Bear's Hot Jam
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SYNOPSIS:
Mira buys her perfect getaway cabin in the north woods. She has no idea that Bear built it and has come to claim it. Can a bear and a human become amiable roommates?

CAST:
Bear (male) ageless; don't look for a bear suit! While BEAR needs to be larger than life – play with the idea of huge paws and huge feet. Maybe ears and a tail. He should probably be in black as he's not a grizzly (they eat people). BEAR is clever and confident but not mean (except for stealing the chocolate bar if you think that's mean). But remember – he's still a bear.

Mira (female) ageless; has had it with the rat race and has moved to what she thinks is her idyllic cabin in the woods.

SET:
A table and chairs would be nice. If you want to go all out – you could hang a sign somewhere that says "Extraordinary fire place" or something of that ilk.

TIME:
Spring, summer. Today.

PROPS:
Bear and Mira each have a phone. 1 pot of coffee. 2 coffee mugs. Room spray. Bag of groceries: toilet paper, chocolate bar on top. Mason jars. A bucket of fish heads. (We don't need to see the fish heads.) A sponge. A fish.

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(Lights up on Mira standing or sitting at her table in her perfect cabin in the woods.)

MIRA
It was the first day in my cabin in the woods. I was an over-achieving achiever. I fixed the roof, painted the walls, swept the fireplace and ordered the bats outside. After years of living in the city, I finally had my dream home. And it's smack in the middle of a blueberry patch – how idyllic is that? After kicking Sam out of my condo, I thought – now I can do what I've always wanted to do. But I didn't know what I always wanted to do so I went online to get ideas.

The ideas said: buy a goat farm (but I'm allergic)
become a beekeeper (but I'm afraid of bees)
create a worm farm (why?)
become a real estate agent (again, why?)
make jam – bingo!

So that's how I came to this cabin in the woods with fifty mason jars and ten bags of sugar. Oh! And I brought coffee, too. Because – coffee. I was sitting at my sweet kitchen table made for two by my cozy fireplace with a stone hearth happily drinking my coffee and reading witches' spells online (yes, I have wifi because – wifi) when this bear knocks on the door.

I go to answer it because I am polite and neighborly and also I didn't know it was a bear. Guess what? It really was a bear. He came in, poured himself a coffee (I wish I didn't have two coffee mugs) sat down at the table and made himself at home.

BEAR
Hello. I like it here.

MIRA
I wanted him to leave.

BEAR
I may never leave.

MIRA
I really wanted him to leave.

BEAR
The truth is, this is my home. I got sick of caves.

(BEAR pulls out his phone.)

BEAR (cont'd)
And the wifi is much better here than in the cave.

MIRA
I thought about throwing him out. But I weigh 130 pounds and he weighs 500 pounds. So that was not the best idea. Also he has claws – really long, sharp, razor-sharp claws that could divide a person's body in two and well - I bite my nails. So I just said,

Okay. You can stay. For now.

Even though I secretly thought he would make a better rug than a roommate.

BEAR
You shouldn't live alone.

(BEAR drinks coffee and plays video games on his phone.)

BEAR (cont'd)
Yes! Level five, baby! I can beat it.

MIRA
I never lived alone until last night. I lived with my parents and then with Sam but I finally threw Sam out. All he did was drink my coffee and play video games on his phone all day.

BEAR
Is that a problem?

MIRA
I wanted help paying the bills. I wanted him to have a job.

BEAR
I have a job.

MIRA
What do you do?

BEAR
I protect people from bears.

MIRA
I only have one bed.

BEAR
I'm a bear. I sleep on the floor.

MIRA

I didn't bring any bear food.

BEAR

I'm a bear. I forage.

MIRA

If you insist on staying, you need to help out here. The least you can do is chop wood for the fireplace and stove. I will need a lot during the winter.

BEAR

I'm a bear. I hibernate during the winter.

MIRA

What good are you?

BEAR

I eat so many blueberries that the bushes grow bigger every year. By harvesting all of them, the plant develops a stronger root system which allows the bush to naturally grow bigger. Bigger blueberry bushes? Bigger blueberries.

MIRA

How do you know that?

