

BIG BASTARD

A play in two acts

By Craig Houk

SAMPLE

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Synopsis

Patrice Bean develops an unhealthy relationship with a very large black bear.

Characters

ARTHUR BEAN Male, 40s

PATTY BEAN Female, Late Teens (young Patrice)

PATRICE BEAN Female, 60s or older

CODY HODGES Male, 30s

BRENDA SIMMONS Female, 40s

BIG BASTARD A Bear

Casting Notes

The role of Arthur Bean must be played by a very large, bear-like man.

Place

Sierra County, Downieville, California.

Time

Present and Past.

Setting

A small shabby house on a mountain in the woods. A stage two bordering on stage three hoarder lives here. A front door and a small porch, large window, kitchen/dining/living room area. A hallway leading off to a bathroom and bedrooms.

Setting Notes

While I recognize that this could present a challenge for directors and designers, it's important to note that the scenes set in the past do take place in a relatively tidy house. I expect (know damn well) it wouldn't be practical to have two houses on stage (or is it?), so get creative.

ACT 1**SCENE 1**

The past. Early evening.

(A quiet moment passes before what appears to be a large bear comes lumbering by the window. But as the mysterious creature makes its way around the house to the front porch, we see that it's ARTHUR BEAN coming home from work. He makes his way onto the porch and into the house.)

ARTHUR

Patty. Patty!

PATTY

(Off.)

Yeah, Daddy?

ARTHUR

Oh, come on now. Don't "yeah Daddy" me. It's been a long day. And do you know what I'm not smelling? I'm not smelling dinner cooking, that's what I'm not smelling.

PATTY

(Off.)

I'll be right out!

ARTHUR

And get me my beer. I mean, what the hell are you doing in there?

PATTY

(PATTY BEAN enters from the hallway.)

Sorry, Daddy. I was just waiting for the oven to heat up. I've got a plate of leftovers ready for you in the fridge.

(She goes to the refrigerator.)

ARTHUR

Oh, geez. / Leftovers?

(Patty pulls a plate wrapped in foil out of the refrigerator.)

PATTY

/ I know, I know. But listen, it doesn't make sense to have that ham loaf go to waste. We've got string beans and potatoes too. And anyway, you're the one who keeps saying we need to watch our spending.

(Patty pops the plate into the oven. She sets a timer.)

ARTHUR

All right, well, enough with the dang chit chat then. I'm starving.

PATTY

It's in the oven now. And you know, I packed you a really big lunch this morning.

ARTHUR

So, what's your point.

PATTY

I put two snack cakes in there this time.

ARTHUR

Yeah, and what's that got to do with the price of eggs?

PATTY

Did you eat your lunch?

ARTHUR

Yeah, of course, I ate my lunch. But that was lunch. That was about five hours ago. And now I'm talking about dinner. The one hasn't got anything to do with the other.

PATTY

Okay, okay, well, settle down. And have a seat. Your food'll be ready in about ten/fifteen minutes.

(Arthur sits in an armchair.)

ARTHUR

Where the hell's my newspaper?

PATTY

You're sitting on it. Nothing but bad news anyway.

(Arthur grabs the paper from underneath him. A quiet moment passes as Patty pulls a glass beer mug out of the freezer and sets it on the counter.)

She then grabs a canned or bottled beer from the fridge, opens it and pours it into the glass.)

ARTHUR

I like the ham loaf.

PATTY

I know you do.

ARTHUR

It's damn good. Better than your mother's, that's for sure.

PATTY

You don't have to say that, Daddy.

ARTHUR

It's true.

PATTY

True or not – and it's not – I'd prefer you didn't say it.

(She hands Arthur his beer. He takes the beer and then takes her hand firmly but not in a way that's painful.)

ARTHUR

I say what I please in this house. Or maybe you've forgotten?

PATTY

(Unfazed.)

No, Daddy, I haven't forgotten.

ARTHUR

Good. Good girl.

(He releases her hand. She heads back to the kitchen to get herself a glass of water or maybe a soda. Arthur reads the paper. Patty drinks.)

You're gonna make a nice wife for some young man someday.

PATTY

I can't wait.

ARTHUR

Yeah, well, there's no rush. And, of course, he'd better treat you right if he knows what's good for him. Because any man who'd mistreat my daughter would find himself six feet under, and in short order, that's for sure.

