

The Last Blackberries of Summer

A ten minute play

Characters

Annamarie Song-Rosenblatt, 31, Asian-American

Menika Berry, 30, African-American

Leah Black, 27, White

Time

Sunset on Labor Day

Place

The beach

Synopsis: Menika wants to convince Leah to raise a child with her, but Leah must confront her own self-defeating beliefs after an incident at Annamarie's beach rental. Fresh fruit gives three women strength to thrive in a sometimes hostile world.

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A ten minute play

(A beach. Reddish light of late summer twilight. Gulls squawk and waves break gently. MENIKA, 30, black, tall, slender, in a red halter top and summery skirt, lies on a towel. LEAH, 27, white, tattooed but not heavily, pierced but not excessively, in a black swimsuit, gives her a massage. There is an overstuffed canvas beach bag. There are three wine glasses, a bottle of white wine, and a plate of cheese, and an empty towel.)

MENIKA

Ooooh, that feels so good.

LEAH

Turn your feet in a little. There we go.

LEAH kneads her way up MENIKA's legs.

MENIKA

Whoa, do your fingers walk like that on your clients?

LEAH

It depends.

MENIKA

On what?

LEAH

On whether I want to see them again. On how much of a tip I think I can get. On how good they smell.

LEAH turns MENIKA over and kisses her. LEAH looks up and out.

Little shits! You got a problem? Huh?

ANNAMARIE, 31, Asian-American, in a polo and Capri pants, is there. She carries a handheld electronic device somewhat larger than the average cellphone and a container of blackberries (the actual fruit, not the technology).

ANNAMARIE

I brought some blackberries –

LEAH

You come here and repeat that! Say that to my face! Yeah, I'm talking to you!

LEAH grabs some blackberries and hurls them in the direction of her anger.

MENIKA

Lee!

LEAH

I am SO SICK –

MENIKA

They're just kids, Leah.

LEAH reaches for more blackberries. ANNAMARIE protects them.

ANNAMARIE

Don't waste them. This is all that's left.

LEAH

You see what happens? That's what happens!

MENIKA

When you do that they form an opinion -

LEAH

Good!

ANNAMARIE

Guys, this Pinot is awesome. And these blackberries are full of antioxidants. Here. Drink. Eat. Cheese. Beach. Fun! David and I get some pretty weird looks, too.

ANNAMARIE positions the electronic device carefully on her towel, almost as if it were a baby.

LEAH

Little toads.

ANNAMARIE

Oh, Emma's fine, by the way. Just another false alarm.

LEAH

Maybe you should send that thing back.

MENIKA

Maybe you should just relax.

LEAH

Beep! Beep! Beep! It's a little hard to relax with the constant BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

ANNAMARIE speaks into the device.

ANNAMARIE

It's OK Emma! *(to LEAH)* Shhhh. She can hear us.

LEAH

Inside? What, is she bionic?

ANNAMARIE

It transmits from anywhere. Even at work I can soothe my child. Even from the ER at 3:30 a.m., no matter how *cwazy* it is, isn't that right, Miss Emma Jane Song-Rosenblatt-Williamson-Williams?!

ANNAMARIE speaks into the device.

Hmmm...she looks flushed.

LEAH

Wait, what is her name?

ANNAMARIE

I would totally recommend melding your names and not hyphenating. David and I were both hyphenated kids ourselves, and the grandparents were pretty insistent that we keep all the names, and so we have the unique Emma Jane Song-Rosenblatt-Williamson-Williams!

The electronic device emits three beeps.

Oooohhh...who is at 99.4. *(to the device)* David, please check Emma! But if you do hyphenate, keep the first names simple. So, if you guys hyphenate you'll be...Berry...

MENIKA

(indicating Leah) Black.

ANNAMARIE

Or Black-Berry!

LEAH

Ha ha.

ANNAMARIE

Oh my God! Carrie Black-Berry!

ANNAMARIE pops a blackberry into her mouth and does the same for each successive name.

Or Terry! Or Jerry! Barry!! Barry Black-Berry!!!

MENIKA

We haven't even -

ANNAMARIE

Or Mary!

ANNAMARIE offers blackberries to LEAH, who refuses.

LEAH

Holy Mother of God...

MENIKA

I just want to wait till...we know it's working.

ANNAMARIE

It'll work. Simon's the best. Over 80 percent success. How many embryos did you get to blast?

MENIKA

Eight.

ANNAMARIE

Eight??!! My God, Menika! Do you know how many couples would kill for eight frozen blastocysts? You are so set. Awww, next Labor Day you will be here with little Carrie Black-Berry...I can do her first well-baby check right here! And we're gonna get you your own VideoNanny... You know, with in vitro you guys might get two. Or three. Carrie, Terry and Mary!

LEAH

I'm gonna take a walk.

LEAH storms into a pair of shorts.

MENIKA

Lee. Leah!!

ANNAMARIE

Menika, your life is gonna be so great. It is! Isn't that right, Miss Emma Wemma Lemma!! Aren't kids awesome??!!

A large piece of kelp is hurled at LEAH and hits her.

LEAH

What the fuck? Hey! HEY!!

LEAH charges after the culprit.

MENIKA

I'm sorry.

ANNAMARIE

No, hey... I could have used her when I overheard that woman in the supermarket on Friday. "God, *everybody's* got an Asian nanny." Practically the first thing I heard when we got here. Oh well. Stuff like that just makes it easier to go back to the city, right?

So. Menika. You guys are really ready?

MENIKA

Yes. Very ready.

ANNAMARIE

Was it 30? 'Cause I feel like 30 really pushed me. And it shouldn't, really.

MENIKA

I started thinking about this when we were in college.

