

"SUMMER ON FIRE"

10 Page Excerpt

by

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SYNOPSIS:

Due to a scheduling snafu an ultra-right wing commentator for FOX News must share his Fire Island rental home with a decidedly left wing young singer and her lesbian girlfriend. The clash of politics and personalities make for a lively Labor Day weekend in the summer of 2008. SUMMER ON FIRE is a comedy about sexual misconduct, political turmoil, burgeoning fame, elusive justice and long lasting love. In these turbulent, politically polarizing times I wrote the play as a nod to Norman Lear and George Bernard Shaw both of who believed that the best way to get people to accept and consider differing points of view was by making people laugh at them.

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CHARACTERS:

GWYNN SIMMONS (25) - A singer/songwriter on the verge

MAXIE FLEISCHER (27) - Gwynn's activist lover

FRANK FLANAGAN (60) - A conservative TV star

FAY BOROSHENKO (55) - Frank's Ex-wife and magazine writer

DALE LAWLESS (45) A liberal political advisor

TERRY KLEIN (35) Frank's producer and right hand man

TIME:

ACT ONE - Friday and Saturday of Labor Day weekend, 2008

ACT TWO - Sunday and Monday of Labor Day weekend, 2008

SETTING:

Fire Island, New York. We are in a beautiful beach house in the remote Pines area of this very inaccessible island. This is the former vacation home of Frank and Fay Flanagan in better times. Now it is a rental property that they share one weekend a year when they open it to friends each Labor Day.

The house is modern, by island standards, with a floor to ceiling glass window facing the ocean. To the left on two levels are the bedrooms. Master bedroom downstairs with a guest room and small bath upstairs. The Master bathroom is downstairs next to the small kitchen and bar to the right and center. The entrance to the house is to the far right. A mosh pit couch faces out toward the ocean. There is a flat screen TV mounted in a bookcase by the left wall.

Beyond the glass wall is a large wooden deck area trimmed with strands of lights that extends off the back of the house. A larger deck area is indicated offstage to the right.

ACT ONE - SCENE ONE - LIGHTS UP

(A fierce rainstorm roars outside the spacious, dimly lit beach house. GWYNN SIMMONS(25) and MAXIE FLEISCHER(27) are seated on a blanket on the floor surrounded by lit candles, snacks and a nearly empty bottle of champagne. Both are dressed in comfortable gear, hair still wet from swimming. Gwynn is wearing a flowing sundress over her swimsuit while Maxie has on a T-shirt and sweat pants. They are in the middle of a long, lingering kiss when a loud CRACK of thunder causes Maxie to jump)

GWYNN

So awesome.

(Holding her close)

My grandpa said thunder and lightning is what happens when God and the devil fight. What do you suppose they fight about.

MAXIE

Politics. That's what most nasty ass fights are about, right?

(Getting up)

We're out of champagne. I'll get another bottle.

GWYNN

No. No more champagne.

MAXIE

Don't worry. We still got plenty.

(Maxie moves to a case of champagne sitting on the floor in the kitchen)

GWYNN

I'd feel a hell of a lot better about drinking it if I was sure who'd sent it.

MAXIE

Who cares who sent it? It's here for you. You'd better get used to it, Gwynn. From now on your life is all about Fire Island beach houses and cases of champagne showing up at your doorstep. Because you are a Goddess of Song.

GWYNN

More like a total unknown who got lucky.

MAXIE

Uh uh uh. Repeat after me. You are a Goddess of Song. Say it.

GWYNN

Ugh. Can't we just be Gwynn and Maxie for a few more days? Then when we go home I promise I'll be a Goddess of Song.

MAXIE

Okay fine. But first...we drink!

(She pops the bottle and drinks from it to keep from spilling)

GWYNN

Go easy on that stuff. Last night you were so high you thought the waves crashing outside were advancing armies coming to get us.

MAXIE

I did? Wow. I put a lot of hashish in that 'loaded lasagna' we made. It was way stronger than I'd thought. Lesson learned. Never buy drugs from a Rastafarian named Spike.

GWYNN

Well I think it'd be a good idea if we dial it down a bit.

MAXIE

Dial what down?

GWYNN

The drinking and the drugs. I need to focus. I haven't written a new song in weeks.

MAXIE

Good! The whole idea was for you to take the summer off. This is about celebrating and relaxing not fretting and dieting. So what do you say to more champagne?

GWYNN

I say, 'See you tomorrow champagne.'

MAXIE

Wrong answer.

GWYNN

Look. I've got to get in shape. The tour starts in less than a month. I've got to keep my head on straight.

MAXIE

Are you okay?

GWYNN

Yeah, why?

MAXIE

You've been out of sorts ever since you spoke on the phone to that agent. Is everything all right?

GWYNN

Yeah.

MAXIE

Did you talk to him about me going with you on the tour?

GWYNN

Yes. He's worried there won't be enough money in the budget.

MAXIE

No problem. I'll do it for free. You can pay my way.

