

A funny, messy, honest look at surviving life's curveballs.

# Take Care

A play by Ellen Denny

2 F / 1 M

90 mins

Comedic Drama

Live Percussion (Vibraphone)

Minimal Set / Props



## Synopsis

Having paused her career to raise her daughter, 42 year old writer Johanna Dunham is finally plotting her grand return. She's even one-upped Virginia Woolf and found the perfect 'house of one's own' where she can write. But when her husband suffers a stroke, Johanna is thrust into life as a caregiver spouse and single mom to Lucy. After a disastrous visit to a caregivers support group, Johanna is on the brink of driving off into the night, when she nearly runs over Len, the handsome young firefighter-next-door longing for an escape of his own...



Photography by Terry Manzo

Audience  
Reactions

*"The heartfelt story unfolded with grace and grit in this touching script."*

*"Really moving and funny"*

*"90 minutes of sheer enjoyment"*

*"A great script... Its blend of humour and tenderness are so resonant with real life."*

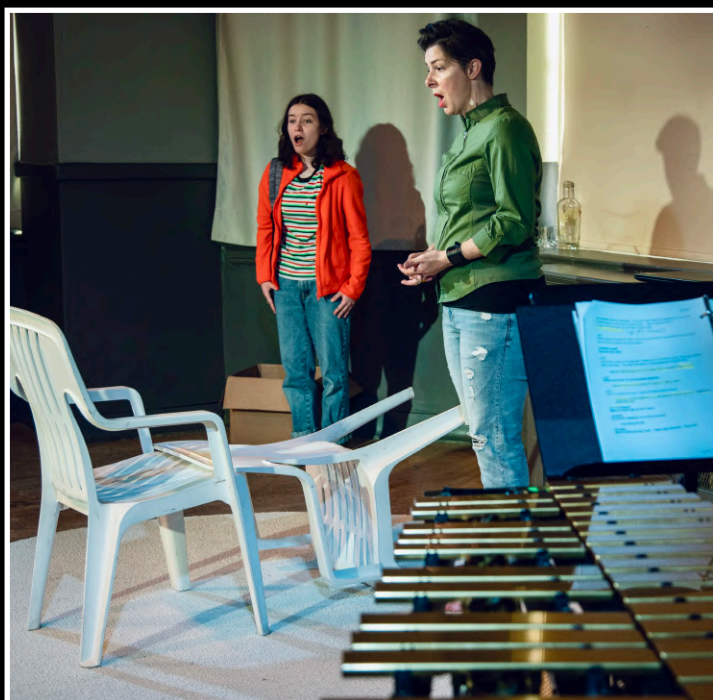
## LUCY

Why isn't Dad saying anything?? He opens his mouth, but all that comes out is-

*BONNNGG from low on vibraphone. Lucy and Johanna's mouths snap open and drift shut.*

## History

*Take Care* was developed with support from the **Toronto Arts Council**.



The play premiered at **Here for Now Theatre Company** in Stratford, Ontario in August 2022. It was directed by Jan Alexandra Smith, with movement direction by Patrice Bowler, lighting design by Stephen Degenstein, and costume and set design by Monique Lund.

### Original Cast:

Sara-Jeanne Hosie as JOHANNA

Emma Cuzzocrea as LUCY

Tenaj Williams as LEN

With live scoring by Max Lindsay

(Hear [stylistic example of vibraphone](#))

## Media

A production still of *Take Care* appeared in [The New York Times](#)



JOHANNA

This isn't hard. This is easy.

Sticking it out for your family, *that's* hard.



## Script Excerpt (Take Care - Scene 4)

JOHANNA (42) and her daughter LUCY (12) arrive home to Johanna's writing house, where they've been living since her husband's stroke. JOHANNA presses the answering machine. (Note: Sadie McCallister is like totally popular. Lucy is not.)

SADIE (voice-over)

Um hi, this is Sadie? McCallister? I'm like calling for Lucy?

JOHANNA

As in your new *friend* / Sadie??

LUCY

SSHHHHFFT!!!

*LUCY does not move a muscle.*

SADIE (cont.)

I'm wondering if she like wants to come over on Friday night, for like a sleepover? My mom says she should come for dinner, so... like yeah, you can call me back I guess, 522- eighty six eighty six. Bye.

ANSWERING MACHINE (voice over)

To replay this message press one. To delete this message / press seven. To save this message press nine.

LUCY

How do I save it?! HOW / DO I SAVE IT!!

JOHANNA

Nine- press nine!!

