was just being accurate. God, how humiliating. My father was gardening. I remember that. It was weird to see him gardening. He didn't do it often. After he said that he went back to work. He was all sweaty. He worked hard. But he didn't seem to enjoy it.

(FATHER stops gardening and looks at JAY.)

FATHER

You want to help?

JAY

No.

(JAY runs to side of stage. MOTHER enters holding a can of beer.)

MOTHER

Can I offer you a beer?

FATHER

(Taking it)

Thanks.

MOTHER

Hillside looks nice.

FATHER

Yeah, it'll take a lot of work.

MOTHER

*Wahoo*

I'm thinking of planting more ivy.

FATHER

Ivy's good.

MOTHER

Except the deer like to eat it.

FATHER

What don't they like to eat?

MOTHER

Yeah, you said it.

FATHER

It's beautiful out here.

MOTHER

Yes, the weather's fine this time of year.

FATHER

I forgot how much sun gets in here. It's blazing today.

MOTHER

I know. People think we live in the shade of the Redwoods, they're always so surprised by all the light we get up here. (She looks at him.) The hillside looks beautiful. You've done a wonderful job.

FATHER

Another hour and I'll have this all finished.

MOTHER

Didn't even take that long.

FATHER

No.

MOTHER

(Holding out her hand for finished beer can)

Here, I'll take that.

FATHER

Thanks.

MOTHER

Let me know if you want another one.



Wahoo

FATHER

In an hour.

MOTHER

Ok.

(She exits. FATHER wipes brow and exits.)

JAY

So, I mean, whatever. Now they're all happy. Intelligence: whatever. If my Dad knew the real story of Mush he wouldn't be so critical of me. The enemy should do their intelligence as well. Mush went to see the Admiral.

(FATHER enters in ADMIRAL's hat.)

FATHER

Your after action report says you machine gunned men in the water.

JAY

Yes.

FATHER

Why?

JAY

No point in sinking a troop transport and letting the troops get away.

FATHER

Good work, Mush. I like your thinking.

JAY

Thank you, sir.

(JAY spins towards the other direction. He is met by BROTHER wearing an army officer's hat, sunglasses and biting a corn pipe in his teeth.)

JAY

General MacArthur, pleasure to meet you, sir.

BROTHER

(Pinning medal on him)

It gives me great pleasure to pin this on you, son. Killing all those Nips headed to fight my boys. You saved me a lot of trouble.

*Wahoo*

JAY

It was no trouble, sir. All in a day's boating.

BROTHER

Keep up the good work.

JAY

(To audience)

And Mush got his wish: the Sea of Japan, a hunting ground, an ace's dream. If he could only get through the Japanese defenses that guarded the entrance.

FATHER

Mush, we're giving you what you always wanted.

MUSH

Sea of Japan?

FATHER

Sea of Japan. We can't protect you there. And it's damn shallow. And full of mines. But you're invincible, Mush.

JAY

Thank you, Admiral.

FATHER

We're also giving you some new ordinance.

(BROTHER exits and re-enters holing helium canister.)

FATHER

The Mark 18. Designed especially for you because you convinced us the Mark 14 was a piece of doo-doo.

JAY

It's beautiful, sir.

FATHER

Be careful. She's highly detonable.

JAY

That's how I want her, sir.

(They laugh.)

FATHER

We're proud of you, Mush.

*Wahoo*

BROTHER

Damn proud.

FATHER

Keep up the good work.

JAY

So on August 13, 1943 the Wahoo entered the Sea of Japan.

(The other actors now wear their submarine hats.)

MOTHER

(To audience)

Via La Perouse Straights, a massive minefield.

BROTHER

(To audience)

An over flight had determined that the mines were all laid at a uniform depth.

FATHER

(To audience)

So a sub entering at a lower depth could avoid contact.

MOTHER

But there were still the anchor cables to contend with.

FATHER

And if the sub got caught on an anchor cable it would pull the mine down on top of it.

BROTHER

And that would be the end.