(Moving to her)

We'll tell him I'm your personal assistant. Wink wink.

GWYNN

You're really going to chuck all the stuff you do with the women's council just to follow me around?

MAXIE

One less cranky lesbian on that council can only help matters. They won't miss me.

GWYNN

Well...I'll see what they say. That's all I can do.

MAXIE

Don't you want me to go?

GWYNN

What I want is to not screw this up. This is a big deal for me. You see it as one gigantic party. I see it as work. I see it as pressure.

MAXIE

That's why I should be there. I can help you.

GWYNN

Help me how?

MAXIE

I can look after you. Be your bodyguard. Like Kevin Costner in that movie with Whitney Houston. You know where he's the bodyguard. What the hell was the name of that thing?

GWYNN

'The Bodyguard.'

MAXIE

Yeah. That's me. I'll watch over you. Keep you safe.

GWYNN

(Skeptically)

Oh yeah. Right.

MAXIE

Hey. I've got skills. That summer I spent on a kibbutz in Israel...I got up every morning and trained with the Israeli army. They taught me hand to hand combat. Real warrior stuff.

(Does some moves)

I can be there when packs of sex crazed college boys come running after you. I'll say, "Back! Horn dogs. Or I'll disembowel you with my kick of death!"

(Thunder CRASHES outside causing Maxie to yelp and dive into Gwynn's arms)

GWYNN

(Laughing)

I feel safer already.

MAXIE

Look. I can do this. I'll prove it to you. For the rest of this weekend I'm gonna take care of you. I'll cook your meals, do the dishes and massage your miniscule ego.

GWYNN

Is that really what you want to do?

MAXIE

Yes. But first I'm going to pin you down and kiss every crevice on your beautiful body.

GWYNN

Well if that's your plan then I should take a shower. Some of my crevices are still full of sand.

MAXIE

All right. And when you come back you're gonna put yourself in my hands. I want you to enjoy the last weekend we have before the nasty old world comes banging on the door.

(Kissing her)

Now go wash your crevices. I'll clean up. That's an order.

GWYNN

Okay, Kevin. Just don't break anything. Remember. Everything in here is rented.

(Gwynn goes into the bathroom. As Maxie picks up the plates and forks she hears a LOUD RUSTLING outside the front door. Frightened, she is about to run toward Gwynn but she stops herself)

(Instead she grabs an empty champagne bottle and nervously moves toward the sound. Just then the door opens but the chain stops it. Maxie gasps. A voice comes from the other side of it)

FRANK (O.S.)
God damn it. Hey. Let me in.

MAXIE
What do you want?

FRANK (O.S.)
I want to come in.

MAXIE
Why?

FRANK (O.S.)
Because it's raining, that's why. I live here. Let me in.

MAXIE
You stay where you are.

FRANK (O.S.)
Jesus Christ.

(Frank slides his arm in to undo the chain from the outside)

MAXIE
Stop that. Stop that right now. I'm warning you.

(Grunting Frank almost has the chain undone. Freaking, Maxie swings the bottle hard and whacks him on the hand)

FRANK (O.S.)
Aaaarghhh!

(Frank pulls his hand back out. Maxie slams the door and locks it. Hearing this, Gwynn calls from the bathroom)

GWYNN (O.S.)
What was that?

(Maxie calls to the bathroom while waving the empty bottle like a sword)

MAXIE
Don't worry. I got it. Finish your shower.

(Just then the dark silhouette of a man appears on the patio. FRANK FLANAGAN (60) dramatically steps inside. He's dressed in a top coat and fishing hat and angrily brandishes a garden gnome)

FRANK

(Moving to the bathroom)

Stand back or I'll bust your God damned skull open.

MAXIE

(Blocking him)

Where do you think you're going?

FRANK

I gotta pee. Get out of my way.

MAXIE

There's somebody in there.

FRANK

Well tell them to get out.

MAXIE

It's my girlfriend. She's in the shower.

FRANK

That'll take for God damned ever. I'll go upstairs.

(Frank jogs up to the guest bathroom.

As he goes inside Gwynn, wrapped in a towel, comes out of the one downstairs)

GWYNN

What's going on? I heard voices.

MAXIE

Gwynn, I did a bad thing.

GWYNN

What? I was gone two minutes. What did you do?

MAXIE

I let a strange man in. He's upstairs peeing.

GWYNN

You let a strange man in so he could pee?

MAXIE

No. He let himself in. He had a key and-- Hey! I kept him from walking in on you in the shower. Give me some credit.

(The toilet FLUSHES upstairs)

Go in the bedroom and put something on. I'll deal with him.

GWYNN

But maybe if we--

MAXIE

(Striking a Ninja pose)

You! Go! Now!

(Gwynn dashes in the bedroom. Upstairs,
Frank walks out, holding his hand)

FRANK

There. Much better. Now. Before I call the cops and have you and your girlfriend carted off for trespassing would you mind telling me what you're doing in my house.

MAXIE

We rented it. From Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend.