BEAR

I'm a seasoned blueberry-eater and have witnessed this. Plus – Wikipedia says so.

MIRA

You can't have my blueberries. I'm going to make jam.

BEAR

They're my blueberries. I was here first.

MIRA

I bought this land.

BEAR

I was here first.

MIRA

You're trespassing on my property.

BEAR

I … was … here … first.

MIRA

You're a squatter.

BEAR

I've been here for many generations. How long have you been here?

MIRA

Since the Mayflower.

BEAR

Pshaw. So you came to America in 1620. I was here generations earlier. I had my geneaology chart done. I can get it for you. Hold on. It's on my phone.

MIRA

You're a free loader.

BEAR

All I need are the bare necessities of life.

MIRA

You're sitting in my chair drinking my coffee and using my wifi. I need to run into town for a few supplies. When I get back, I'd like it if you were gone.

BEAR

You need toilet paper.

(MIRA exits.)

BEAR (cont'd)

I didn't know how to tell her that I built this cabin. Yeah, maybe she signed some papers. But it's my cabin. I don't understand this land ownership that people have. You live in the woods for generations and you want something – a bit homier than a cave so you build a cabin. And then someone presents these papers saying they own the land and they're selling the cabin. Ha! Not so fast.

This is my first day in my cabin. I mean, look at it. I am an over-achieving achieving bear. I built that fireplace from scratch. After years of living in a cave, I finally had my dream home. And it's smack in the middle of a blueberry patch – how idyllic is that? After building this, I thought – now I can do what I've always wanted to do. But I didn't know what I always wanted to do so I went online to get ideas.

- Create a goat farm. - I do like goat cheese and they would keep the weeds down. But they need to be fenced in and who wants a fence in a forest?
- Be a beekeeper. - Oh how I would love all that honey. But I'm allergic to bee stings.
- Build a worm farm – hello? I live in the woods. Worm farms are everywhere.
- Become a real estate agent. - What is "real estate" anyway?

- Make jam – Bingo. I can live on jam. And the occasional chocolate bar.

Now, this Mira-human hasn't done too badly with the place. But the smell – the fake pine-scent everywhere. That has to go. I have something better. Wait here.

(BEAR retrieves a bucket of something from just outside the door.)

Whaddya think? It's fish heads. Isn't that a pleasing aroma. I'll just wipe down some walls with them. Soon it will smell like home.

(BEAR quickly does so.)

The aroma makes me want to fish. Excuse me.

(BEAR bumps into MIRA as he exits. MIRA has one bag of groceries – toilet paper.)

MIRA

Oh good! You're leaving.

BEAR

Going fishing. Wait. Do I smell – chocolate? I do! I do! Thank-you!

(*BEAR takes the chocolate bar and exits quickly. MIRA unpacks.)*

MIRA

Wait! I only bought one! Who knew bears like chocolate? Bear is right about one thing. You never can have too much toilet paper.

(MIRA sniffs the air.)

Euuuu! What's that I smell? Something fishy. Something fishy that's dead. Something fishy that's rotten.

(*MIRA retrieves the bucket of dead fish.)*

Fish heads! Yuck! Something fishy is going on around here. What can I do with fish heads? I heard they're good fertilizer. Maybe they'd be good for the blueberries. But then maybe the blueberries would taste like dead fish. And then the fishy-blueberries would attract all sorts of pests. But I just can't throw them outside. Then the outside will smell like dead fish. Just like my inside smells of fish. I can't get away from it! That's it! I have to get rid of the fish and Bear for my piece of mind. I can't bear BEAR!

(BEAR enters.)

BEAR

You rang?

MIRA

You… you … have to leave.

BEAR

Is that any way to talk to someone who just brought you a present? Look!

(BEAR hands MIRA a fresh fish which she may throw up in the air.)

MIRA

Noooo! Anything but fish!

BEAR

It's dinner. Delicious.

MIRA

It needs to be gutted, cleaned and cooked. It's a lot of work.

BEAR

Haven't you heard of sushi? Did you buy any wasabi when you were in town?

MIRA

You're unbearable!

BEAR

Bear with me.

MIRA

You're not exactly a care-bear.