(They inflate balloons from helium tank and tie ribbon around them. The ribbon is then tied to a rock on the end and the minefield lain – rocks tied to balloons with wrapping ribbon, the balloons lain about the stage at a uniform height. The ACTORS begin to move as a group about the stage, clumped together, close, to avoid making contact with ribbons. BROTHER holds model submarine; JAY is behind him; MOTHER and FATHER trailing.)

FATHER

They knew they'd made contact with an anchoring cable from the eerie scraping sound it made on the hull.

*Wahoo*

(The sub hits a line and as it moves forward they make a scraping sound.)

MOTHER

Slow speed. Crawl through, helmsman.

JAY

Not too slow. The longer we're in this minefield the more we expose ourselves to air attack.

(BROTHER looks unnerved by scraping sounds.)

BROTHER

Sir.

JAY

Keep going. We're not hung up.

BROTHER

Sir.

JAY

Shut up.

BROTHER

Sir.

JAY

(Taking sub from BROTHER and shoving BROTHER behind him in the clump)

Shut up. Silence on the bridge. I have the con.

(JAY steers forward. They get hung up on another ribbon.)

JAY

Shit. We're hung up. Reverse engines.

MOTHER

Reverse engines.

JAY

Slowly.

(They back up a bit.)

JAY

*Wahoo*

Ok, we're free.

(But this only gets them stuck on another ribbon.)

JAY

Shit.

BROTHER

Sir, I think we should abandon the straits.

JAY

Mr. Leffert, relieve Mr. Tangle of his post. Mr. Tangle, confine yourself to your cabin.

BROTHER

Sir, I-

JAY

Pending court marshal proceedings for cowardice.

BROTHER

Sir-

JAY

If you don't leave the bridge willingly, I'll have you escorted off the bridge at gunpoint.

BROTHER

I protest.

JAY

Then shot for mutiny.

BROTHER

Yessir.

(He moves to the back of the clump. They move forward and run into a cable.)

FATHER

Another contact, Captain. I strongly protest.

JAY

Mr. Leffert, you're a coward.

FATHER

Sir-

*Wahoo*

JAY

And you're under arrest. Leave the bridge or I'll have you keel hauled. Reverse engines.

MOTHER

Reverse engines.

(They back up.)

JAY

Forward engines.

MOTHER

Forward engines.

(They move forward, getting hung up on another cable.)

JAY

Shit.

FATHER

Sir, I think this is gross endangerment.

JAY

Mr. Tansey, gag Mr. Leffert. If he resists you are to strike him unconscious with the butt of your service revolver.

BROTHER

Sir, you can't-

JAY

Gag Mr. Tangle as well.

(MOTHER binds and gags FATHER and BROTHER.)

MOTHER

Officers bound and gagged, sir. I do protest though against-

JAY

Mr. Tansey, bind and gag yourself. I'll take the con and the propulsion.

(MOTHER binds and gags herself.)

JAY

Mush preceded through the mine field, at speed. He got hung up again and again.

Wahoo

(JAY steers the sub forward with the others shuffling behind him. The sub's fin hits a ribbon and starts to drag it – BROTHER makes the scraping sound. JAY moves the sub forward, the ribbon still attached and the ribbon's balloon starts to come down on the sub. The others all make whining sounds. JAY reverses the sub but while still stuck on the first ribbon it becomes attached to another ribbon and begins dragging that ribbon's balloon down as well. All the others are now whining loudly. They are in quite a pickle.)

JAY

Mush found himself in quite a pickle. He tried to wiggle the sub out of the tangle.

(He wiggles the sub. The others wiggle with him. It remains hung up.)

JAY

No luck. He tried angling the sub up, hoping the cables would come loose.

(He angles the sub up, the others sinking behind him. It remains stuck on both cables.)

JAY

Didn't work. Then he hit on a great idea. A Mush masterpiece. He would sink the sub by blowing out its air. With greater tension on the cables he would be able to free himself more easily from their death grip.

(He starts to lower the sub towards the floor. The others sink with him. When it has reached almost the stage...)

