

Fire Season  
(excerpt)

By  
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## SETTING

Present. Rural Washington.

## STORY

When a 12-year-old boy overdoses on prescription pills, a small town in Washington has to deal with the aftermath.

## ENSEMBLE CAST

WASHINGTON TRACK ONE (white woman, 30-40s)

- Elizabeth - single mother
- Omaha - Nebraska's mother

WASHINGTON TRACK TWO ( white guy, 30-40s)

- CURTIS - veteran with PTSD
- Male Nurse

WASHINGTON TRACK THREE (black woman 30s)

- Dr. Anne Cormack
- Wal-Mart Guard

WASHINGTON TRACK FOUR (Latino/Native American man, 30s)

- Phil
- Roughneck
- Bruce

WASHINGTON TRACK FIVE (white biracial man, teen - early 20s)

- Ricky- Elizabeth's son
- Homeless Veteran
- Highway Cop

WASHINGTON TRACK SIX (Latino or Biracial woman, early 20s)

- Jessamyn - Ricky's pregnant girlfriend
- Investigator
- Flag Veteran

## The Style

The scenes overlap and interplay with sparse pieces that modify themselves with the story. This isn't a minimalist style, as that word conjures up images of folding chairs, actors in black spandex, and existential angst that doesn't speak to contemporary America. Instead I want to employ an infrequently used phrased in theatre: transformation.

In transformational style of theatre everything should be capable of change, speed, disappearance. Actors can speed out onto stage on rolling chairs, vanish behind black sheets, move through scenes that are sometimes in different times and places. Transformational style also serves another purpose: to engage the audience. They witness a world evolving, disintegrating and building.

The play should be orchestrated like a symphony with different sections. In many sections the actions and dialogue spans different locations but happens simultaneously in a multiverse that is overlapping and flowing together. Like different parts of an orchestra each scene should exist on its own but gain a greater meaning when brought together with the others by complimenting, commenting and offering ironic contradiction to each other.

Players and directors should feel free to montage certain sections, switch up rhythm-tempo, use the tools of dance and music. The play depends on a large, flexible cast of actors, creative directing, and vigorous energy. The cast size is a suggested number and can be increased or modified to fit the players or community.

The run time is approximately 90 minutes. Although this is a two-act play, it can be performed without an intermission.

PROLOGUE: The Past is...

Anne hands out pills to  
different Patients in a  
clinic.

ANNE

The past is prologue. It's what I tell my patients after a bad diagnosis so they don't dwell in tragedy. I tell them 'the past is prologue' and now the rest of their story can begin. They can shape their future in anyway they want. But I know that the phrase actually means the opposite. In high school I was in the drama club and I got cast in the role of Antonio in "The Tempest." In the play I tell Sebastian that 'the past is prologue' so I can convince him to conspire and commit murder. I tell him that he shouldn't feel guilty about the act because our story has been determined and etched into stone. So every few years it's always surprising when a story like this happens. It makes you sit up and pay attention when some Antigone demands that attention must be paid to their dead. I moved to Washington because I liked the enormity of it all. Mountainous, ancient, trees that have grown for thousands of years, volcanoes. And now Boeing. Amazon. Microsoft. Titans of industry that match the roots of this land. The earliest bones in North America are buried here. The tribes that spread throughout the Western Hemisphere started right in this New World. Tribes of giant men and women like the Chinooks, Spokanes, and Yakamas. And then the Norwegian, Russian, and German settlers who conquered and invaded this colony. Now in these parts, the giants look at doctors like bad omens. They are suspicious of our expertise, angry that we might be a harbinger of death. And today in this land an unclaimed kid turns up in some county morgue every day with no shoes and a pocket of pills. But it's stories like this which break the spell of complacency: when a grieving mother demands action. And with a roar of grief, a giant wakes us all up.

The patients take off their  
gowns and transform into  
different characters.

### 1.3: Car Ride

Elizabeth is picking up Ricky and Jessamyn to take them to school. She has just finished her graveyard shift. She yawns. Ricky and Jessamyn jump into the car.