FRANK

Not through. 'To.' Meaning until. That was the agreement.

MAXIE

That's not what the contract says.

FRANK

I beg to differ. I proofed the ad myself. My assistant Terry placed it and he's not the type to make mistakes. Of any kind. Ever. So if I were to choose between your word and my assistant's track record I'd say start packing.

(Gwynn comes out of the main bedroom.
She's wearing a large terry cloth robe)

GWYNN

What's going on? Who the hell are you?

FRANK

Hi there. You must be the girlfriend who was enjoying my shower. I'm the guy who owns this house. I'm also the guy who just had his wrist fractured by this bottle swinging lunatic.

GWYNN

(To Maxie)

His voice sounds familiar.

MAXIE

I thought so too.

(Frank moves to the kitchen and puts
ice in a dish towel to wrap his hand)

FRANK

Never mind that. Just pack up and go. I have a lot of people coming here for the weekend. So you have to clear out. Is it just the two of you or is there a whole coven here with you?

GWYNN

There's been some kind of mistake Mister whoever the hell you are. We rented this house for the summer. Through Labor Day.

FRANK

Not 'through.' 'To.'

GWYNN

We have every right to stay. And you have no right to storm in here and try to kick us out.

FRANK

(Wrapping his hand)

I'd be careful advising me of my rights. I'm the landlord here. Accent on lord. If I were you I'd be calling a lawyer.

GWYNN

We don't need a lawyer.

FRANK

Oh I'd say you do. For starters your 'lover' here likely broke my hand. That's assault. Furthermore I noticed you just came out of the main bedroom. That's a major violation of the rental agreement which clearly states that renters and their guests are to confine themselves to the guest room. Not park themselves in the main bedroom otherwise known as my room. And to add insult to injury...that's my robe. I stole it from Claridges in London and you have no right to be wearing it!

MAXIE

(Putting it together)

Holy shit! It's Frank Flanagan.

GWYNN

The FOX TV guy? From 'The Flanagan File?'

FRANK

That's me. In the badly bruised flesh.

MAXIE

Oh my God. We've been staying in the house of the fucking Antichrist!

FRANK

(Pulling out his cell phone)

I'll call my assistant and straighten this out.

MAXIE

I can't believe this is your place. God, I hate you.

GWYNN

Maxie, don't make things worse. Let me get the contract.

(She moves to her purse to get the contract. Frank dials his phone)

MAXIE

You expect me to be silent? This guy is the mouthpiece for the whole religious right. He hates gay people.

FRANK

Wrong. For one thing, Butch, I've got nothing to do with the religious right. I'm a traditionalist. If you'd ever watched my show or read any of my books you'd know that.

MAXIE

If I watched your show or read your books I'd sprout horns and a tail. And what the hell is a traditionalist? Is that right wing speak for Neanderthal?

FRANK

As much as liberal is left wing speak for Bolshevik. So if the red shoe fits. Personally I hate those kind of labels.

(Into phone)

Terry? Get over here right away. I've got a situation here. Two carpet munching carpet baggers insist they have my place rented for the weekend. So flutter over here pronto and straighten this out or you and the sisterhood of the frisky pants will all be out on your candy coated asses by morning.

GWYNN

Your assistant is gay?

FRANK

How did you guess?

MAXIE

You hear the way he talks?

(To Frank)

You're an evil, despicable man. A hate monger. A sex bigot!

FRANK

And I'm guessing you won Miss Congeniality at the Miss Godless Shrew Pageant.

MAXIE

Why the hell would you hire a gay assistant?

FRANK

I didn't hire him because he's gay. I hired him because he's the best. What he does behind closed doors is his business. And the same goes for you two. Except that I don't want it going on behind my closed doors and in my bed.

GWYNN

(Finding the document)

Here it is. Right here. On the first page. 'Through Labor Day.' Right there.

MAXIE

Ha! Read it and weep, Herr Hitler.

FRANK

(Reading it)

Well...that's clearly a mistake. Everybody knows I throw a party here Labor Day weekend. It's an island ritual.

MAXIE

I don't give a shit about you or your rituals. We have a contract. There it is in black and white. 'Through' not 'to.'

GWYNN

So we have every right to stay.

FRANK

Not exactly.

MAXIE

Of course not. Not in Frank Flanagan's world. In his 'traditionalist' view of the world gay people have no rights.

FRANK

That's not true.

MAXIE

Oh no? Are you or are you not opposed to gay marriage?

FRANK

Oh. Definitely opposed.

GWYNN

Why?

FRANK

I'm against marriage for everybody. It's unfair. The day the average guy doesn't get taken to the cleaners when he gets divorced. When they fix that then I don't care who gets married to who. As long as it's civil.

MAXIE

Civil as in outside the church.

FRANK

Civil as in civilized. Right now the whole thing's barbaric.

GWYNN

So you're not against gay rights?

FRANK

I'm pro-heterosexual rights. Just like I'm pro-taxpayer and pro-military.