ANNAMARIE

Seriously? That is so not where I was in college.

MENIKA

And I started having this baby right after we graduated.

ANNAMARIE

Huh?

MENIKA

You went off to the Italian Olive Harvest. I went to Doctor Simon's Ovum Harvest.

ANNAMARIE

You're serious.

MENIKA

I felt ready. And that I could excel, you know? Did you feel that? That you were not only ready, but ready to excel?

ANNAMARIE

More wine?

MENIKA

No thanks. So Dr. Simon harvests eight, and I pick the donor...and they all make it!?...she wants to start right away and we set it all up and I'm all ready to go it alone...and this voice calls out to me, "Wait. Wait for the right person to share this with." So we freeze those eight little balls. For seven years.

ANNAMARIE

Seven years? You've had these for seven years?

MENIKA

I needed to wait 'til I found the right person. *(beat)* She's very different in the city.

ANNAMARIE

Oh, sure! Sure!

MENIKA

I'm glad we both found our right person. Sad... no one would bat an eye if David and I kissed on the beach.

ANNAMARIE

Or if you wheeled his baby around the supermarket.

MENIKA

Shouldn't the right person make it easy to ignore ignorant people?

ANNAMARIE

Look, if you've waited seven years...All I'm saying is that you would still excel on your own.

The baby cries louder. The device beeps louder.

Oh God. Oh GOD!!!

ANNAMARIE is gone. The baby shrieks. MENIKA looks at the monitor for a while. She sings a little lullaby into the device then rocks the device and dances with it. The baby's sounds are gentle. MENIKA gently puts down the device and dances;

*we might well assume she's a professional dancer.
LEAH is there. She's wet.*

MENIKA

Did you chase them into the ocean?

LEAH

I decided to go in. Cool off. Sorry if I offended.

LEAH shakes her hair; water sprays around.

MENIKA

Careful! The VideoNanny.

LEAH

Where's Annemarie?

MENIKA indicates the device. LEAH shakes her hair directly at it. MENIKA turns off the device. LEAH pours some wine and eats some cheese.

MENIKA

It's Annamarie. Look, I know this weekend has not been your thing. This time tomorrow we'll be home, we'll go for a long walk, lie out in the park and blend in with all the other exotic folk - Leah! You promised.

LEAH

It's organic tobacco.

MENIKA

Cigarettes can not be organic!

LEAH

I just needed to relax.

MENIKA

You said you'd quit.

LEAH

I bet smoke sets that thing off. BEEP! BEEP! Non-uterine mother puts Baby in danger!

MENIKA

Not just for the baby. For you.

LEAH

Here, I'll have some anti-oxidants.

LEAH inhales a handful of blackberries.

Mmmm, delicious. Maybe it's because AnnAmarie has washed them so thoroughly and has named them so lovingly and ascribed different personality traits to them...

MENIKA

And for my sake. I need you around.

LEAH

Yeah, I do a pretty good job chasing the assholes away.

MINEKA

I can take care of myself.

LEAH

Then you don't need me.

MENIKA

Who else is going to hand mash locally grown produce into baby food?

LEAH

You mean who else is *cwazy* enough -

MENIKA

We don't have to be like Annamarie.

LEAH

I don't have a problem with Annamarie. I rather like her jaunty hair flip and her slightly outdated yet flattering Capri pants.

MENIKA

Then what's the problem? That the baby won't look like you? That people will think you're the nanny?

LEAH

Whoa, where did that come from?

MENIKA

Do you want out?

LEAH

Out?

MENIKA

I need to know now because I do not want to do this alone!

LEAH

Maybe you should do it alone. *(beat)* It's easier for a child to be raised by a single mom than by two moms. *(beat)* And it's better.

MENIKA

Leah, I'm already pregnant. I went to Doctor Simon last week.

LEAH

You're lying.

MENIKA

Damn, how did you know?

LEAH

It takes nine days for a pregnancy test to show up. Why do I know that? And I know you. You would not for one nanosecond do that without telling me.

MENIKA

Look, we've still got the appointment with Doctor Simon on Wednesday. And the thought of going there without the running commentary of my best friend beside me frightens me immensely. It's positively *cwazy*.

LEAH turns on the device. ANNAMARIE is heard singing softly to EMMA. Then a recorded lullaby is heard. MENIKA and LEAH watch the device. ANNAMARIE is there.

ANNAMARIE

She's fine. She was lying on the sensor and it was hurting her widdle bum-bum. David just laughed at me. "I'm fully functional. Go have another glass of wine." Solid advice, I guess.

LEAH hands ANNAMARIE the device. ANNAMARIE turns it off.

No, she'll be fine. More Pinot, please!!!

No one moves. ANNAMARIE pours some wine.

It's getting a little chilly.

ANNAMARIE examines the blackberry container.

The last blackberries of summer.

ANNAMARIE offers the blackberries to MENIKA.

You need those antioxidants!

MENIKA refuses the blackberries.

Or...you know, split them?

LEAH takes out her cigarettes from her shorts. She plays at lighting up.

LEAH

I should try to quit.

LEAH tosses the cigarette pack into the ocean.

MENIKA

In the ocean?

LEAH

The packaging is biodegradable.

MENIKA

We could freeze them. The blackberries. Thaw them for Christmas...or later.

ANNAMARIE

They're never as good! It's now or never, ladies!

MENIKA eats a blackberry like it's a communion wafer. She hands the container to LEAH. LEAH eats a blackberry the same way.

ANNAMARIE

Summer Black-Berry. That's a cute name.

LEAH

Maybe.

The women look out on the ocean. The lights fall. Eight stars twinkle. One is especially bright.

END OF PLAY