JESSAMYN

Hey Miss Simones.

RICKY

This car fucking stinks.

ELIZABETH

Good morning sunshine. Oh my God, Ricky! Mountain Dew?!? In the morning. You're gonna rot your guts.

RICKY

I need something to pick me up.

ELIZABETH

Then how about something healthier, like a cup of coffee or a shotgun blast to the face?

RICKY

Coffee has pesticides in it.

ELIZABETH

You don't know anything.

RICKY

I know that this car smells like rotten breastmilk and failure.

ELIZABETH

Then close your mouth.

JESSAMYN

Thank you for taking us to school. My mom had to open up the bakery early.

ELIZABETH

Well it works out because I got off the graveyard shift a half hour ago. I'll drop you guys off and then go get some sleep for a few hours.

JESSAMYN

Only a few hours? You should sleep in today.

ELIZABETH

Oh yeah?

JESSAMYN

Yeah, you look tired. (thinks about it) I didn't mean it like that.

ELIZABETH

Oh, well that's good. Ricky, your girlfriend didn't mean it like that.

RICKY

Yeah, she means you look like you got beat with a nasty stick.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, son. Such a sweet boy with a filthy mouth. The mud didn't fall far from the pig trough, Jessie.

JESSAMYN

I love the relationship you guys have. It's almost like you're an old married couple.

RICKY

That's the sickest thing I have ever heard.

JESSAMYN

I didn't mean it like that. What I mean is that your relationship is so...real. None of this prim and proper mom and son stuff. You know what I'm saying Miss Simones?

ELIZABETH

I was raised by dirty hippies. Ricky's grandmother was horrified that he would call me 'mom.' Thought it was fascist.

JESSAMYN

No, you're a cool mom. I even like how you've dealt with everything. You are so strong.

RICKY

Oh please-

ELIZABETH

Quiet, fuckface. Your girlfriend is kissing my ass. And I think I like it.

JESSAMYN

What you said in the paper about Eli was so powerful.

RICKY

-he was listed as your only son.

ELIZABETH

Hey, I made the paper print a correction.

RICKY

It shouldn't have required a correction. It should have been obvious to the reporter that-

JESSAMYN

-Ricky, this is about something bigger than your name in a story. And your mom's quest to fight these evil corporations-

RICKY

-yeah, whatever. No one cares.

JESSAMYN

What's going on right now is a national tragedy. We should be protesting-

RICKY

Yeah. Fight the power. We shall overcome. Just do it.  
Better ingredients, better pizza-

JESSAMYN

-Ricky, why are you joking? This is about your brother.

ELIZABETH

Jess, my son cares but he has a special way of managing emotions. I like to call it the 'dickhead way.'

RICKY

And I learned it by watching you, Liz.

ELIZABETH

But Jess, I appreciate your enthusiasm. I just want them to lower the flag. It's simple. Eli loved going to military parades when he was a baby.

RICKY

We went to one parade.

ELIZABETH

We went to others.

RICKY

Well I must've missed that, Liz.

ELIZABETH

You did. You hated going to parades so we left you at home.

RICKY

Left behind: yeah that sounds like my childhood.

ELIZABETH

Ricky, get off the cross honey. We could use the wood.

RICKY

You always say stupid shit like that. What does that even mean?

JESSAMYN

I think it means you're trying to be a martyr. Like Jesus, right Miss Simones?

ELIZABETH

That's right. You are so smart, Jess. I hope my son is using that brain of your's.

RICKY

Among other things, Liz.

Jessamyn slaps him to 'shut up.'

JESSAMYN

Ricky, stop it. I am trying to get on her good side. She's going to be my mother in-law?

RICKY

Mother in-law? Who said anything about getting married?

JESSAMYN

You can't really expect me to-

ELIZABETH

What the hell are you guys whispering about? Lover's quarrel?

RICKY

Vomit. No.