PATTY

Nothing like a death threat to lock in a good man.

(She drinks. A brief moment as Arthur looks at the newspaper.)

ARTHUR

(Quietly, to himself.)

Oh, Jesus.

PATTY

Another one's gone missing.

ARTHUR

(He looks to Patty.)

Huh?

PATTY

Another young girl. Missing. That makes three this year.

ARTHUR

Yeah, I see that. It's awful.

PATTY

Monsters everywhere.

ARTHUR

Out there, yes. But not in here. I won't allow it in here. Listen, just bring me my dinner, okay?

PATTY

It's not ready yet, Daddy.

ARTHUR

Yeah, well, I'm hungry. Bring it to me now.

PATTY

(Quietly.)

It's not like you're wasting away over there.

ARTHUR

What's that?

PATTY

I didn't say anything. Just getting your plate out of the oven.

ARTHUR

Okay, well, hop to it then.

(Patty turns off the timer and the oven, grabs a potholder and pulls the plate out of the oven. She sets the plate on the stovetop. She then grabs a tray table and sets it up near Arthur. She grabs a knife, fork and napkin, and places them neatly on the tray table. She then retrieves the plate, still, covered in foil, and brings it to Arthur. She pauses for a moment and then raises the plate up and brings it down on his head. End of scene.)

SCENE 2

The present. Early morning.

(CODY HODGES, a local deputy, arrives at the window. He peers in, squinting and looking around. He decides to move around to the front door but before he can get there he slips and falls out of sight.)

CODY

(Off.)

Goddamit! Son of—!

PATRICE

(Off, down the hallway.)

What the heck is going on out there? Who is / that?

CODY

(Off.)

/ Oh, God, no. No, no, no, this can't be happening. Oh, Jesus.

(A toilet flushes.)

PATRICE

(Off, down the hallway.)

I'll be right out!

(Off, the deputy throws up.)

Whoever you are, you better not be drunk! I don't have patience for people who drink!

(PATRICE BEAN appears from the hallway speaking to herself.)

Not to mention it's not even seven o'clock in the GD morning.

(She goes to the window and opens it.)

Well, what do you know? Deputy Hodges. Looks like a fine day to be sitting on the ground outside my window in your own filth.

CODY

(Off.)

I am not sitting in my own filth, and you know it.

PATRICE

Yeah, well between whatever that is and the vomit, your dry-cleaning bill is gonna be outrageous. I hope the taxpayers won't have to pay for that.

CODY

(Off.)

That's not funny, Patrice.

PATRICE

Yeah, well, I think maybe it is. Hey, be careful getting up there.

(Cody gets up and is visible in the window.)

CODY

May I come in?

PATRICE

You may not. You're filthy. Why don't you head over to the creek and get yourself washed up. I'll make some coffee and then I'll meet you out on the porch.

CODY

I don't have time for coffee. I need to talk to you now.

PATRICE

Okay, well then you're gonna have to do it from out there.

CODY

Not sure why it would matter if I came into your house like this anyway.

PATRICE

Mm hm. You got something to say about how I keep my home, deputy Hodges?

CODY

As a matter of fact, I do, Patrice. And I've got plenty to say about the veritable minefield of bear excrement you got on your property out here.

PATRICE

I see. Okay, well, go on then. You've got my undivided attention.

(Cody leans in the window a bit.)

CODY

All right, so listen. We're getting complaints...

PATRICE

From who?

CODY

It doesn't matter from who.

PATRICE

I'd like to know.

CODY

Why? So, you can add them to that little hit list you've been putting together?

PATRICE

Pfft.

CODY

You know, you're this close to having us bring adult protective services out here.

PATRICE

Adult protect...? What're you talking about? What the heck for?

CODY

It's not good for you to live like this, Patrice.

PATRICE

Like what?

CODY

Take a look around you.

PATRICE

So, what? So, I've got a few too many things. What's any of that got to do with you? Or with anyone else for that matter?

CODY

Well, you might be surprised to hear that I agree with you. I mean, I generally don't think it's anyone's business what people do inside their own homes...

PATRICE

Perfect, so then why don't you skedaddle and have yourself a nice day.

(She moves away from him.)

CODY

...Except that what's going on inside your home is causing problems for people outside of it. Me in particular. You understand? So, here's what you're gonna do—

PATRICE

Oh, no. No, no, no. No one's gonna tell me what to do. This is still a free country last time I checked.