JAY

First he worked himself free of one cable.

(He twists the sub and it comes free of a ribbon.)

JAY

Then the other.

(Another twist and that cable is free also. The others breath a sigh of relief. They all stand up straight and proceed through the minefield to safety.)

JAY

Mr. Leffert, you are released from custody. You too, Mr. Tansey.

MOTHER/FATHER

(Mumbling through their gags)

*Wahoo*

Thank you, sir.

JAY

I don't have much choice, do I?

(They mumble something.)

JAY

What?

(They mumble again.)

JAY

What?

FATHER

(Pulling his gag down)

Can we take the gags off, sir?

JAY

No, keep them on. I like you gagged. Makes it easier to work with you. And keep Mr. Tangle bound as well.

(They move forward through the rest of the minefield, maybe a few more scrapes. Then they are through it.)

JAY

He made it. He was there. The Sea of Japan. A sea of targets. Mush had a field day.

(*Run Silent, Run Deep* music swells. JAY hands out sharpened pencils. The actors dance about the stage wielding their pencils.)

JAY

Where once there were mines everywhere, now there were targets: freighters, tankers, troop transports, sampans, you name it. He'd struck the mother lode and the new torpedoes were lethal.

(As if they were ballet dancers, the actors dance about elegantly popping the balloons. This is all done in time to the music. Soon all the balloons are popped.)

JAY

But actually no one knows what happened in the Sea of Japan. Because once Mush passed through La Pearouse Straits there was only silence. He and the Wahoo were never heard from again.



*Wahoo*

(The music fades. MOTHER crosses to living room area and FATHER exits. BROTHER removes his cap and looks at JAY.)

BROTHER

You're pretty creative with your models and balloons and everything.

JAY

Leave me alone.

BROTHER

It must be fun to play this way.

JAY

What do you want?

BROTHER

Nothing. Can't you take a compliment?

JAY

Not from you. I don't trust you.

BROTHER

Ok. Listen, I know you don't like criticism and all that.

JAY

Leave me alone.

BROTHER

But Julian or whatever you call him doesn't look so well.

JAY

I said leave me alone.

BROTHER

Just telling you. It might be that cheap food you give him.

JAY

Shut up.

BROTHER

And the fact that you never clean his cage.

JAY

I clean his cage.

BROTHER

*Wahoo*

Yeah, like maybe once every five years.

JAY

Shut up, shut up, shut up.

(BROTHER exits. JAY crosses to cage and looks at JULIUS.)

JAY

Hey, Julius. I'm sorry about your cage.

(He cleans the cage, removing the pan and dumping it in trash. He then wipes down the pan, adds absorbent pan liner, and replaces it. He changes the water. He crosses to MOTHER.)

JAY

Hi.

MOTHER

Hello.

JAY

Can you drive me to get some food for Julius?

MOTHER

He has food. We picked it up last week.

JAY

That's not good food. It's bad for him. He needs special food.

MOTHER

No.

JAY

Well, can you give me some money so I can go buy food?

MOTHER

How are you going to do that?

JAY

I'll walk.

MOTHER

No.

JAY

Please.

*Wahoo*

MOTHER

Where are you going to walk?

JAY

To the pet store.

MOTHER

(She hands him money from her purse)

Ok. Here.

JAY

Thank you.

(JAY exits and returns with food for JULIUS. As he changes JULIUS' food he talks to the audience.)

JAY

There is a lot of debate about the machine-gunning of the men in the water. Some on the sub claimed the Japanese in the water were shooting at the Wahoo, that they started it. Doesn't seem very likely though, does it? And there's a lot of debate about the final fate of the Wahoo. The Japanese claimed they sunk it with aircraft, which is likely – the water was dangerous, all very shallow. A Russian scholar claimed Mush was sunk by Japanese depth charges. I like to think that's a cover-up. That Mush escaped to Russia to fight for the Soviet navy in the Cold War. He knew his aggressiveness would never fit in in sensitive, touchy-feely America, so he went somewhere where bloodthirstiness would be appreciated. It's all subject to interpretation. The only thing we can be sure of is mystery. Sometimes there's no explanation.

