

TEN PICNICS

by Mark Harvey Levine

© Mark Harvey Levine
(310) 621-2570
markle9@hotmail.com

Ten Picnics

Characters:

Ten Picnics was written to be performed by three actors:

- Actress 1: Peggy (Frank's mother), Eileen (Frank's classmate), Rebecca (new age-y), Megan (Jen and Frank's baby)
- Actress 2: Lee, (Frank's other mother), Debbie (Eileen's teenage friend), Karla (awkward), Jen (Frank's girlfriend, later wife)
- Actor 1: Frank (Peggy and Lee's son, Jen's boyfriend and later husband) at various ages.
(Played By An Adult)

Time:

Thirty-five years leading up to the present.

Setting:

A park.

A park. PEGGY and LEE are sitting looking through the picnic basket. FRANK sits off to one side. FRANK is five months old at the moment, and generally just sits there, sucking on his entire hand. Occasionally he makes little grunts. Off to one side is an abacus, with all the beads shoved over to one side.

PEGGY

(to the audience) Ten Picnics.

Peggy slides the top row of beads on the abacus over to the other side.

PICNIC ONE

PEGGY

It's a glorious day for a picnic!

LEE

Days like this, it feels like the earth has stopped spinning and everything's still and we have all the time in the world.

PEGGY

How's Frankie? Does he need his little hat? The sun is kind of-

LEE

He's fine.

PEGGY

I can't believe we really have a baby.

LEE

I know. Every time I say "my son" it sounds weird.

PEGGY

I'm a mother. You're a mother. We're mothers.

LEE

I think I want to be a 'Mommy'.

PEGGY

I'd rather be 'Mama'.

LEE

Okay, great. You'll be Mama and I'll be Mommy.

PEGGY

You're going to be a great Mommy.

LEE

I don't know...

PEGGY

You're going to be the mother of all Mommies!

LEE

(laughs) Stop it.

PEGGY

Well, I wanted to thank you for making me a Mama.

She takes a wrapped box out of the picnic basket -- it contains a watch. Lee opens it during the following.

LEE

What's this?

PEGGY

Just a little present. For being such a wonderful mother. And lover.

LEE

Shhh. Not in front of the baby. It's gorgeous.

PEGGY

I wanted something that said I love you -- for all time.

LEE

I love you right back. For all time.

Pause.

PEGGY

Are you scared?

LEE

Terrified.

They grab each others' hands. FRANK gets up and slides over the second row of beads. He exits.

PICNIC TWO

PEGGY and LEE change positions...time has passed. LEE calls to offstage.

LEE

Frankie! Stay where we can see you!

PEGGY

(looking in the basket) So what do we have here?

LEE

My famous Magical Salmon Salad Sandwiches...hard boiled eggs...Mac and cheese for Frankie...

PEGGY

Can you picture him all grown up? With a girlfriend?

LEE

Or a boyfriend.

PEGGY

Either way, I can't see it.

Frankie comes running in, screaming and waving his arms with sheer joy (*he's about four now*), makes a circle around them and runs off again.

LEE

He's having fun. (*pause, then shouts offstage*) Frankie! Leave the ducks alone!

PEGGY

Do you think we're going to mess him up?

LEE

Oh, of course. All parents mess their kids up. That's our job.

PEGGY

No, I mean...

LEE

Because "Frankie Has Two Mommies"

PEGGY

Yeah.

LEE

How many serial killers had lesbian parents? No, trust me, the ones that get messed up are messed up because of other reasons. Y'know, parents that are wacko, or something.

PEGGY

Well, then, we're really in trouble.

They laugh. Peggy then slides the next row of beads on the abacus over, and exits, and Frank enters.

PICNIC THREE

LEE and FRANK (*now ten*) sit having a picnic.

LEE

I made you fried chicken.

FRANK

I'm not hungry yet.

LEE

Your Mama loved this spot. This was her favorite spot for picnics. We came here every year on this date.

FRANK

I miss her.

LEE

I miss her, too, honey. *(pause)* I was cleaning out some of her things...

FRANK

Do you have to... *(can't finish the sentence)*

LEE

Eventually, honey, we have to. I found this...I think she would want you to have it.

He doesn't take it.

LEE *(CONT'D)*

C'mon. You don't have to wear it. I think it's for ladies, anyway. It's a watch.

FRANK

I remember it.

LEE

Well, it's not just for telling time. You can use it for other things. Remembering.

He reluctantly takes the box, and opens it. He looks at it for a long moment.

LEE *(CONT'D)*

One day you'll be able to remember without being so sad.

FRANK

You think?

LEE

I know.

Frankie thinks about this for a long beat.

FRANK

Okay. Let's eat.

LEE

(smiles at him "taking charge") Well, alright then.

Lee moves the next row of beads over and exits.

PICNIC FOUR

Eileen enters. She and Frankie are now fifteen.

EILEEN

I mean, it's like you and I are sitting here, right? And there's this moment where I'm talking and I do this thing with my hand, right? *(she makes a gesture)*

FRANK

Right.

EILEEN

And then, like -- pow! That moment's gone! Gone forever! And it's getting further and further away, receding in our memory.

FRANK

Yeah.

EILEEN

And maybe, MAYBE, if something extraordinary happens, you might remember it forever. But mostly not. I mean, you can recall the stuff that happened last week.

FRANK

Yeah.

