

SUNSET ON CAMP SUNSHINE

by Ken Bradbury



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SYNOPSIS: Camp Sunshine has had a great 20-year run and now it's time to close up the tents and pack up the wieners. Here's the last installment of that strange little spot in Arkansas. This sequel to the popular Camp Sunshine is a final reunion for Uncle Ernie, G-L-O-R-I-A Gloria and the gang as they return for a last visit to camp. Meanwhile, the bulldozers roar in the background to smash the place to smithereens for a mega-mall. Kum-bah-yah, baby!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 2 males)

UNCLE ERNIE (m)..... *(11 lines)*

GLORIA (f) *(7 lines)*

LUCILLE (f)..... *(10 lines)*

SKIP (m)..... *(18 lines)*

MARGO (f)..... *(17 lines)*

GLORIA: (*Blowing into an imaginary microphone... and blowing and blowing, then...*) Can you hear me? Can you hear me now? Hey! You folks in the back of the bus! Can you hear me? Okay ... okay. So my name is Gloria. That's G-L-O-R-I-A, Gloria. As many of you know, I am the former 4th runner up in the Miss Arkansas Beauty pageant and the former activity director of Camp Sunshine, the best little Baptist Bible Camp in Arkansas ... or at least it used to be. I'm glad you've joined us for our farewell tour around the campsite. I gotta tell you that this is an emotional moment for many of us. Dear old Camp Sunshine holds a special place in our hearts ... and tomorrow it all comes crashing down. As you can see, our bus driver is now turning left on Armageddon Avenue. Please keep all body parts inside the windows.

UNCLE ERNIE: Easy ... easy gettin' off the bus folks. Let's have the walkers first ... that's it. That's it. Okay? Everybody here? As G-L-O-R-I-A Gloria probably told you when you got on, this here is the last weekday of Camp Sunshine, that spot made most glorious by the Lord God Almighty, right here in the middle of the Garden of Eden, Arkansas, United States of America. My name is Uncle Ernie ... Ernest, startin' tomorrow when I'll be workin' at the new Wal-Mart that's gonna be built right here on the site of what is now Camp Sunshine. You'll have to excuse Gloria. The events of this summer have put her into quite an emotional snit, despite her heavy use of sedatives. Every half hour or so we need to give her a few moments alone to have a nervous breakdown. Now on your right ...

SKIP: (*Texting.*) Dear Margo, this is so cool. Ever since your old man bought this camp, then got a Wal-Mart franchise my folks have quit tryin' to send me to summer camp. I needed a break. I got baptized six times last summer and I was startin' to get a rash from the algae in the pond.

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Dear Skip, I never want to speak to you again.

SKIP: What? What did I do? Come on, honey! We had a thing goin'!

MARGO: Dear Skip, when you applied for a job at Daddy's new Wal-Mart you wrote, "By the way, your daughter is mighty fine." on your application. Daddy read it. He's given your name to the Arkansas State Police.

UNCLE ERNIE: Now this building right here next to the wrecking crane, that's the Camp Sunshine Worship Chapel. In a few months it'll be the sight of ladies' underwear. Did I say that right?

SKIP: (*Texting.*) Hey, I just wanted to say that I knew the boss's daughter!

MARGO: The boss was not happy. Good luck, Bubba.

SKIP: Dear Margo, there's sirens comin' down the street and red lights are flashing out in front of my house. Come on, honey! Get me outa this!

MARGO: Would love to, but have a nail appointment in ten minutes.

GLORIA: Okay ... okay. I have finally pulled myself together with the help of the dear Lord and Seconal, which is now legal in Arkansas if taken in pill form. I'm sure that Uncle Ernie filled you in at the last stop. He is a dear man. Brain surgery can do wonders. Now as we turn down Predestination Boulevard, let me give you your last sight of the Camp Sunshine volleyball courts.

LUCILLE: (*Writing.*) Dear Mommy and Daddy, this is for sure my last day at Camp Sunshine since they will be blowing it to bits at eight in the morning. They asked all us former campers to come back for one last look. Only three of us came. The other two have parents who work here. I'm just hanging around. It's pretty dull. The really good part will be tomorrow when they set off the dynamite charges.

SKIP: (*Texting.*) Margo, I need help and I mean it! I'm in the basement behind the old man's hunting trophies. I can hear the cops upstairs. Please ... please, honey! You gotta help me! I'm too young to go to jail.

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Dear Skip, you're never too young to go to jail.

UNCLE ERNIE: Easy ... easy now ... watch that last step. Sorry, but this old school bus was all we could afford for our farewell tour of the camp. Okay. This here used to be the boys' dormitory area. As you can see, there ain't much left of it. What? No, it wasn't no storm or tornado, just adolescence. Boys can be mighty rough on a camp ... and a camp director. Maybe some of you are curious about this metal plate I've got stickin' out of my right temple ...