CODY

That it is, Patrice. But what you're not understanding is that there are laws. Okay? And what you're doing, what you've done, is you've broken the law.

PATRICE

Oh, is that so? And what law have I broken?

CODY

You're a public nuisance, Patrice.

PATRICE

I'm flattered, but this is private property.

CODY

It doesn't matter. You've got garbage piled up all over the place out here.

PATRICE

I make my own compost.

CODY

Tossing your trash out onto the lawn doesn't constitute composting.

PATRICE

What do you know about it?

CODY

What I know is that what you're doing is bringing wildlife into the area. Okay? And it's dangerous.

PATRICE

We're surrounded by wildlife, Deputy Hodges. In case you didn't know.

CODY

You're encouraging animals to come into people's yards, Patrice. In many ways, you're training them to do just that. You understand what I'm saying?

PATRICE

Well, I just barely made it through high school, and I dropped out of community college, but I've got a decent grasp on the English language if that's what you're getting at.

CODY

Oh, Jesus. Look, I'm just trying to have a sensible conversation with you. All right? So, I'd appreciate it if you took this seriously.

PATRICE

So, what do you want me to do?

CODY

You need to start by getting your yard cleaned up. And if you need help with that, just let me know; I'll see what I can do.

PATRICE

I don't need help. I don't want anyone coming up here. Least of all you.

CODY

Fine. And you know, the best way to keep me out of your hair is to do what I've told you. And while you're at it, I really think you should clean up in here too. It's a goddam mess. And it stinks.

PATRICE

You stink.

CODY

Difference being, I'm gonna take care of that as soon as I get home. In the meantime, when I come back next week, I don't want to see so much as a mouse turd within a hundred feet of your front door.

PATRICE

The only turd you'll find within a hundred feet of my front door will be you.

CODY

I'll try not to take that as an insult but rather as a commitment from you to getting things in order around here.

PATRICE

Take it however you like. Are we done here?

CODY

Uh, actually no. Because there's something else I wanted to tell you.

PATRICE

Oh, geez. And what's that?

CODY

Debbie and I got engaged.

PATRICE

What?

CODY

Debbie McKeever. Waits tables over at the Carriage House Inn. Pretty brunette—

PATRICE

Yeah, yeah, I know who she is. She's a nice girl. I didn't know you two were, uh...

CODY

For a little more than a year now.

PATRICE

I see. Okay, well congratulations, good for you. Though I wasn't aware she had problems with her eyesight.

CODY

Problems with her eyesight? What are you...? Oh, I see what you mean. Well, if you're suggesting that I'm lucky to have her, you are one hundred percent correct. Anyway, I thought maybe I'd share some good news with you.

PATRICE

Good news for you, I suppose. Anything else?

CODY

No, I guess not. I'll see you soon, Patrice.

PATRICE

I look forward to it.

(He's off.)

You've been bumped to the top of that hit list, by the way.

CODY

(Off.)

I'm flattered.

(End of Scene.)

SCENE 3

The present. Late at night. The house is dark.

(A quiet moment passes before a large black bear comes lumbering by the window, huffing and growling. A light comes on in the hallway. Patrice peers out.)

PATRICE

I can hear you out there, you big bastard.

(She moves into the room. She goes to the window and opens it.)

You hungry? I think I got some cake. It's not from scratch or even from a box mix, but it does come in a box.

(She searches for it in the mess.)

Okay, now where the heck is it? I think it's raspberry. Or maybe cherry. Might not be a cake at all, it might be a strudel or a Danish. Who the heck knows?

(She finds it.)

Here it is! Nope, it is indeed a cake. Lemon iced cake to be exact. It's probably stale but what do you care? You're a bear.

(She goes to the window. She holds the box out and gives it a little shake.)

What do you think, huh? You want to give it a try?

(She opens the box.)

There's just a little bit of mold on the edges here, but I'll just, uh... pull that off...

(She does.)

And now it's as good as... well, as good as it's gonna get.

(The bear growls softly.)

You know, despite what I hear, you seem pretty docile. Though you are a very big fella. What're you, six hundred pounds, maybe a little more? The largest bear on record was eight hundred and eighty pounds, I'll have you know. I read that on the internet. I'm just telling you this because I don't want you to get all smug about it. You're big, but you're not that big. And you're just not that scary to me is all I'm saying.