ELIZABETH

All right Romeo and Juliet. This is your stop. Get the hell out. Now what do you say, son?

RICKY

(exiting)  
Mom, you got ants in the car. It's gross.

ELIZABETH

Bye fuckface.

JESSAMYN

Thank you Miss Simones.

ELIZABETH

Stop it with the Miss Simons stuff. It's like we're almost family. Call me fuckface.

JESSAMYN

Maybe I can call you that at another time.

ELIZABETH

Jessie...I want you to be careful with my son. He's a sweet kid. And I know it may feel like we're family already, but we got a long way to go. Okay?

JESSAMYN

Miss Simones, I think I love your son.

ELIZABETH

Oh, baby. It ain't about love. Being a real family is about so much more than that. Now go. Learn, live, and prosper fuckface.

JESSAMYN

Goodbye Miss Si-fuckface. (starts to leave) I just want to say that I know that Eli is looking down from above on you with-

ELIZABETH

-I am pretty sure my youngest son is not dancing with Jesus on a rainbow of love. My baby is in the ground. The love of my life is in a box at Greenfield Cemetery. And we are here. And that's all there is to it.

JESSAMYN

Yes, ma'am. I hope they lower the flag.

Jessamyn leaves. Elizabeth sits there and thinks.

#### 1.4: Job Interview

Curtis sits in the break room. He fidgets, scratches his ankle and sweats in a suit. He then checks his watch and gets nervous. He takes out his ankle bracelet charger and looks for an outlet. Phil enters.

PHIL

You're recharging your phone?

CURTIS

No (thinks) Yeah. Ummm...I was excited to get your email.

PHIL

Do you mind if we do this thing here? My office is a mess. Plus you should see your confines. This is the break room.

CURTIS

It looks nice. So Mr...

PHIL

Phil. Just Phil. I didn't expect so many people would be applying.

CURTIS

Well it's a great position.

PHIL

(disbelief)

Really? (picks up his file) Well, I guess. We lost a floor associate a few weeks ago. Things just didn't work out so you would be taking over his position.

Curtis walks over and sees Donnie's locker. And then he sees E. Simones listed.

CURTIS

'E. Simones.' I knew someone from high school with that last name.

PHIL

Yeah, that's Elizabeth. She's a bit of a mess. So, Mr. Curtis Cement...

CURTIS

Clement.

PHIL

Clement, right. I want to get this position filled as quickly as possible so we can be back at full manpower.

CURTIS

I want to do that for you, Phil.

PHIL

And that's music to my ears. And I see here that you served in the military?

CURTIS

Yes, I was in the special forces in the first Gulf War.

PHIL

The first one. Guess the sequels are never as good as the originals.

CURTIS

Joke, right?

PHIL

Right. Well thank you for your service. You have my respect, sir. People don't understand men like us.

CURTIS

You served?

PHIL

You betcha.

CURTIS

Army?

PHIL

National Guard. I wanted to be in the Army but I have flat feet and bad vision...with a touch of asthma. Weekend warrior was the best I could do.

CURTIS

Well...thank you for your service. And the National Guard has a proud history.

PHIL

I think so too. Guys like us, we don't just sit around talking about doing something.

CURTIS

We get out there and do it.

PHIL

Yeah. I like you, Curt. You seem like the real deal, and there's not many people like you around any more. That's the trouble with this country: we've become a nation of paper patriots. People who don't want to get their hands dirty. Snowflakes.

CURTIS

Uh, yes. That's why I think I would make an excellent floor associate here.

PHIL

You're talking my language. This country was built by do'ers and fighters like us. Well...you at least. I shouldn't include myself in that category.

CURTIS

I'm sure there were more than a few flat-footed, blind, asthmatic pioneers who built this country.

PHIL

(not amused)

Ah, funny. Funny, funny, funny.

CURTIS

Are there other veterans on staff?

PHIL

No. I mean, I want to hire them but it's never the right fit. But there is a very large community of vets in these parts.

CURTIS

Yes, I see the pick-up truck patriots in the parking lot.