LUCILLE: Mommy and Daddy, the bus just went by. Gloria seems to be leading the tour group this morning, but her eyes looked all funny. The kids say she's had most parts of her body lifted several times now and maybe there's just nothing left to grab hold of.

GLORIA: I'm truly sorry, but when I look upon these glorious mess halls and sanctified shower houses, something just speaks to my spirit. I am touched in a way that I just cannot describe ... legally. Now on my right ... (*She points left.*) ... oh ... sorry ... I mean on your left (*She points right.*) ... Oh dear. Oh God forgive me. Has anybody seen that little bottle of pills I left on the front seat of the bus?

SKIP: (*Texting.*) I am serious, Margo! I can hear the cops upstairs questioning Mom and Dad! There must be a dozen of 'em! You gotta call your old man and tell him I was just kidding ... please?!

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Skip, remember that summer you snuck into the girls' dorm and stole my underwear, then ran them up the flagpole?

SKIP: (*Texting.*) A joke! Margo, it was just a stupid joke!

MARGO: ... and then when we went out for morning flag raising we sung the Star Spangled Banner while saluting my ... you know.

SKIP: Oh come on, Margo! I was just a stupid kid!

MARGO: Dear Skip, you ... still ... are.

UNCLE ERNIE: Easy ... take it easy there. These rocks are slippery. Okay, everybody, this was the lake where the little campers would go swimming. As you can see, it's pretty much taken over now with algae and junked cars. We had an awful time gettin' the state to approve it as a swimmin' hole with all these Chevy pickups stuck in mud here, but God was protectin' us, you bet your life! Many was the hours I spent here teachin' spindly-legged little campers how to do the backstroke for God. And those that didn't make it all the way across the lake? Well, we had a name for them. "Atheist!"

LUCILLE: Dear Mom and Dad, Uncle Ernie has the tour group down at the swimming hole now. He just jumped in to show them how God's love would protect a true believer. Several men in the group are tryin' to get him untangled from the hood of a Chevy S-10 pickup.

SKIP: (*Texting.*) I promise! I promise I'll never pull anything again, Margo, if you'll just get me out of this mess!

MARGO: (*Texting.*) You remember the time you put the snake in the girls' shower?

SKIP: He was just a baby snake!

MARGO: Gloria saw it and went running across the campground during evening vespers?

SKIP: I sorta forgot.

MARGO: And she sorta forgot her towel. Do you remember the look on Reverend Azbell's face when she ran right through the group while we were singing "Amazing Grace"?

SKIP: I think of it every time we sing that song in church. My face gets red. But please ... please Margo! Help me!

MARGO: Gotta go. I'm next for my manicure.

SKIP: Margo!!!!

UNCLE ERNIE: (*Sputtering, coughing.*) No ... I'm okay. Really. No, I'm fine. I was just ... I was momentarily overcome by Satan. Just as I jumped into the water I had a flashback ... I thought of a snot-nosed little kid who used to come to Camp Sunshine. Name was Skip. The kid who put the alligator in the pond just before the diving contest.

GLORIA: Well, welcome back to the final tour on the good old Sunshine Bus. I hope you're enjoying your final tour of Camp Sunshine. It breaks my heart to think at this time tomorrow it'll all be blown to kingdom come and parts of Southern Missouri, but perhaps it's the will of God. As we say in my little Whole Lotta Holiness Church, Wal-Mart is like God ... it has everything and the aisles are always full. Glory Halleluiah! Amen!

LUCILLE: Dear Mom and Dad, that's the third time the bus has gone by the camp canteen. I think the driver swallowed some of Gloria's relaxation pills. They've asked us to stand here and hand out camp souvenirs when the people get off the bus. I have no idea why anybody would want to take home the old spoons they dug out from under the camp stove. There goes the bus again. I think Gloria was either screaming or singing. It's so hard to tell the difference.

SKIP: (*Texting.*) They're coming down the stairs, Margo! Help me!

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Pose next to your dad's taxidermy stuff. They'll think you're a stuffed skunk.

UNCLE ERNIE: (*Shouting as the bus goes by him.*) The brakes, Oscar! Step on the brakes! Sorry folks! Oscar! The brakes! The brakes!

LUCILLE: (*Writing.*) There it goes again. Oscar seemed to be going faster this time. We need to stop buying our busses from the Demolition Derby.

SKIP: (*Texting.*) I'm crawling out a window! Please, Margo!

