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