

Guarding

A Love Letter to Summer Jobs

by Genevieve Simon

Workshopped @ The Actors Theatre of Louisville
Louisville, KY (2019)
Director: Emily Moler
Dramaturg: Susan Yassky

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Director: Emily Moler

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CONTACT
(419) 494-2166
genevievesimon92@gmail.com
genevieve-simon.com/playwright

EXCERPT

Characters

7 F/NB, 2M, 1 voice

The Assistant Manager:

EMMA (F) – 23 years old. Her 8th summer at the pool. Must be played by a white actor.

The Lifeguards:

JENNY (F/NB)– 18 years old. Her third summer. Any race.

KAT (F/NB) – 17 years old. Her second summer. Must be played by a black actor.

VALERIE (F/NB)– 16 years old. Her first summer at the pool. Any race.

JORDAN (M)– 19 years old. His second summer. The whitest boy.

LINDSEY (F/NB)– 18 years old. Not new but it feels like it. Any race.

NICK (M)– Maybe 24 years old? No one knows how long he's worked here. Any race.

HOMA (F/NB)– 22 years old. Second summer at this pool, but she's worked at pools before. Must be played by a black actor.

BETH (F/NB)– 18 years old. Her second summer, but she's known Jenny for a long time. Any race.

THE CLOCK - (50+ years old) Any gender, any race.

A voice. A presence. A reminder. Should be a different timbre than any other voice we hear in the play. Maybe like a news anchor/radio announcer.

The Pool Manager (Josh) remains unseen.

Casting Note:

All of the female identifying characters can also be played by non-binary actors, except EMMA. I highly encourage avoiding a cast of only cis actors – this would not accurately reflect the truth of living in a small town in the Midwest. JORDAN and NICK, however, must be played by cis male actors.

Setting:

2006: An Outdoor Public Swimming Pool in Small Town Ohio

The audience is at the Pool. They are the swimmers.

The actors should look at specific audience members when yelling at pool patrons.

At the end of the whistle, the PA system crackles and turns on. The lifeguards remain in their chairs.

A tinny-sounding announcement is heard. It has a sing-songy rhythm, as if the person speaking says the same thing every hour every day in the exact same way every time.

EMMA

(over loudspeaker)

Ladies and gentlemen, the time is now 12:50pm, and the Family Aquatics Complex will be taking a ten-minute break. During this break, adults eighteen years of age and older may remain in the pool and waterslide. Anyone under the age of eighteen must remain clear of the pool. We remind you to please walk, please stay off the bridge and the white area around the pool. Thank you!

The PA crackles and turns off.

LINDSEY

See ya

She begins to climb down.

KAT

You have to wait

LINDSEY

What

KAT

Did you check your area?

You can't get down until everyone is out of the pool

LINDSEY

Oh right

She makes a kind of show of looking around. LINDSEY climbs down and walks around to BETH's chair.

BETH and KAT remain on duty—all the other lifeguards get out of their chairs.

***The Clock Says
12:50 PM
ADULT SWIM BREAK***

KAT sighs and begins to watch a very slow lap swimmer swim back and forth in front of her. Her eyes track this single swimmer's progress for this whole scene.

NICK

That always annoys me

VALERIE
What

NICK
the announcement
they always say “Family Aquatics Complex”

VALERIE
yeah? Isn’t that the name of the

NICK
It’s just, like, linguistically wrong
it’s actually an “*Aquatic*” Complex not an Aquatics Complex

HOMA
(to BETH, fast)
Hey, match my pitch:
“AAAAAHH”

BETH
“Ahhhhhhh?”

VALERIE
I don’t get the difference

HOMA
Oh man

NICK
Well “aquatics” means like
An animal or a plant that lives in the water or a sport you play in water

VALERIE
yeah we do that here

NICK
No but it’s a noun

HOMA
Jenny!
Match my pitch: AHHHHHH

JENNY
Wha-aaaaaaaa?!

NICK
And “aquatic” is an adjective

HOMA
Oh my god amazing yes

NICK

So technically that's the right

JENNY
What was that?

VALERIE
Oh ok
Uh I gotta order food before this break is over

VALERIE walks off.

