

## **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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## The Last Blackberries of Summer

### 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 *crazy*.

*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**