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Glee: Summer Break

Written by Sophia Lowell

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AN ORIGINAL NOVEL

BY SOPHIA LOWELL

**BASED ON THE SERIES CREATED BY
RYAN MURPHY & BRAD FALCHUK & IAN BRENNAN**

headline

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1

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Rachel Berry's bedroom, Monday morning

A tiny drop of sweat inched its way down Rachel Berry's cheekbone and rolled delicately onto her pink floral pillowcase. Sunshine was surging through her curtains, illuminating her just as a strong spotlight should. It was as if her room were a Broadway stage and the light had finally found its star. Rachel stirred, rubbing her eyes and sleepily stretching herself awake. A smile spread across her face. Sunshine like that could mean only one thing: beautiful, delicious summer was about to be here. And it was all hers!

The *Wicked* calendar on her wall, with its neatly drawn x's inked with a chartreuse glitter pen on each day, signaled that there was only one more week left at McKinley High

School. One more *measly* little week before Rachel's time completely belonged to her. Five days, that was it.

'Good morning, Patti!' she said to her brand-new ceramic bust of Broadway legend Patti LuPone. It was an early end-of-year gift from her dads. They'd even wrapped it in *Sweeney Todd* wrapping paper. You really could buy anything online these days.

Rachel began humming a pitch-perfect rendition of 'Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'' from *Oklahoma!* as she booted up her computer. *I got a beautiful feelin', everything's goin' my way*. The lyrics seemed fitting, but she sang them only inside her head. One's vocal cords needed time to wake up. Not worth risking an injury.

As she typed her password, Rachel wondered if this feeling of impending freedom could ever be matched by anything other than the end of a school year. Probably not. Maybe the end of a yearlong run as Maria in *West Side Story*, but even *that* would be bittersweet. When that day came (and it would), she would be showered with praise and admiration – which is more than she could say currently of her Glee Club counterparts. They were all way too self-involved with their silly issues to congratulate her daily on her numerous talents.

But that didn't matter for now – it was going to be Rachel's summer. Or, as the brightly colored Excel spreadsheet now open on her desktop proclaimed, RACHEL'S STAR POWER SUMMER! It was going to be a tightly packed, intensive

schedule consisting of various classes, training sessions, and even an impossible-to-secure meeting with a real Broadway talent agency. Rachel had charted her very own way to the stars. She was like Galileo, only tinier and with much more charisma.

Rachel assessed the schedule once more. She was positively brimming with excitement at the strides she was going to make in her career from the rigorous workload. Of course, it didn't seem like work to her. She was a girl who made things happen for herself – and sometimes for her fellow Glee Club members. Not that they had a choice once Rachel decided to include them in her agenda. Resistance was futile.

This time, the lucky recipient of her wishes was none other than Finn Hudson – the leading man who somehow always maintained a notable presence in her life, whether they were together or not. They'd reconnected and broken up so many times that no one at McKinley High could even keep track of their status anymore. They'd come to accept that Finn and Rachel would always be drifting in and out of each other's orbits. It was just a question of whether the planets were aligned that day.

Rachel tore her eyes away from her schedule for just a moment to cast a dreamy glance at the glittery picture frame on her desk. It contained a snapshot of her and Finn gazing into each other's eyes, taken while singing the *Journey* medley onstage at last year's regionals. A great shot.

She was proud of him – she really was. Finn had come

so far in Glee Club. She appreciated the improvement more than anyone else. But Rachel always saw new ways to sculpt people into perfect specimens. Finn was no exception. His dancing skills were atrocious. One time last year, when they were rehearsing for regionals, Finn had crissed when he should have crossed. He accidentally smacked both Rachel and Quinn Fabray in the face. Not that Rachel minded so much about Quinn (actually she really enjoyed it), but Rachel's face was very precious. It was going to be the second reason she was famous. Her voice would be the first.

Lots of the kids in Glee could use practice in dancing, but Finn needed it most. So Rachel had taken it upon herself to include him in her Star Power Summer. Not that he knew it yet. She had seen an ad for couples ballroom-dancing classes in the back of an issue of *Ohio Bride* magazine (which she flipped through at the bookstore sometimes to look at the gorgeous ball gowns). Obviously, she wasn't gearing up to marry Finn or anything. This was just the perfect venue for them to practice some much-needed partnering skills. Besides, Rachel thought it seemed incredibly romantic.