(The bear huffs. She shakes the box again.)

So, do you want this or not?

(The bear growls softly.)

Okay. Well, I'll, just uh... I'll just leave it right here. You can help yourself whenever you like.

(She places the cake on the windowsill or perhaps on a rain barrel or on the ground outside.)

So, listen. I feel like I should tell you this, though I'm not sure why, but, uh... I'm not well. Haven't been for a very long time. Frankly, I should've kicked it by now, but here I still am. It's mostly my kidneys and my liver, though I've had problems with my intestines too. I'm a GD mess. My doctor says I'm a miracle. Pfft. A miracle. Do you know how many pills I take a day?

(The bear huffs.)

Yeah, me neither, which is why I asked. You know, I got one of those seven-day pill cases. Jumbo size, if you can imagine. Packed with medicines. It's to the point now where I can hardly even close it.

(The bear growls softly.)

Yeah, well, I appreciate your concern but there's really nothing anyone can do about it. So, I just take the pills and then I hope for the best. Some days are good, some days are bad... But I guess that's how it goes for everyone, right? You included I expect.

Oh, and hey... It took me two days to clean up this yard, so I'd appreciate it if you didn't make a mess out there. Otherwise, that could mean the end of our special little visits together.

(The bear huffs.)

Mm hm. Deputy Hodges is onto us. Says I'm encouraging you. I mean, really. What difference does it make what I do if you're just showing up here? You are just coming here, right? You're not going onto anyone else's property?

(The bear huffs.)

Okay, well, I hope not. Because I get it. People want to feel safe, especially in their own homes. So, maybe you can just leave the neighbors alone and I'll make sure you get what you need right here. You understand?

(The bear growls softly.)

Good. I'm glad we got that sorted because I don't need any more trouble. I've got plenty enough to worry about.

Okay, well, I guess it's time I went back to bed. I have a full day tomorrow.

(The bear huffs.)

Hey, I don't need your sass. And anyway, what do you know? I'm a very busy woman. Lots to do around here. And it just so happens, I have to get up a little earlier than usual to take care of something that I've been putting off for far too long.

(The bear growls softly.)

Yeah, well, I'm not in the mood to talk about it just now. It's late. And I'm sorry I brought it up.

(The bear huffs.)

Enjoy your cake. And get some sleep. Or whatever it is you do at this time of night. And whatever it is, keep to yourself. I mean it.

(She closes the window and then exits off down the hallway. End of Scene.)

SCENE 4

The present. Morning. Sunlight fills the house. The room appears to be empty.

(A quiet moment passes before the phone rings. Patrice snorts and then pops up from underneath a pile of papers.)

PATRICE

What the heck?

(She makes her way to the phone and answers it.)

Yeah...? Who's asking...? Jenna? Okay, well, I don't know any Jenna, so... Sorry, what's that...? Oh, well, that's a very unfortunate last name, Jenna; I can see why you might hesitate to share it... You don't hear it? I mean it's right there. Maybe if you just say it out loud a few times in a row, you might... Mm hm. Listen, can you hold on a second?

(She puts down the receiver and finds a Post-it pad and pen. She writes the following down as she speaks it out loud.)

Reminder: Do not under any circumstances answer the phone ever again.

(She places the Post-it on the receiver and then continues the call.)

So, what can I do for you, Miss Talia...? Mm hm... You're a what...? A paralegal...? Oh, I see. So, they've decided to skip the big guns this time; they brought out the cap pistol. That can mean only one of two things: either they're getting real cocky or they've given up... Uh-huh... No, I'm sorry, I haven't had a chance to look over those documents just yet, but it's on my to-do list, make no mistake about it... Right... Understood... Yes, well, you'll have my response soon. In the meantime, I do have an entirely separate response that I'm prepared to share with you right now, but I don't think it'll be helpful for either of us... Okay then... Yes, of course, I'll be in touch... Oh, don't you worry, I've got your number... Okay, well, you have a lovely day. Bye now.

(She replaces the receiver and grabs the Post-it pad and pen. She writes the following down as she speaks it out loud.)

Reminder: Don't bother paying the phone bill.

(She digs through some papers and finds the phone bill. She places the Post-it on it. There's a knock at the door.)

Who's there?

(BRENDA SIMMONS has arrived and is standing on the porch.)

BRENDA

Good morning, Patrice!