GLORIA: (*Hanging on for dear life.*) As you can see ... we seem to be picking up a bit of speed on Damnation Avenue! Please! Please don't panic! This is all a part of the trip! I promise you! We shall now stop! (*She looks at the driver.*) I said, "We shall now stop." Oscar! We shall now ... we shall now pray!

LUCILLE: (*Writing.*) Dear Mommy and Daddy, I guess I will be sort of sad to see Camp Sunshine get blown up and replaced by a Wal-Mart. It just won't be the same with shopping carts instead of prayer circles. (*Jumping out of the way.*) There goes Oscar again. That makes lap number five. I guess that too many kids had other things to do during the summer and the camp just wasn't much use ... that and the fact that about two kids got sent to the hospital every week. Then there was that group from St. Louis that we never did find. Uncle Ernie thought it was the rapture, but when Skip was missing too he knew it had to be something else. (*Jumps out of the way again.*) Lap six. Gloria's hair's getting all messed up. She won't like that.

UNCLE ERNIE: Slow down Oscar! Slow down so I can ...

LUCILLE: Uncle Ernie just jumped on the back of the Sunshine Bus as it went speeding by the gymnasium. He's getting awfully old to be hanging on like that.

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Dear Skip, I hear they found you hiding in the bushes behind Mrs. Clinton's tool shed. That was a really dumb thing to do. You know that's where Mrs. Clinton keeps her pit bull. Too bad you didn't get the Wal-Mart job. Maybe then you'd had health insurance.

UNCLE ERNIE: (*Desperately hanging on.*) Open the door! Open the bus emergency door!

LUCILLE: He didn't hang on for very long. The bus turned a really sharp corner. Do you remember that dumpster that's behind the mess hall?

GLORIA: Do not panic! I repeat ... Do ... Not ... Panic! We managed to lose that crazed old man who jumped onto the back of our bus! We often have trouble with crazed Methodists roaming loose over the campground! Now on your right you'll see what was left of the camp dumpster and ...

SKIP: (*Texting.*) Margo, I hope you're happy. I'm in the ER down at the hospital. They're putting stitches in a place that I haven't even seen except in a mirror.

MARGO: (*Texting.*) Be sure and send me pictures. It's your best side.

UNCLE ERNIE: (*Lending a hand, painfully.*) Easy ... easy ... get down easy. Yes, I seem to have come up against another of Satan's forces disguised as a pile of garbage. Yes, yes, I imagine the smell is somewhat overwhelming. I lost my sense of smell in my last encounter with a crazy moose back in 1997, but I can remember what month-old canned spaghetti can smell like. Now, if you'll step right over there a little girl named Lucille will pass out some final souvenirs of the camp. My shirt? I think they must have had lasagna for the last supper.

LUCILLE: They're all meeting in what's left of the Meditation Chapel for their final goodbyes now. At least I hope they're the final goodbyes. I just got a text from Margo. She says that Skip is having trouble sitting down. He always did. Oh wait a minute ... she sent a picture of ... uh ... Dear Mom and Dad ... I gotta go. I'm laughing too hard to write.

UNCLE ERNIE: Right this way ... have a seat there in the pews No wait ... I guess the pews ... aren't too stable any more. Just stand. Yes ma'am. I'm truly sorry about the smell. No, it doesn't smell a thing like heaven, but this is Arkansas.

GLORIA: *(Stands a moment, trying to control her emotions.)* Ladies and gentlemen ... former campers at this most blessed of campgrounds ever created by God. Yes, he made it all on the Thursday afternoon of Creation. I have it written down somewhere. Uh ... Uncle Ernie ... if you'd like to stand to the side for just a moment ... you others ... please ... join with us in this final circle of brother and sisterhood *(The others join hands with her ... Uncle Ernie off by himself.)* I think it only fitting at a moment like this that we take some time to share our favorite moments of Camp Sunshine. Okay ... you may begin. *(A protracted silence as they each look to one another to speak but no one does. Finally.)* Okay ... okay. I guess we're all too overcome to speak. So as a final closing gesture, let us all sing ... come on, you know the song ... the one with which we ended each night's campfire at good old Camp Sunshine ...

ALL: *(Singing.)* Kum-bah-yah, my Lord ...

SKIP: What stinks?

ALL: Kum-bah-yah.

MARGO: Don't look at me!

ALL: Kum-bah-yah, my Lord.

LUCILLE: Gloria's roots are showing ...

ALL: Kum-bah-yah.

MARGO: I heard that!

ALL: Kum-bah-yah, my Lord.

UNCLE ERNIE: I love Wal-Mart.

ALL: Kum-bah-yah.

SKIP: Wanna see my stitches?

ALL: Oh Lord! Kum-bah-yah!

THE END



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