Rachel imagined that twice a week at the dance studio a scene would unfold just like the one in *Singin' in the Rain* where Don Lockwood and Kathy Selden waltzed through the empty soundstage. Rachel would float in wearing a gauzy dress, her dark hair fashioned into a finger wave. Then she would be swept into the debonair arms of a suit-and-tie-wearing gentleman. If all went according to plan, it was

going to be perfect. She couldn't wait to tell Finn when she got to school.

A lemon-yellow sundress and red sequined ballet flats sat expectantly on the cushy armchair by her bed. Her outfit for the day was perfectly suited to match her sunny mood. Rachel believed that success was the result of preparation-meets-opportunity – she could never be too prepared in any aspect of her life, including each day at McKinley. That was why she always finished her homework before singing an entire Broadway soundtrack each evening. And that was also why it was absolutely essential to choose each outfit the night before.

As Rachel began getting dressed, she went over her new summer schedule in her head. Mondays would start each week off with a four-hour studio session at Lima's only recording studio, Lima Beats. It wasn't much – just an old converted house downtown that some ex-record producer named Tito opened up a few years back. Its customers mainly consisted of pimply teenage boys in garage bands with MySpace pages and ridiculous names like Twisted Agony. All very amateur stuff. Of course, that would all change when Rachel stepped through the door and began recording her album of Idina Menzel cover songs. Rachel's voice was going to sound even more amazing on professional recording equipment. She just knew it. No Auto-Tune necessary.

Tuesdays and Thursdays would begin with tap, jazz, and ballet classes, followed by elocution lessons with a local

private tutor, Sir Paul Stanton. He was a friend of her dad's and had apparently attended Oxford University and everything. He had already assigned her a book to read before her first lesson – *Elements of Elocution*, by some old-timey actor named John Walker. It did sound a bit dry, if Rachel was being honest with herself. But she personally thought that proper pronunciation was an oft-overlooked yet very important skill for any performer to possess. She had pointed this fact out to her fellow Glee member Tina Cohen-Chang once during practice last year and had received little thanks for her efforts.

Tina had been trying to suggest a new song for the club to practice, but every title that had passed through her lips had been peppered with stutters. Rachel thought it sounded worse than when someone's nails accidentally scratched the chalkboard in math class. Or when Noah 'Puck' Puckerman did it on purpose just to watch everyone cringe. After Tina suggested doing a song by the 'B-B-B-Buh-Beach Boys', Rachel could stand it no longer and lectured the group on the importance of speech lessons. Tina ran out of the choir room crying, and once again Rachel was greeted by nothing but angry expressions and crossed arms. Except from Brittany Pierce, of course, who had asked if she could bring her cat to the speech lessons. Apparently, poor Britt had been having trouble understanding the kitty over all the extremely loud purring.

Rachel was used to being chided for her efforts, though.

Just because others didn't care whether they sounded like uneducated country bumpkins didn't mean she couldn't. She had clocked enough hours watching *My Fair Lady* to learn that lesson! Anyway, it turned out that Tina had only been faking the awful stutter. Why someone would want to make herself sound anything less than perfectly poised was absolutely unfathomable to Rachel.

As she brushed her shiny dark locks and stared at her reflection, Rachel's smirk faded to a frown as she noticed the beginnings of a tan line on her shoulders. It must have been from the camisole she had worn in the backyard. She had spent some time out there over the weekend memorizing a new monologue from *In the Heights*.

Rachel had to be careful in the sun. Her skin browned very easily. Unlike the Cheerios – who were practically tan-orexic with their Sue Sylvester-funded addiction to the sun beds down at Total Tan – Rachel didn't like to overexpose herself. She wanted her skin to remain young and beautiful forever. She would never understand Coach Sylvester's obsession with the look of a fake tan against a Cheerios uniform. Regardless, a visible tan line was *so* not part of Rachel's plan, especially because she had just booked a photographer to take her head shots this Saturday.

