

Thirst for Eden

A full-length play

By Christopher G. Smith
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Thirst For Eden First produced at the Rochester Repertory Theatre

A Drama in Two Acts
CAST OF CHARACTERS

- JAKE ADAMS: A powerful writer in his early 60's.
DANIEL CAIN: Jake's son. In his early 30's.
FAITH: Jake's companion. 29 years old.
JOHN BARLEYCORN: Jake's inner voice. A charming drinking buddy.

Setting: Jake's Northwoods cabin.

Time: Early 1960's.

Scene Breakdown

ACT I

- Scene 1Sunset, late one summer. Cabin
Scene 2Later the same night. Cabin living room.
Scene 3Late night, early morning. Jake's study and cabin.
Scene 4Early morning, after sunrise. Cabin.

ACT II

- Scene 1Forest (Morning moments later)
Scene 2Cabin living room.
Scene 3Late afternoon. Study.
Scene 4Sunset. Living room and study.
Scene 5Late at night. Cabin
Scene 6Early morning.

ACT I
SCENE 1

SETTING: JAKE ADAM'S Northwoods cabin. Sunset. End of summer. Early 1960's.

The cabin is secluded deep in a pine forest which surrounds the set. The set should be representation. Walls are merely suggested, doors and windows are floated. The cabin is made up of three main rooms. On the main floor is a large living area. The walls, if any exist, are a dark pine. An occasional fishing or hunting trophy can be seen on the "walls." On a coffee table in front of the couch sits a drawer from an old steamer trunk. It is filled with old papers and photos. Off to one side is an old chair. A sideboard or table used as a bar sits far on stage right. In the hallway leading to the bedroom stands a gun case. It is unlocked, the door is ajar. One shotgun is missing.

To the left of the living area is the bedroom. On the bed lies the missing shotgun in a breech position. Two shells are on the bed.

As the lights come up, DANIEL is standing near the front door. His arrival has been a surprise and both men are feeling awkward. Daniel is in his early 30's. He is tan, unshaven, and dressed casually. His army duffel bag and back pack rest beside the door. Standing between the bedroom and the gun case is JAKE ADAMS. He is a powerful, muscular man in his early 60's. His hair and beard are grayish white. The shotgun in the bedroom is his.

DANIEL

So, do you get much writing done here?

JAKE

Writing?

DANIEL

Yeah, that's why you're here? Fleshing out a new book...

JAKE

Book?

(Laughing)

Jesus, I am a book.

DANIEL

If this is a bad time...

DANIEL moves towards his backpack

DANIEL

I didn't expect you here. The cabin is usually quiet now.

JAKE

Too quiet!

DANIEL

What are you doing here? Someone said you were on a lecture tour.

JAKE

That? I was tired of talking about myself.

(Laughing)

You wouldn't believe what they found in my work. Scholars! You can dig too deep, you know? So what trouble brings you to "The Wilderness."

DANIEL

No trouble. I love it here. We had some good times here.

JAKE

Yeah. We did didn't we? Good summers.

DANIEL

Too bad I missed this one.

JAKE

What do you mean?

DANIEL

This is my first time here this year, and now it's time to close up.

JAKE

Close up?

DANIEL

This is the weekend. It's the same one every year.

JAKE
Not now!

DANIEL
It's end of the season, Jake.

JAKE
The hell... So my summer's over.

Jake closes the gun case

JAKE
I haven't finished my work Daniel. Are you working?

DANIEL
I'm in between jobs.

JAKE
I see.

DANIEL
I spent my summer up in the Boundary Waters. It was good. You know I'm writing again.

JAKE
Good for you. What about?

DANIEL
Mostly nature piece? Fishing? Muskies?

JAKE
Trying to make a buck off the old man's name?

DANIEL
No. I earn my own way. I'm writing some pieces for sporting magazines.

JAKE
They pay anything?

DANIEL
Not great, but it helps me get by.

JAKE
Don't set yourself up for failure like that. If your going write tackle something big. Try to get an advance.

DANIEL

I'm not sure that's for me. I'll stick with the articles.

JAKE

Yeah? That's how I started but I tell you, they chew up your time and you don't get much pay for it.

DANIEL

I know, but I'm enjoying it.

JAKE

That's too bad. I always hoped you'd want to be an accountant or something. I'll never understand why you didn't finish college.

DANIEL

Pop, that was almost ten years ago.

JAKE

Yeah? I know. Closed book. It's just I wished you'd finished. I wanted that for you.

DANIEL

Well I'm happy now. If you'd like to read some...

JAKE

I would. That would be nice but ah... Sorry, I'm was right in the middle of something..

DANIEL

You're working? I understand. The place is yours. So you'll close up then?

JAKE

I'm not leaving now.

DANIEL

No, when you do, remember to drain the pipes. Last year one burst...

JAKE

I know how to close up a cabin.

DANIEL

I'm sure you do. It's your place.

(Pause)

It was good seeing you again.

JAKE

You too.

Daniel turns to go.

JAKE

Wait a minute, Danny. You drove a long way. Are you thirsty?

DANIEL

Some other time...