HOMA
Valerie match my pitch: AAAAHH!!!

VALERIE
(easily matches as she keeps walking)
aaaaaahhh

HOMA
Holy shit
Yes girl

LINDSEY
Hey

BETH
Hey

LINDSEY
How's it going

BETH
Glad it's break

LINDSEY
Yeah
Yeah
But you gotta be up there

BETH
Eh
Could be worse
Plus this is when everyone does the really excellent dives and stuff

LINDSEY
haha
Hahayeah

JORDAN
Hey Valerie

VALERIE
What

JORDAN
Mushrooms or umbrellas?

VALERIE
What?

JORDAN
Mushrooms or umbrellas?

VALERIE
I'm on the phone

LINDSEY
How was your weekend?

BETH
Uh yeah it was fine

...
How was yours?

LINDSEY
Oh yeah cool yeah
Yeah
I was
I went to this
Like barbecue thing?
With some friends?
At like a farm I guess

JORDAN
Homa

HOMA
Yeah?

JORDAN
Mushrooms or umbrellas

LINDSEY
I mean yeah it was fun

HOMA
Hm ok, in what way

LINDSEY
I like never do stuff like that so
I mean

JORDAN
Which is better

LINDSEY
But yeah it was pretty—
There was like a live band too

HOMA
Umbrellas

BETH
Oh really?

JORDAN
Hm

LINDSEY
Yeah it was super good

JORDAN
Interesting

BETH
What kind of music?

LINDSEY
I guess you'd call it
Folk music?
Like John Mayer?

BETH
... Ok.
(looking at swimmers)
Man I wish people would not do that

HOMA walks over to BETH and LINDSEY, singing robustly.

HOMA
“Do you rememBAH!
Twentyfirst niiiight,
SeptemBAH!
Do do do do do doooooo: REMEMBAH!”
(to Lindsey and Beth)
heeeey

BETH
Hey

LINDSEY
Hey!

HOMA
(quieter)

oh look
isn't that Double Back Flip Guy?

LINDSEY
Who?

BETH
Ugh

HOMA
Haha I love this guy

LINDSEY
What's his

BETH
Well he
(to Double Back Flip Guy, aka DBFG)
YEAH YOU'RE GOOD
(DBFG makes a shitty joke)
HAHA YEAH

HOMA
(quiet to LINDSEY)
he makes the same joke every time
and then

*They watch him attempt a double back flip. He lands on his back.
We hear a loud THWAP offstage as he hits the water.
They all wince, then pointedly look away as he surfaces.*

After a few moments (once he's gone)

LINDSEY
is he ok?

HOMA
Oh yeah

BETH
Well I mean "is he ok" like

HOMA
Haha

BETH
He keeps doing it
He does that every time

HOMA
Every single time

LINDSEY
Yeah yeah oh yeah
It's so hot

*HOMA stretches and sings.
At the break station, VALERIE and NICK and JENNY are getting ready to go
back up in their chairs.*

HOMA
“Baeoooh! Say that you remmebah
Baeoooooo-eeooo-eeoooh!”

BETH scans.

LINDSEY
Did you guys hear about the—

BETH
You guys only have like a minute til Emma comes after you.

HOMA
Thanks girl

LINDSEY and HOMA leave BETH and go to their stations.

HOMA
(as they walk)
sucks for Emma.

LINDSEY
What
Why? What
Is she the one who

HOMA
(suddenly cold)
who said she did anything?

LINDSEY
No, I don't – I didn't –

HOMA
Who told you that?

LINDSEY
nobody – I dunno I just meant like

HOMA
(Suddenly light)
I gotta grab my towel
My thighs are burrrrrning

*HOMA skips off.
VALERIE, NICK, and JENNY by the break area:*

VALERIE
Hey wait

Can someone get my back?

JENNY looks up. She's too far away.

NICK
uh
Sure

VALERIE
oh.
Thanks

NICK tentatively squirts some sunscreen into his palms.