She needed something that looked extremely professional yet screamed 'future star' to hand to the casting directors at her upcoming auditions. The head shots would also come in handy for signing autographs for her adoring fans. She

was going to give one to Breadstix to hang on the wall, where people could admire Rachel's megawatt smile and ponder her humble beginnings while they ate their spaghetti and meatballs. She would sign it, 'To Breadstix, Thanks for all the pasta and good times! Ciao! Rachel Berry.' It was a far cry from Sardi's in New York City, but it would have to do. The restaurant would certainly thank her for it later, when her photo drew in lots of business.

Rachel reminded herself to call the photographer to confirm her appointment. She also had to e-mail some outfit options to him. She was thinking polka dots, but did they seem like too bold of a choice? Quickly typing a note into her spreadsheet, she double-checked the rest of her smorgasbord of training sessions. Voice? *Check*. Acting? *Check*. Ballroom dancing with a hunky male lead? *Check, please!* She printed out three copies of her schedule and scribbled *Rachel Berry* in the top-left corner of one, then *Finn* and *Mr Schuester* on each of the other two. The one that bore her name was marked with a gold star sticker, of course. At this point, it was still just a metaphor for stardom. But soon it would be true!

She thought it was important to keep Mr Schuester in the loop on all her plans. He should know how dedicated she was to continuing her training throughout the summer and be able to refer to the schedule at any moment during vacation in case he needed to contact her about set lists for next year.

Since Mr Schuester's Glee takeover, Rachel had been carrying the majority of the club's vocal weight. She had suspected this on several occasions and even proved it once by bribing Lauren Zizes from the AV Club to secretly tape the other kids during practice. Hardly *any* of them had been singing at all! Being the most talented, she didn't mind much. But if she was going to be the one doing all the heavy lifting, she should have certain power when it came to song selections and costume ideas. That was why she always took every opportunity to make her opinions known, much to the chagrin of her lazy New Directions teammates. And man, were they lazy.

Rachel grabbed her brand-new copy of the McKinley High *Thunderclap* from the top of her white lacquered dresser. It was so heavy, almost like a textbook. The shiny black cover was emblazoned with the school's red-and-white crest. The symbol seemed to give Rachel that giddy feeling of anticipation she got when she watched the opening credits of *The Music Man* and knew she was about to experience a musical tour de force on-screen.

Despite the substantial weight, it was the one book that students from any clique at school didn't mind carrying around. Yearbooks had always been kind of a big deal at McKinley High. And they were sort of a game for Rachel. She liked to make sure her presence at the school was known by appearing in as many pictures as possible. It would prepare her for the days when her face would grace the covers of

fashion and star magazines. Sadly, she had little control over her appearances in the yearbook. Most of the photo spreads were of the Cheerios doing backflips and flirting with the football team between classes. However, the one trump card she did hold was her secret weapon, Jacob Ben Israel. To Rachel, 'J-Fro' was extremely creepy, almost like a stalker at times, but he was also a *Thunderclap* photographer. And that meant she had to play up the charm around him a bit every year during layout finalization. It was great acting practice.

This year, she had let J-Fro include her in a feature called 'A Day in the Life', which followed different McKinley students around during the same day at school. Rachel was ecstatic to be selected – the feature would probably have double the number of pictures of her that appeared in the previous year's edition. She even allowed J-Fro to begin the day at her house, taking pictures of her getting ready in her bedroom while she sang her morning scales ('*me me me me me me me me meeee*'). He scampered around all day behind her like a clumsy, drooling puppy with a frizzy Afro, snapping away and asking her incredibly invasive questions.

She fired off answers like a true professional. It was only when J-Fro got to 'What color underwear do you have on today?' that Rachel gave the most celebrity-like answer of them all: 'No comment.' She doubted that part would appear in the *Thunderclap*, but she had been in the moment.

Rachel flipped to the feature she had so eagerly awaited all semester. She had held off until she was home to give it

her full attention and properly soak up each detail. It hadn't come out quite how she'd expected it to.

