

CHUM

by

Antonio Gangemi & Aimee Parrott

Registered WGAw No. 1159867

EXT. LAKE -- DAY

MICHAEL, 30s, nudges the rowboat away from shore. For a while, he avoids eye contact with passenger, SARA, 30s.

MICHAEL  
So... when's the big day?

SARA  
Next month. A month from today,  
actually.

MICHAEL  
Wow, it came around just like that.

SARA  
Yeah, it did sort of creep up.

MICHAEL  
Excited?

SARA  
Very.

MICHAEL  
Good. Real good.

A ripple of silence as he paddles.

SARA  
Can I ask you something?

MICHAEL  
I've got some time to kill.

SARA  
You sure you're okay with me... not  
inviting you? I just figured --

MICHAEL  
I think you made the practical  
decision. Really. Let's take  
ourselves out of the equation, and  
think for a second.  
(gesticulating a  
headline)  
*Ex-boyfriend of bride invited to  
wedding overseas...* Does that sound  
like a good idea to you?

SARA  
(smirks)  
No. I guess not.

MICHAEL  
How many people you expecting?

SARA  
Just over two hundred.

MICHAEL  
You found two hundred people able to fly to Paris for a wedding?

SARA  
Well it's because of Pavel. He has a fleet of aircraft so --

MICHAEL  
A *what*?

SARA  
You heard me. He has a fleet of aircraft. A small fleet.

MICHAEL  
Oh, a small fleet.

SARA  
Anyway, he's providing transportation.

MICHAEL  
So my guess would be... billionaire.

SARA  
I don't know. I never asked.

MICHAEL  
Really? Huh. Well, it's like they say, *if you have to ask, you can't afford it.*

SARA  
Yeah something like that.

MICHAEL  
How'd you two meet? No, let me guess. You tripped over a gold bar and landed in a pool of caviar.

SARA  
How'd you know?

MICHAEL  
That rhymed. Did you like that?

SARA  
You're quite a poet. So when did you finish building your rowboat?

MICHAEL  
Over the summer. Like it?

SARA  
It's great. Surprisingly great.

MICHAEL  
... meaning you're surprised I  
actually finished something.

SARA  
Nooo. I mean I never knew you were  
such a... craftsman.

MICHAEL  
(boasting?)  
Oh yeah. I'm a pretty crafty guy.  
But I can't take all the credit.  
Tom and Pete pitched in.

SARA  
What are friends for. So, are you  
working now?

MICHAEL  
Temping here 'n there.

SARA  
Are you still screenwriting?

MICHAEL  
Yup. Turned the dial up to full  
blast on that one.

SARA  
Back to writing everyday?

MICHAEL  
I try to squeeze in an occasional  
shower.

SARA  
Was this morning one of those times?

MICHAEL  
Yes it was, matter of fact.

SARA  
Good.

She sneaks a smile his way.

MICHAEL  
So how long have you known Pa-vel?

SARA  
Do you have to say his name that  
way?

MICHAEL

No. I don't have to.

SARA

About a year and a half.

MICHAEL

Really, that's all? We went out for three times that.

SARA

I know. I was there.

MICHAEL

Can I ask you something? And don't take this the wrong way...

SARA

I'm sure I won't.

MICHAEL

If it took you five years to figure out I wasn't Mr. Right - for lack of a better term - how can you be sure with Pavel after just eighteen months?

SARA

Because I'm a grownup now.

MICHAEL

Oh.

SARA

I can spot when things aren't working out. And when they are. Can't you?

MICHAEL

I guess. Christ, a fleet of aircraft. That's insane. Just out of curiosity, how many planes make up a *small* fleet?

SARA

He's got four.

MICHAEL

Holy Christ.

SARA

How about you?

MICHAEL

Huh?

SARA

I mean, have you dated since we went out?

MICHAEL

(as if)

Oh sure. Senior year at Venton, I was the biggest whore there.

Sara's disappointed.

MICHAEL

Never said I was proud of it. But you asked, so...

(Jack Webb)

Just the facts, ma'am.

SARA

Is that what dating has turned into for you?

MICHAEL

Don't be so melodramatic. Ma'am. This isn't the Courtship of Eddie's Father. What can I say? I didn't write the Ops Manual for the Dating Scene. It is what it is - a shark tank. Longer you're in it, the more likely you wind up chum.

SARA

I'm sorry to hear that.

MICHAEL

Tell me about it. But hey, you got out...

SARA

What's the longest you dated someone? Since us.