NICK
do you want it
Uh
Where do you

VALERIE
in the middle?
just like where I can't reach

NICK
Uh
Ok

*NICK gingerly begins to apply the sunscreen. It's as if he's never done this before?
A beat where NICK rubs VALERIE'S back and JENNY watches.*

VALERIE
What are you

NICK
What

VALERIE
Can you just
Like
Get it under the straps?

JENNY watches.

NICK
Uh
You want

VALERIE
I don't wanna get weird lines there so just

NICK
Uh huh

VALERIE
Just like get in there

NICK
Ok

*NICK lifts the straps. JENNY is transfixed.
A short beat.*

NICK
is that

VALERIE
What

NICK
How's that

VALERIE
Is it all rubbed in?

NICK
Uh
Yeah

VALERIE
Ok cool
If I get a sunburn today you owe me
Hahaha!

VALERIE walks off.

NICK
(to himself)
You're welcome?

**THE CLOCK SAYS
1:00 PM
END OF BREAK**

EMMA
(from the First Aid Station)
Lindsey! Hey! You're on First Aid! Let's go!!

LINDSEY
Oh—ok—sorry—

She runs to the First Aid station.

LINDSEY
How's it going

EMMA
(distracted)
oh good good good uh
yeah
can you check the gauze
I think we might be low

LINDSEY
Yeah sure
...
Is Josh coming in today?

EMMA
Why

LINDSEY
Oh I don't
I just wondered
Like if the drill was happening today?

EMMA
uh yeah...I can't tell you that

LINDSEY
Oh yeah no I know I just
...yeah

LINDSEY looks around the office.

LINDSEY
So weird
...
can't believe the summer's almost over

EMMA
Well it's only July I mean
We've still got like a month

looks down, keeps working

LINDSEY
Yeah but
Also like
This is the last summer

EMMA
Oh. Yeah

LINDSEY

I really thought they were gonna be able to keep it open

EMMA doesn't want to talk about this.

EMMA

Hm

LINDSEY

I thought it would be

I don't understand what happened

EMMA

(lightly, simple)

They held a vote.

They didn't get enough votes.

Not enough people wanted to keep it open,

So.

LINDSEY

Yeah I know I just

It's so weird like

...I don't understand

EMMA

Well I guess

I guess a lot of people have private pools

LINDSEY

yeah

EMMA

And those people voted so.

LINDSEY

Yeah

I dunno I'm gonna

This is so crazy to say out loud!

I never thought I'd!

But I think I'm gonna miss the water slide

Hahaha

EMMA

Hm

LINDSEY

And the diving well!

I mean you can't have that in your backyard

And I mean yeah the slide is like

Pretty old but like

What is it

Two stories tall? Three?

EMMA
I think two

LINDSEY
Yeah but still!!!
You can't have that in your backyard!
What do you think all the kids'll do
The ones who bike every day?

EMMA
You mean like Jace?

LINDSEY
Who?

EMMA
(taken aback)
He's—you know—Jace—he—
He always wears those camo swim trunks?

LINDSEY
Uh
How old is he?

EMMA
Jace is eight. His brother Kyle is gonna be six in a month.
Kyle's the one with the Superman S shaved on the back of his head.

LINDSEY
Oh. I guess I don't—I guess I haven't seen them

EMMA bites her tongue. An awkward pause.

LINDSEY
Are you still in school?

EMMA
No
I graduated

LINDSEY
Oh cool
What did you go to school for?

EMMA
Math
Math education

LINDSEY
Oh cool so that's like teaching math

EMMA
... Yeah

LINDSEY
Like for college students?

EMMA
No no
Probably to kids
Elementary school

LINDSEY
Probably?

EMMA
Yeah when I
When I get my own classroom
You know

LINDSEY
(does not know)
yeah yeah right
Wow that's
That's so cool
That's something I would never
I'm trying to
I'm starting in the fall? And I'm
Trying to figure out what I'm gonna
But I guess I'm kinda getting ahead of myself like
Picking a major and stuff but like
I've just been asking everyone I know really about
What they

EMMA
Uh huh

LINDSEY
(weirdly formal)
Do you mind if I ask why you chose math?

EMMA
Uh
Well
I think math is straightforward

LINDSEY
Huh

EMMA
I mean it either is something or it isn't