It looked more like the back section of *Us Weekly* where the magazine picked apart fashions and made jokes than a young starlet's profile in *Vogue*. Not one of the photos was flattering. There she was, singing in her bedroom with morning hair sticking out in every direction. Getting slushied in the hallway. An action shot of her singing and dancing in Glee Club, giving it her all while the others around her either looked bored or rolled their eyes. *Well, at least it's accurate*, she thought. And even if it didn't paint her in the best light, it was Rachel's first two-page spread. Her dads had been proud. They reminded her of the showbiz adage 'Bad publicity is better than no publicity at all.' At least people at school were talking about her.

When the yearbooks were handed out yesterday, J-Fro had practically groveled at Rachel's feet for forgiveness. It didn't shock her. It seemed like he was always begging Rachel for something. He claimed that some of the Cheerios had sabotaged his original layout as a prank – they had stolen his camera and used the rejected photos of her that he was keeping for 'personal use'. By the time he'd found out, the proofs had already been sent to the printer and were being prepped for binding. When she'd asked him what he meant by 'personal use', J-Fro darted out of the room, wailing something about how the photos couldn't legally be taken away from him.

Part of being unstoppable was being resilient. Rachel was able to let this little publicity hiccup roll right off her back. In addition to witnessing the annual McKinley High tradition of defacing the Glee Club group photo in the *Thunderclap*, Rachel was used to virtual taunting. Snide comments on her YouTube videos were a daily occurrence, so it was a good thing Rachel had developed a thick skin.

For example, she had recently received a comment on her a cappella rendition of Eminem and Rihanna's 'Love the Way You Lie' from a user named WMHS_CheerioBrittz. It said, *You should stay inside the computer screen, all tiny and stuff. It's cuter and way less annoying than you normally are. BTW, how did you get in there . . . ?* Even Brittany, who sometimes seemed as if she had an IQ lower than her age, had managed to insult her. Not *well*, but still. Rachel knew what it was like to be constantly berated and underappreciated by the popular kids.

But surprisingly, those other Glee kids could be the worst of them all! With the constant bickering and social drama that went on within the four walls of their inadequate choir room, sometimes it seemed more like an episode of *Jersey Shore* than a professional music group. Just last week, Mercedes Jones and Santana Lopez had gotten into another one of their heated diva-offs over who should get the Hayley Williams solo in a mash-up of B.o.B's 'Airplanes' and John Denver's 'Leaving on a Jet Plane'. It was completely absurd. Mr Schuester spent half of practice trying to mediate the

fight, while everyone else just slacked off. Artie Abrams even fell asleep. Puck took the golden opportunity to draw some unsavory doodles all over Artie's face with a permanent marker. It was like working with children. Honestly.

But at least Rachel didn't have to worry about babysitting her classmates for the next three months. All she had to think about was number one – herself. Tucking the three schedules into the pages of her yearbook, Rachel blew herself a kiss in the mirror and bounded downstairs. She still had enough time to give her dads hugs and grab breakfast on her way out the door.

Rachel opened the freezer door and started searching for ingredients.

Breakfast was important. She liked to create her own unique juices and smoothies each morning to fend off any bugs she may have picked up in that disgusting petri dish of a school. All one had to do to catch a virus at McKinley was step through the door. Rachel always took necessary precautions. There was no way she was going to have an encore of her experience with laryngitis. Losing her voice had been traumatic, to say the least.

I love a good theme, Rachel thought as she tossed some fresh acai berries into her chrome ten-speed blender. She called it the StarBerry smoothie. It also required a scoop of ground flaxseeds, some raspberries, and sliced star fruit. A dash of pomegranate juice and crushed ice finished it off. She hit the BLEND option, and the sweet concoction whirled

around, mixing together to create something delicious and unstoppable – not entirely unlike when all the members of New Directions actually played their parts, working together to create smooth melodies.

Rachel was totally the juice in that scenario, though. Without juice, things would get clogged in the blades, resulting in a lumpy mess. Glee Club needed Rachel like a smoothie needed juice. Yep, that was her, all right. Good old juice.

Too bad she didn't need the Glee kids. This summer, she was going to create her own sweet sounds. No matter what they had to say about it.