BEAR

And I'm not a gummy bear. But I'm here. Bearing gifts. You'll just have to grin and bear it,

(*MIRA is at her wits end. She grabs the pine spray.)*

No! Not the pine spray! Anything but the pine spray!

MIRA

Why shouldn't I spray you? You drink my coffee, take my only chocolate bar and fill my home with the smell of fish heads. Roly-poly, smelly fish heads. I'm in a forest! My home should smell like a forest!

BEAR

Then open a window. Put away corporate America's vision of what a forest smells like and open a window!

MIRA
I don't want to let in the bugs. There aren't any screens.

BEAR
I don't want screens. I like having bugs come into my cabin/

MIRA
/my cabin.

BEAR
They're tasty protein bites. Oh look – a spider!

(BEAR scoops up a spider and eats it.)

Yum.

MIRA
There is no end to how you disgust me. I have to make blueberry jam. Then the cabin will smell like blueberries. You can go now.

BEAR
I better stay. If the cabin smells like blueberries, you're going to attract bears and you need me to protect you from bears. So what's the plan? Do you have a recipe?

MIRA
Blueberries and sugar. It makes delicious jam. The store owner told me he would put my jam on his shelves. That's how I'm going to earn my living.

BEAR
Did you not look at the general store? There are four shelves of blueberry jam. All made with blueberries and sugar. Edgar has been making his jam here for twenty years. Everyone buys his. He has a reputation. You are a newbie, a nobody, an unknown, a nonentity, a person of no importance/

MIRA
/got it. You don't have to hit me with a hammer.

BEAR
You need a gimmick. Something to set you apart. Blueberry with vanilla? Nah. Elsa tried that. Cardamom gives it a lovely twist. You could try a healthy version – sweetened with agave – a little chia seed for crunch. Or – I've got it. Biting blueberries! You know – spicy, fiery – the hot sauce of jams.

MIRA
Who would buy that?

BEAR

You don't research well. The only things that outnumber the amount of blueberry jams in the general store general store are the shelves of hot sauce. The spicier the better. "Does it make your lips go numb? I'll take four please." Not my jam, mind you. Humans are weird.

MIRA

You know, that might just work.

BEAR

We could call it, "Dragon Fire Blueberry Jam." Ingredients: blueberries, jam, pectin, ghost pepper mixed and cooked with genuine fire from a dragon.

MIRA

That's way too long.

BEAR

Bear with me.

MIRA

That's it! The Bear's Jam.

BEAR

As I said, it's not my jam and it will be a hot mess as we figure out the recipe.

MIRA

The Bear's Hot Jam.

BEAR

I think I'll go fishing.

MIRA

You can't. We have to figure out the recipe.

BEAR

We?

MIRA

We. Do I really add a ghost pepper? Or hot sauce? Do I go all Italian and use red pepper flakes?

BEAR

If you're thinking long-term – I'd go internationally. Mexican peppers, Italian peppers, Szechuan peppercorns. Hit up all the continents.

MIRA

Antarctica?

BEAR

It could be killer-jam – literally. Do you want to experiment with lichen and chance which ones you can eat and which ones will poison you?

MIRA

We'll skip Antarctica. We have a lot to do. Better get cracking.

(BEAR and MIRA go to work. Maybe we see them unpacking mason jars and blueberries as they address the audience.)

MIRA (cont'd)

"Bear's Hot Jam" was a roaring success. There's a cookbook coming out and I need to go on tour to promote it. Bear was not interested in going on tour.

BEAR

Of course not. I'm a bear.

MIRA

Over the next year, Bear caught fish for me. Raw for him. Cooked for me. He even put screens on the windows and resigned himself to eating bugs outside. Now, I'm off to plug the cookbook in New York. Keep the home fires burning! Don't miss me too much.

BEAR

Sell lots of books!

(MIRA exits.)

BEAR

The truth is – I will miss her. But you know what? For two whole weeks, I have the cabin to myself and for two whole weeks, I will wipe it down with fish heads and revel in the delectable aroma. Mira's a good roommate but she has no idea how to keep a home feeling fresh.

(BEAR gets his bucket of fish heads and start to wipe down walls or floors or the table as the lights go down.)

END OF PLAY