PATRICE

Says you, Brenda! What do you want? You know, because I happen to be very busy at the moment!

BRENDA

I was hoping we could have a little chat!

PATRICE

(Quietly, to herself, as she heads for the door.)

I've been very popular lately. This must be what the Queen of England feels like. Except she's dead now. Lucky stiff.

(She opens the door.)

Okay, so, make it quick, Brenda.

BRENDA

You mind if I come in?

PATRICE

As a matter of fact, I do. We can talk out here on the porch.

(Patrice closes the door and moves past Brenda on the porch.)

So, what is it?

BRENDA

Have I done something to upset you?

PATRICE

Is that what you came here to talk to me about?

BRENDA

No, it's not. But I'd like to know. Because I feel like I've been nothing but nice to you.

PATRICE

How do you mean?

BRENDA

Well, I... I guess I'm just trying to understand why you have all this animosity towards me. I mean, because I'm not a terrible person, you know.

PATRICE

I'm like this with everyone, Brenda. Equal opportunity and all that.

BRENDA

I see. Well, I'm not gonna let that discourage me. I'm determined to win you over.

PATRICE

Okay, well, in that case, I hope you've experienced disappointment at least once in your lifetime; it'll soften the blow. So, what do you say? Can we get to the matter at hand?

BRENDA

Right. Okay, so, listen. A lot of people around here are a little concerned... So, it's not just me, Patrice; I just happen to be the one delivering the message—

PATRICE

Oh! Well, it looks like Brenda drew the short straw then.

BRENDA

It was a pack of bamboo skewers actually; we were having a neighborhood barbecue. But yes, it was me. And honestly, it was probably gonna be me regardless since no one's keen to talk to you anyway.

PATRICE

Fair enough. All right, okay, so, is this about that black bear or what?

BRENDA

Yes, as a matter of fact, it is.

PATRICE

Yeah, well, then I expect you already know that Deputy Hodges has been here. And in case you didn't notice, my entire yard is as clean as a pick now. I did what I was told to do, everything's in order, so you're now welcome to get the heck off my property.

BRENDA

Okay, well, we all appreciate what you've done with the yard; it hasn't gone unnoticed, that's for sure. Except...

PATRICE

Except what?

BRENDA

You need to be careful.

PATRICE

Careful?

BRENDA

I mean, come on, Patrice? What're you doing messing around with a bear? A wild bear? Listen, I get it. You're a weird lady, you're cantankerous, you like to be left alone to do whatever the hell you want, but you're gonna get yourself killed. You understand?

PATRICE

You don't know what you're talking / about.

BRENDA

/ I know exactly what I'm talking about. I've got eyes and / ears.

PATRICE

/ So, what then? So, you've been spying on me? Is that what you've / been doing?

BRENDA

/ You're not as clever as you think you are, Patrice. I mean, maybe you've got Deputy Hodges / fooled but...

PATRICE

/ Yeah, and maybe you and Deputy Hodges are conspiring against / me.

BRENDA

/ No one is conspiring against you, Patrice.

PATRICE

Yeah, well tell that to the people trying to take my land away from me.

BRENDA

What? What're you talking about? Who's trying to take your land away from you?

(Patrice goes silent; she's said too much.)

Patrice?

PATRICE

Aliens.

PATRICE

Aliens.

PATRICE

Uhhhh... yeah. That's right, Brenda. Aliens are trying to take my land.

(She points to the sky.)

BRENDA

Okay, well, like I was just about to say, Patrice, you can't fool me. So, listen. I've said what I came here to say. Take heed or don't, that's up to you. But you know, if you're in some kind of real trouble, and you need to talk, you know where to find me. I'll be the lady looking at you through a pair of binoculars from her living room window.

(Brenda starts off.)

PATRICE

Hold on a second. I got something for you.

BRENDA

Oh, you do, do you?

PATRICE

Yeah, yeah. I'll be quick.

(Brenda waits on the porch as Patrice goes into the house. She grabs the Post-it pad and pen and then returns to the porch. She writes the following down as she speaks it out loud.)

Reminder: Brenda Simmons is a nuisance. Steer clear.

(She takes the Post-it and places it on Brenda's forehead.)

BRENDA

You know, this is why you don't get invited to the neighborhood barbecues.

(Brenda peels the Post-it off her forehead and exits. End of scene.)