EILEEN

And last month. But last year's already starting to go. And five years ago? It's pretty much gone except for the highlights.

FRANK

The important moments.

EILEEN

Right. But the boring stuff, like what you ate for lunch...that's pretty much gone.

FRANK

Forever?

EILEEN

Forever.

Frank slides the next row of beads over, and exits. Debbie enters. She and Eileen are now nineteen.

PICNIC FIVE

EILEEN

I went on a picnic with Frankie Cameron once.

DEBBIE

Oh no, really?

EILEEN

Yeah. I think he liked me.

DEBBIE

Oh gross.

EILEEN

But get this. He starts talking about something his mother did or something, right?

DEBBIE

Yeah...

EILEEN

And I said..."I thought your mom was dead?" Cause I remember he said that once.

DEBBIE

Yeah, I think I remember that too.

EILEEN

And he says "That's...my other mother. My mom's still alive."

Debbie doesn't get it.

EILEEN (*CONT'D*)

They...were...lesbians!

DEBBIE

No!

EILEEN

Swear to God.

DEBBIE

You're kidding me!

EILEEN

Swear. To. God.

DEBBIE

Whatever happened to him?

EILEEN

Frankie?

DEBBIE

Yeah.

EILEEN

...I don't know.

Debbie slides the next row of beads over, and they both exit with the picnic basket.

PICNIC SIX

Frank and Karla, both 23, enter with the picnic basket.

KARLA

This looks like a good spot.

FRANK

I used to come here with my...parents.

KARLA

Oh.

FRANK

But it's a good spot for a picnic.

KARLA

Okay.

FRANK

So do you-- (*want to sit here?*)

KARLA

What? Oh, sure.

They sit. There is an awkward silence.

FRANK

(*simultaneously*) So, what do you like to--

KARLA

(*simultaneously*) How many times did you--

FRANK

Oh, sorry--

KARLA

No--

FRANK

You go--

KARLA

No, it's okay--

FRANK

Really.

They sit in awkward silence. Finally, disheartened, Frank slides the next row of beads over, and Karla leaves.

PICNIC SEVEN

Rebecca enters. She's kind of new age-ish. She and Frank and are both in their late 20's.

REBECCA

I never wear a watch.

FRANK

No?

REBECCA

I try to get all my sensory input from the earth. The trees. Green things.

FRANK

Broccoli?

REBECCA

No, no, the ground. The sun. You can tell time pretty good from the sun and the stars.

FRANK

Actually, you can tell time from broccoli, too. The way the cheese lays just so...

REBECCA

Don't be silly.

FRANK

Why not? Why not?

Frank rolls his eyes and slides the next row of beads over. Rebecca leaves.

PICNIC EIGHT

Frank and Jen enter, they are early 30's.

FRANK

I used to come here with my...mothers.

JEN

(she's cool with it) That must have been nice.

FRANK

Yeah, it was. It was.

JEN

It's a nice spot for a picnic. *(pause)* You know, if you say "picnic" over and over again, it loses all meaning.

FRANK AND JEN *(TOGETHER)*

Picnic, Picnic, Picnic, Picnic, Picnic, Picnic, Picnic, Picnic.

They laugh.

FRANK

So, are you hungry?

JEN

Not really.

FRANK

Me neither.

He pounces on her, and they fall, kissing and giggling. They start to unbutton their clothes, when Jen looks at the audience and coyly slides another row of beads over and exits.

PICNIC NINE

Frank (*mid-30's*) sits alone, staring out. Peggy and Lee enter. Frank isn't aware of them.

PEGGY

He looks lonely.

LEE

Part of life.

PEGGY

Do you think we did a good job?

LEE

He's fine. I just wish we could talk to him.

PEGGY

We do talk to him.

LEE

You know what I mean.

PEGGY

It's strange to see him as a man. I still see him as a baby.

LEE

That's the hard part about being dead. You remember everything...

PEGGY

Well, being alive's no picnic either...

They smile, and exit. Frank slides over the last row of beads.

PICNIC TEN

Frank and Jen (*from Picnic Eight*) sit together. Their baby, Megan, who is five months old, sits where baby Frankie was in Picnic One, and just like him she quietly sucks on her fist and drunkenly looks about.

JEN

How's she doing?

FRANK
She's fine.

JEN
It's a glorious day for a picnic!

FRANK
Listen...I want to give you something.

He hands her the watch.

JEN
Oh, Frank, it's beautiful!

FRANK
It was my mom's.

JEN
Oh, it's gorgeous. Thank you.

FRANK
Maybe one day you can give it to Megan.

JEN
Does it still work?

FRANK
...In a manner of speaking.

JEN
I wonder how much we have left.

FRANK
What?

JEN
Time. I mean, now that we've procreated and all.

FRANK
We've got tons of time.

JEN
I just keep thinking about, like, insects. You know...the minute they lay eggs they go off and dry up and die somewhere.

FRANK
Aren't you supposed to rip my head off and eat it, first?

JEN
I'm serious.

FRANK

We've got plenty of time. We have all the time in the world.

JEN

Okay.

FRANK

We've got a baby! It's a whole new era!

JEN

Okay!

FRANK

Now...let's open this basket and see what's inside...

As Jen opens the basket and starts taking out food, Frank goes to the abacus and one row at a time, slides all the beads back to where they were at the beginning, clack, clack, clack, as the lights fade.

END OF PLAY