(He finishes with the food. He pets JULIUS, who doesn't move; then crosses to top of the stairs where he sits and listens. FATHER enters living room area where MOTHER sits with cocktail.)

FATHER

Hello.

MOTHER

You're late.

FATHER

Oh, give me a break.

MOTHER

It's been a while.

*Wahoo*

FATHER

Not that long.

MOTHER

I mean since you were late. Without calling.

FATHER

I'm sorry, Darleen.

MOTHER

It doesn't matter.

FATHER

You want another?

MOTHER

No, thank you.

FATHER

How are the kids?

MOTHER

OK. They're fine.

FATHER

Well, I'm going up to bed.

MOTHER

Ok.

FATHER

About the yard...

MOTHER

Yes?

FATHER

I hired a kid from next door. Exchange student. To do the gardening. He'll come up twice a week.

MOTHER

Ok.

FATHER

I don't have time for it.

*Wahoo*

Ok. MOTHER

I'm going to bed. FATHER

I see that. MOTHER

(FATHER starts to climb stairs as MOTHER pours herself another drink.)

JAY  
(To audience)  
So I guess everything is ok between them. That's going to be my interpretation.

(FATHER has made it to the top of the stairs. He stops to talk to JAY.)

How are you? FATHER

Ok. Caesar died. JAY

Oh, yeah? FATHER

Yeah, food poisoning. JAY

That's too bad. FATHER

You never liked to kiss him. JAY

No, I didn't. I don't like to kiss rats. FATHER

He wasn't a rat. He was a hamster. JAY

He was a rodent. What's the matter? FATHER

I don't know. Just sad. JAY

*Wahoo*

FATHER

Yeah, well... these things happen.

JAY

Yeah.

FATHER

Good night.

(FATHER exits. JAY crosses to hamster cage and removes JULIUS, puts him in paper bag. BROTHER enters.)

JAY

I gave him the better food.

BROTHER

He had kidney failure. You can't reverse that. You killed him a long time ago when you gave him that shitty food. Everything else you did didn't make any difference.

JAY

Shut up.

BROTHER

I'm just saying...

JAY

I said shut up. (He pushes BROTHER away. BROTHER shoves him back, hard. JAY falls to floor, dropping bag.)

BROTHER

Don't push me, asshole! Sometimes you didn't even feed him. I'd come in here, his bowl was empty and he was lying in his straw looking weak. I had to feed him. Fill his water bowl.

JAY

Leave me alone.

BROTHER

I'm just saying, don't push me. You killed him. Slowly. Take responsibility.

(BROTHER is about to leave. He sees bag, picks it up and kindly hands it to JAY who snatches it back. BROTHER exits. JAY stands and talks to audience.)

JAY

## *Wahoo*

Years later they found the Wahoo, in the middle of the Sea of Japan. Right where Mush had always wanted to get her. Sunk by a Japanese plane. I guess he thought he was invincible. And for a time he was. Years later Japanese shipping records revealed that half the men aboard the Boyu Maru were Allied prisoners of war. Friends. They'd been machine gunned like the rest. It's called collateral damage now. Unavoidable. There can't be a lot of caution in war. (He carries bag off stage humming "Taps" as he goes. He sets the bag off stage and turns back to the audience.) I start high school tomorrow. It's going to be different for me. I haven't been the best student this year, but a hell of a lot better than last. Mostly I've learned to make myself invisible. Which is weird because I want to be star of the class but that person always gets too much attention. He's too closely watched. And I'm not really all that smart. Not like my brother. He's the family genius. This girl wants me to audition for a play with her. I don't know. Acting seems so stupid. I have a new hamster. Emperor Augustus. I feed him the right food. My mother buys it and brings it home and I try to be really good about keeping his water fresh. I still have to work on cleaning up his poop. It's all a question of getting organized. I really need to get organized.

(Lights fade.)

End of Play