*LUCY presses nine.*

ANSWERING MACHINE (voice-over)

Message will be saved for fourteen days. End of messages. (beep)

*Awestruck beat.*

JOHANNA

I take it... you'd like to-

LUCY

I have to go to La Senza!

JOHANNA

What?

LUCY

All the cool girls get their pjs from La Senza.

**Script Excerpt (Take Care - Scene 4)**

JOHANNA

I got you those penguin pjs last month.

LUCY

Penguins are for babies!

JOHANNA

You do not need anything from La Senza.

LUCY

Then why did you even say I could go?!

JOHANNA

Well technically I / didn't.

LUCY

Cause obviously I can't! Like obviously I can't without going to La Senza so I guess we'll just FORGET IT!

*JOHANNA turns to audience.*

JOHANNA

We do not forget it. The next few days are *full* of not forgetting.

LUCY

Do you think I should paint my nails before? Or will Sadie wanna do that together...

JOHANNA

Minutes spent writing - zero.

Minutes spent on hold with David's medical insurance - seventy eight.

LUCY

Why can't you own eye liner like normal moms?

JOHANNA

Trips to rehab to meet with the physio, bring David socks, bring David forgotten socks - three.

LUCY

Trips to La Senza - One.

*LUCY exits.*

JOHANNA

I can feel Mrs McCallister's pitying gaze as I drop Lucy off for the big sleepover... *Poor Mrs Dunham, saddled with a crippled husband.* What does she know? I have a Friday night all to myself. And I'm gonna go home to my empty house and write... Except I'm too restless... I should go see David, but I don't think I can stomach the smell of half eaten hospital dinner- what I want is a cigarette. I always keep one- just one measly little cigarette in the glove compartment. For emergencies...

#### Script Excerpt (Take Care - Scene 4)

Contents of my glove compartment: Empty gum packet. Sunglasses case- come on cigarette, where are you... "Take Care"? Oh. Right. It's the pamphlet for Caregiver's Circle. I was gonna burn this. (*she reads*) "Come spend your Friday night with those who understand"... Oh god. Of course they chose Fridays. Not like caregivers have plans, right? It's starting soon, in the basement of the church a couple blocks over- which doesn't matter, obviously, because I'm not gonna... But see, as a writer, this kind of thing is... it could be gold, you know? For character research, so *that* is why I show up. For research.

*JOHANNA grabs a free juice box, as she tries to discreetly continue talking to the audience.*

Everyone here is- they all have the same bags under their eyes- it's freaking me out actually. I am *sucking* back free juice boxes- these people are years ahead of me and they're all- why would a licensed social worker think this would be helpful??

*JOHANNA grabs a fresh juice box before sitting on a plastic chair. It's her turn to speak.*

Hi. I'm new... Lucky me! Um... My husband, David, had... a stroke, real big honker, out of nowhere, a few weeks ago, but... feels more like... a year? Uh, I have a kid. Lucy. She's twelve... I don't really... I'm sorry- is- is there something I'm supposed to say? I'm not sure what it is I'm supposed to... give... or get... from this. I don't need a ton of sad sack wives telling me- sorry, I'm just- you all have vegetable husbands, right? That's why we're all- I'm saying I don't need to hear your stories to know my life is over! So... Shout out to the men though! That is impressive. Honourable even. Cause definitely most men run. My aunt, she got MS, and her husband was out the door! Gone! He was gone! So... She'd probably get more out of something like this, she's pretty isolated, but we leave the crips at home tonight, right? For this party?

*JOHANNA sucks her juice box dry.*

Yeah. I'll uh...

Back in the car, I grope under the seat. One last ditch hope for my emergency cigarette. Nothing... I turn at the firehall, see my writing house. It's supposed to be my- *twelve years* I waited. For my kid to get old enough, independent, so I could... I reach the driveway, my fruit punch-filled bladder screaming for release, but I don't pull in. It's so easy, to keep driving, all you do is keep your foot on the pedal- I'm not gonna run. I'm not gonna run! Fuck Ibsen! Fuck Nora walking out the door like it's nothing! Her husband was healthy! What the hell's *she* complaining about? I'm circling the block. Each time I see the house my bladder revolts- I'm supposed to be *writing*, it's supposed to be *my* turn, *I'm* the one who's putting myself back together- not him- not David going to pieces and expecting me to just put it all- myself- my art- aside like it's- again- *again*- for-

*JOHANNA swerves as she nearly hits someone (LEN) standing in the street. Her bladder gives way as she slams on the break.*

JOHANNA  
SHIT!!