JAKE

(Laughing)

At my age there may not be another time.

Crossing to him

JAKE

Come on boy, we've been away awhile. It's too late to drive. My work will keep. What do you want?

DANIEL

I'm fine.

JAKE

No, no... I'm sick of typing. You stay. Tonight will be special.

Jake exits to the kitchen

DANIEL

Pop!

(Under breath)

Damn it...

Daniel looks at the door deciding what to do. He looks around the room. He crosses to the gun case, and then moves to the couch and sits. He looks through some of the items in the old steamer trunk. He stops on one picture and studies it closely. He is caught up in the warmth of the photo and doesn't notice Jake reenter with the drinks. Jake takes a private moment and looks kindly at Daniel. Jake sets down the drinks and crosses to Daniel. He puts his hand on Daniel's shoulder. Daniel looks up and sees Jake. Still lost in the moment he speaks.

DANIEL

Is this Mom?

JAKE

(Looking)

Yes it is.

(Very tender)

That was in Paris. We were very happy then.

DANIEL

She's beautiful.

JAKE

Yes. She was. I think that was the happiest I've ever been.

DANIEL

In Paris? Mom said you were broke then?

JAKE

We had nothing. I was nobody, but we were in love and that was everything.

DANIEL

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

JAKE

(Gently)

That's Alright. Good memories.

Jake hands him the drink

JAKE

Here.

DANIEL

Jake, don't do this to me.

JAKE

Do what?

DANIEL

I didn't come here for trouble.

JAKE

So why did you come?

(Laughing)

Your old man cause trouble? Ah, people make it up.

DANIEL

I don't want to be responsible.

JAKE

I'm feeling great tonight. No dark moodiness.

DANIEL

I'd like to, Pop...

JAKE

Good. This will make up for those birthdays I missed. Like when you turned twenty-one? This can be your right of passage.

DANIEL

You go ahead.

JAKE

So what's the problem?

DANIEL

No problem, I just don't feel like drinking.

JAKE

For Christ's sake, boy. I've been staring at the typewriter all day. I could use some company. If you don't want to drink with me...

DANIEL

It's not that. You know what happens.

JAKE

I'm good now.

DANIEL

Jake!

JAKE

Oh the hell with it.

DANIEL

Nothing's changed. It was great seeing you, too, Pop. Sorry we missed you at the funeral.

Daniel begins to exit

JAKE

Get back in here.

Daniel stops

JAKE

Don't take some cheap shot and exit. I didn't breed a coward. If you have something to say, say it.

DANIEL

She was only your wife.

JAKE

Ex.

DANIEL

So she didn't mean anything?

JAKE

She meant everything.

DANIEL

That's what you say, but you have a funny way of showing it. The least you could have done was send some flowers. It was a God damn embarrassment.

JAKE

(Avoiding)

They couldn't locate me. How was I to know? Your mother was a wonderful woman and I felt bad as hell for not being there.

DANIEL

If that's your story...

JAKE

I don't owe you an explanation. I know what's true. Believe what you want. Is that what dragged you all the way out here? Memories?

DANIEL

No. I came to close up. It's time. I'm just passing through.

JAKE

To where? Leave an opening Daniel.

Crossing to him

JAKE

We should talk. We're family. We are all the family each other has left.

Jake hands him the drink

DANIEL

I suppose I should be honored. To spend time with Jake Adams, "The Great American Author." I've read this is a rare privilege. Right?

JAKE

Don't believe everything you read. I create fiction, remember?

DANIEL

Besides, people change, right?

JAKE

Right before your eyes. Cheers.

DANIEL

(Disgusted)

What is this?

JAKE

(Laughing)

A little bite to it? Make's you feel alive.

DANIEL

No wonder your guts are shot.

JAKE

Wait until it plays with your head.

Jake holds the drink up

JAKE

What an invention. Let me tell you the tale of the "Shanghai Clipper."

Jake puts his arm around Daniel and leads him back into the room.

JAKE

What a lady she was. I signed on in San Francisco and spent the entire ocean crossing dreaming of the Orient.

DANIEL

When was that?

JAKE

Oh, long ago, when I was just a kid, 17 or so... Sailed off to see the world, Asia, Africa... And what did I see? "I saw the sea."

DANIEL

On a clipper?

JAKE

Well, not exactly, but it sounds a hell of a lot more interesting than a cargo ship! Damn realists.

DANIEL

..and Shanghai?

JAKE

Now that part is true. As soon as we docked I drew my pay and set off for adventure. The East was mine to conquer. But a tough looking deck hand hoisted me up by the scruff of the neck. "It's a sea faring tradition," he says, "for the crew to have a round when we makes port." He was a very persuasive man.

DANIEL

I'll bet. And the drink?

JAKE

I'm coming to that. So, he escorts me down the wharf, see? Into this dank little bar, smelling of stale beer. The men each bought a round, and then it was my turn, and then around again. What camaraderie! Somewhere before my pay ended, we began to experiment, and this little beauty was created. "The Shanghai Clipper." Only thing I brought back from the East. Guess what it's made of?

DANIEL

I don't know? Sake?