PHIL

Yeah, a few of them have come up to me this past week with the whole...controversy.

CURTIS

Controversy?

PHIL

Oh, it's stupid. An employee who works here wants us to lower the flag for her son who died a few weeks ago. As a matter of fact, it's your pal, Liz.

CURTIS

I didn't know her son died. Was it in the line of duty?

PHIL

No. Drug overdose. Painkillers. The kid was about 11 or 12.

CURTIS

Do they know where he got the pills from?

PHIL

No. Probably some piece of shit dealer. They're everywhere in this area.

CURTIS

Well everyone has to eat...I guess. Sir, I know you have others to interview but let me just say I think I could be an asset.

PHIL

Because of your military background?

CURTIS

Sure.

PHIL

Yeah, I bet you have a lot of stories. What was it like?

CURTIS

What was what like? Soldiering? The food was bad.

PHIL

No, seriously. What was it really like?

CURTIS

It was...it was...an education in growth and-

PHIL

-You ever kill anybody?

BEAT

PHIL

In the war. You ever...

CURTIS

I've fired into areas, thrown grenades. I assumed they hit their targets. It's something I don't like to think about.

PHIL

Understand perfectly. We can move on. I was just making small talk.

CURTIS

You were just...small talk? 'Small' talk?

PHIL

Yeah, I mean it's not like that was a real war anyway. A few minutes a shooting and a few months of tanning and jerking off in the desert.

CURTIS

Yeah, it was Club Med.

PHIL

I didn't mean it like that. I just thought maybe you had a few stories.

CURTIS

No, I'm sorry. I don't have any 'small talk' stories. I do remember a friend having his eyeball hanging off his face after a grenade blast or splintered bones poking up out of the skin, ball bearings packed into bombs so that when it explodes the shrapnel pierces the skin so fast that it cauterized the wound before blood can leak out. But I don't have any trivial little quaint stories to dine out on. I guess I didn't pay enough attention in that little microwave war we had. I was too busy getting shot at and..

BEAT

CURTIS

I'm sorry. I'm just a little tired.

PHIL

Yes, I can see that. You must have been real tired after the war. There's this gap of a few years.

CURTIS

I was in the hospital, Walter Reed. I wrote that in application.

PHIL

For almost 10 years?

CURTIS

For about half that time, then rehabbing and just getting back on track. I had nerve damage.

PHIL

Nerve damage?

CURTIS

Shock from a tanker blast. I had some scarring of nerves. You can't really see nerve endings, you know?

PHIL

But then they cured you?

CURTIS

No, you can't cure it. You treat it. I have medication. Exercises I do every day. Painkillers. And this in no way affects my performance as a manager or-

PHIL

-Do all those painkillers help?

CURTIS

They dull my senses a little, take the edge off.

PHIL

So you're pretty much in a lot of pain?

CURTIS

Pretty much.

PHIL

What, like once every few days, a few times a month?

CURTIS

Always.

PHIL

And what's this other thing on here? Is it a new wing in Walter Reed?

CURTIS

Well, it's a section not a lot of people know about.

PHIL

I've had two cousins who rehabed there and I've never heard of it.

CURTIS

It's the psychiatric ward. There's nerve damage and then there is 'nerve damage.'

PHIL

For a few days recouping or...

CURTIS

Three. Years. In and out. Have a satisfied your fucking appetite?

BEAT

CURTIS

...Jesus. I'm sorry.

PHIL

Don't be. (shuffling papers) Well it was a pleasure meeting you.

CURTIS

Look, I'm asking you to give me a shot. I know I may not look like Jimmy Stewart or the soldiers you see on those commercials but...fuck, I mean, come on-

PHIL

-of course, I will consider your application and-

CURTIS

-just give me a chance, I just need one-

PHIL

-Thank you, Mr. Clement. Thank you. We will call. Well...I gotta run. You can see yourself out.

They shake hands and Phil  
leaves. Curtis looks at

Elizabeth's name on the  
locker.