MICHAEL

Two months. My last girlfriend.

SARA

What was that like?

MICHAEL

The exact opposite.

SARA

Of us?

MICHAEL

Of senior year. She didn't touch me, and she didn't want to be touched. Nice, huh? Church choir girl.

SARA

That must've been weird. Especially given your track record.

MICHAEL

It was. Looking back on it... I'm pretty sure she was deranged.

SARA

(chuckles)

Why would you say that?

MICHAEL

How can you be with someone two months and not wanna cop a feel?

SARA

*Cop a feel?* Do people still say that?

MICHAEL

Only in my tax bracket.

Sara nods, unsure this was meant to be hurtful.

MICHAEL

Anyway, it's like she was ritually depriving herself, and all I could do was watch. From the front row.

SARA

So you called it off?

MICHAEL

Yup.

SARA

How'd she take it?

MICHAEL

She called me a depraved, up-n-coming porn star.

SARA

And?

MICHAEL

I took it as a compliment. I said,  
(seasoned veteran)  
*You keep shuttin' the door on sex,  
and sooner or later the only sex  
you'll get is people fucking you  
over.*

SARA

Wow. You've still got a one-track mind.

MICHAEL

I like to keep my game plan consistent.

SARA

I see. Anyone since her?

MICHAEL

Nope. I'm on hiatus from depravity.  
At least for now.

SARA

Good. You wouldn't wanna be typecast.

MICHAEL

That was my concern as well.

They look at each other for an eternal second.

MICHAEL

So I guess that's pretty much it.

He stops rowing. Sara notices they're quite a ways from shore. Michael sets the paddle down, lets out a deep sigh.

MICHAEL

Soon you'll be crossing over the Atlantic. My guess is, we'll never see each other again.

He searches the broad expanse of water for the right words.

MICHAEL

I just wanted you to know, Sara...  
if I had to do it all over again, I probably still wouldn't have been...  
a grownup. But some of my decisions would definitely have been different.

A look of concern splashes over Sara's face.

MICHAEL

Whatever you do, have fun in Paris.

With that, he flings himself OVERBOARD. Sara freezes.

SARA

Michael? Michael!

She leans over the side of the boat, but no sign of Michael.

SARA

What'd you -- Shit!

She dives in.

UNDERWATER

Sara's eyes are as wide as they can go. She spins herself around, nothing but murky water.

She plunges deeper.

Finally, she spots him! His eyes are closed, she swims over.

Sara takes hold of Michael by the belt buckle. Pulls him up, up, up...

BACK TO SURFACE

SARA  
(spitting up)  
Fuck-ing cold. Big jerk.

Michael doesn't respond. Sara treads toward the rowboat.

She attempts to hoist him onto it, but that ain't happening.

Sara takes him by the back of his shirt collar.

SARA  
Come here, You.

She climbs aboard the rowboat. Struggles to reel him in.

Yanks Michael up, grimacing... she's done it. He falls on top of her.

SARA  
Get offa me!

She flips him onto his back, slaps his face.

SARA  
Wake up. Are you there? MICHAEL.

Nothing.

Sara does mouth-to-mouth.

SARA  
I promised myself I wouldn't do this.

Michael coughs up water. Violently.

SARA  
Cover your mouth when you cough.

He opens his eyes. Sara goes from blurry to clear.

SARA  
What were you thinking? Is this  
your idea of a joke?

With sopping wet strands of hair covering his forehead, Michael looks more like an innocent boy than a disgruntled ex-boyfriend. He grins up at her, remembering the old days.

MICHAEL  
Told you I was all washed up.

SARA  
Was all this part of some elaborate  
plan?

MICHAEL  
It's only elaborate if it works.

SARA  
You didn't answer my question.

Michael's eyes glaze over. From mere nostalgia to true love.

MICHAEL  
I just needed to know - once more -  
what it felt like. To be saved by  
you.

Sara's look changes as well. The charade of rich-wife-to-be  
washing away.

MICHAEL  
You can throw me back over now.

SARA  
Okay.

Sara kisses Michael like she did way back when.

When she pulls back, he appears dumbfounded. Not expecting  
that she would flip him back overboard.

SPLASH!

MICHAEL  
(flailing)  
What are you doing? It's fuck-ing  
freezing.

Sara takes hold of the paddle, gets to work.

SARA  
You want me, swim for me.

MICHAEL  
Wait! Hold up!

SARA  
Better hurry up. You don't wanna  
wind up chum.

FADE OUT

THE END