

COME AND TAKE IT

by Ethan Warren

freely adapted from THE SEAGULL

by Anton Chekov

Cast of Characters

KAREN – a prickly and sensitive artist in her 20s

DAVID – a handsome but past-his-prime movie star in his 50s

BETH – a reserved but alluring writer in her 40s

NICK – an ingénue in his late teens

AUDREY – a sickly and regretful woman in her 70s

REBECCA – a pleasant and bemused retired doctor in her 60s

MARK – a depressed and irritable young man in his 20s

SARA – a cheerful but tragic figure in her 20s

ELLEN – the brusque caretaker of Audrey's estate in her 50s

PAUL – a melancholy man in his 50s

Setting

A large home on the shores of a lake in western Maine

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Dark. We hear water lapping on a lakeshore. A loon calls, sorrowful.

Lights up on the lawn of Audrey's large home in the woods of Maine. Downstage right is a large, crude "movie theater" setup with benches and something like a proscenium arch with a projector screen set up.

Mark wanders in, followed by Sara.

SARA

Look, so don't throw away the black stuff. Keep it. But you could *try* wearing some colors. I could help you pick some stuff out, it'd be fun.

MARK

I like the black.

SARA

Why?

MARK

Because I'm sad! OK? Is that OK with you?

SARA

Not really.

(beat)

I'm sorry, I still don't get it, I really don't. You're young, you're a healthy dude, your parents are...

MARK

They're not rich! Not by a long shot.

SARA

Of course not, but they're comfortable. And then look at me, I only make like fifty grand a year. But I manage to not be suicidally depressed all the time. I still manage to wear nice bright colors, at least sometimes.

MARK

(ironic)

Money can't buy happiness, right?

SARA

Yes, fine, but it sure would be nice to go out for dinner once in a while, even just grab a pizza in town. But do you ever hear me complaining?

MARK

You complain constantly.

SARA

When did coffee get so expensive? Have we talked about this?

MARK

Constantly. What time's this movie happening?

SARA

Pretty soon. Do you ever think about what if Karen and Nick get famous? And we tell people we knew them back when they were just struggling artists?

MARK

Not really.

SARA

God, how amazing would it be to merge your heart and your soul with someone else's, like Karen and Nick?

Beat.

SARA (cont'd)

You do believe I love you, right? I drive an hour round trip every day, just to see you. What am I doing wrong? Is it because I'm poor?

MARK

No. It's just...look, I like you fine. OK? I just don't love you. It's nothing personal.

SARA

It sounds kind of personal...

Mark takes a cigarette from behind his ear and lights it.

MARK

Want one?

SARA

No, I'm good.

Beat.

MARK

Don't you ever get bored talking about money? Better to be poor than –
(he shrugs)

SARA

Than what?

MARK

Forget it.

(shakes head, blows smoke)

Sweaty out here today, huh? Might storm later. Wouldn't be surprised.

*(Audrey and Karen enter, Karen holding
Audrey's elbow.)*

AUDREY

Even if I live to a hundred, I'll never get used to nature. It's so quiet out here, I slept eleven hours last night, and somehow I'm still tired. I feel like my brain's stuck to the inside of my skull.

KAREN

It's good for you.

(to Sara and Mark)

Hey guys, I'll let you know when it's time, but you gotta get out of here til then. Please.

AUDREY

Mark, tell your mother to bring that dog inside tonight. It was howling so loud my poor brother couldn't get any sleep.

MARK

Figure it out yourself.

(to Sara)

Let's roll.

SARA

You'll let us know when it's time?

KAREN

Scout's honor.

Sara and Mark exit.

AUDREY

Just watch, that dog will howl all night long. I come to the woods to rest, and after one day I'm trying to figure out how to leave.

Karen looks at the projector screen, leaving Audrey leaning on a bench.

KAREN

It's just like an old drive-in movie. It's *better* than a drive-in. It's something new and different and innovative.

AUDREY

It's really lovely. You did good work.

KAREN

Of course it won't mean anything if Nick doesn't make it. He should have been here already. He's gotta figure out how to get away from his mom. He's a legit prisoner over there.

She goes to Audrey and looks at her hair.

KAREN

Look at these split ends. We need to get you to a hairdresser.

AUDREY

My hair's been the bane of my existence since I was a little girl. I've always looked hungover. It did not exactly drive the gentlemen wild...

She sits on the bench.

AUDREY

What's my brother so upset about?

KAREN

Jealousy. Boredom. I didn't ask him to be in the movie, so he decided he hates it, sight unseen. Nothing new.

AUDREY

You sound paranoid, my love.

KAREN

I'm not! He can't stand to share even a little bit of the spotlight with Nick. He'd be a fascinating psychological case, I swear—like, yeah, he's a genius, not that he'd ever let us forget it. He loves Shakespeare, he cries at emotional movies. All good qualities. But on the other hand he's this enormous narcissist who has a meltdown when there's nobody around to ask him for a selfie. And you think I'M paranoid? He thinks we're all out to get him, even his own daughter and sister. And he's so CHEAP, he won't even lend me a couple bucks if I need something to eat – it's totally crazy.

AUDREY

He loves you. You know that. You're just nervous about the movie.

KAREN

Sure, of course, he loves me, he's not a total monster. But that doesn't mean he likes me much. If I'm in my late twenties –

(gasp)

He has to be fifty! In LA he's forty—you read the magazines, you know. Which is a joke. But when he's here, he has to be fifty, and it kills him. You know how much he goes for all that Hollywood ego-massage shit. It's like he's Mother Teresa, doing God's work, healing the soul of humanity. And all they do is tell the same old stories, reinforce the same awful prejudices. How are we supposed to grow as a society if nothing ever changes?

AUDREY

It wouldn't be much of a society without art.

KAREN

Well yeah, but we should have *new* kinds of art. Or else we'd be better off with nothing at all.

(beat)

Look, I love my dad, you know I do. So maybe I'm selfish, but yeah, sometimes I wish he wasn't a movie star. I'd be happier with some dumb old Ward Cleaver type. It's so embarrassing, going to his parties, everyone talking about three-picture deals and genius grants. And they humor me, since I'm with him, but when they ask where I went to college, and I have to admit I didn't graduate –

AUDREY

That wasn't your fault –

KAREN

Wasn't it?

AUDREY

Well...it was nothing you could control.

KAREN

Yeah, tell *him* that. So I admit I didn't finish, and they lose all interest in me. I see it in their eyes.

(sigh)

And then there's his infatuation with that...*writer*, if that's what you want to call her.

AUDREY

Yeah, tell me about Beth. I can't get a read on her. She's so quiet.

KAREN

Christ. Well, she's smart, but there's not much *there* there. You know what I mean? She's polite enough. Got that alluring melancholy about her. Not even forty and they're saying she's one of the all-time greats. And yeah, the books are...fine. Unobjectionable. She's no Margaret Atwood or anything.

AUDREY

I like talking to writers. Used to be I only had two goals in this life: find a husband, write a book. Zero for two, swing and a miss. Must be so nice to write. Even if nobody reads it.

KAREN

(looks up, overjoyed)

I hear him! God, even his footsteps are sexy. How is that possible?

Nick enters, rushing and excited.

KAREN (cont'd)

Here's the man of the hour!

