

Peach Tree Variations/Stanley's Nightmare

A narrator stands stage right. They have a shirt nearby to delineate a different character. At the center of the stage stands a "tree" and on the left is a "couch" or several chairs.

Narrator: Option one. Alice enters her room to find that over night a peach tree has grown at the center of the room. Sitting in the tree is a bear with menacing teeth. He appears hungry and has a hard time staying in the tree. He clings with large claws to the trunk. And there is no explanation as to how he or the peach tree could have gotten into her room. She keeps it clean, so there really isn't much to grow in.

(Alice enters the room and stares at the man in the bear mask. The mask is made of a paper plate with eyes and teeth drawn on it. Think the Radiohead scary bear logo. The tree is several rehearsal blocks stacked up. A base of four may be desired to add stability. Upon entering Alice looks up and stares.)

Narrator: Option two, Alice is growing a tree. (puts on shirt, walks over) It looks nice.

Alice: Yeah, but... well... you know how you have to care for trees and stuff. Well it's got this parasite. I don't know how the bugger got there.

Narrator: It is... big.

Alice: Yeah. And I keep the house locked. Last night I hear glass shattering. When I came downstairs, *(gestures at bear)* there it was.

Bear: *(stares)*

Narrator: Have you considered an exterminator?

Alice: They don't exterminate bears. *(the bear sighs in relief)* We live in a major urban center. How the fuck does a bear get into a living room in the third floor of an apartment complex in a major urban center?

Narrator: Climbs? Who grows a tree in an apartment in a major urban center? *(the bear points at Narrator, goal, credit the bear with an assist)*

(The bear and Alice switch places. The bear is sitting in the seating stage left swirling a wine glass.)

Narrator: Option three, an intruder.

Bear: *(pointing at tree)* I think it livens up the place.

Alice: I guess.

Bear: The key to bringing nature into the house is keeping it in perspective. If you let the nature dominate then where are you?

Alice: Say could you get me a coke?

Bear: No problem. Diet?

Alice: No.

Bear: Really? Cause you don't want to break a branch.

Alice: Get the coke fucker. *(bear exits)*

Narrator: Interlude.

Bear: *(center, spotlight)* The key as I see it is finding someone too meek to call the authorities. If you can do that then you won't get chased off by dogs or tranq darts. See, the dogs are why I left the state park system. They got these dogs now that they bring in to chase you away. Anyhow it's easier setting up shop here. I stake out a place for a while and then I move in. As long as I keep a low profile... refrigerator access, pure and simple.

Narrator: Option four, peach season. *(The bear is back in the tree. He is eating peaches. As he finishes each one he tosses the pit on the floor stage center. The bag with the peaches can be tacked onto the back of the tree.)*

Alice: Do you mind? You're denting the floor.

Bear: Your fault for having hardwood. Say... You could plant grass.

Alice: It would die. Not enough sunlight in here.

Bear: Hello! There is a peach tree growing in your apartment. How does it stay alive? Love? Animal sacrifice?

Alice: You're in a bad mood.

Bear: Yeah well your brisket gave me indigestion. Did you cook it at a high enough temperature? Because you need to do that with meat in order to insure that it is edible.

Alice: I thought bears had like more acidic stomachs and stuff. Aren't you supposed to eat raw meat?

Bear: I've gone native.

Narrator: Option five, a grudging respect. *(the bear and Alice waltz)*

Narrator: *(now in tree)* Option six... they wrestle. The bear wins. *(bear and Alice wrestle. Bear pins Alice, roars in her face. Exeunt Alice pursued by bear.)*

Narrator: *(out of tree)* Interlude.

Alice: The problem with bears as I see it is that they are hairy and smell like shit. I deal with that enough with the men in my life. The tree is nice. I like the tree don't get me wrong. But why the fuck did the tree have to come with a bear in it? I ask you that.

Narrator: Dinner party. *(the bear drags out a table. Move the chairs from the other side of the stage or bring on new chairs. Narrator puts on shirt and all three sit.)* Pass the salt please.

Bear: Why? Isn't it good enough?

Narrator: I think it needs more salt.

Bear: Look, if you salt the grubs they shrivel.

Alice: This is why I never let you cook.

Bear: You know in the forest I was a good cook. It was simple there. Forage. Eat. Forage. Eat. None of the other bears ever said, "Gee I wish this salmon had a lemon butter sauce." Or, "Gee these berries would be good in a pie." We made fucking do. You people disgust me. *(turns chair around)*

Alice: *(to Narrator)* There's a microwavable dinner in the freezer. Try that. *(Narrator leaves)* Look. He's just not ready. It's good stuff.

Bear: I foraged for hours.

Alice: We have a supermarket down the street. It would be fine to just go there. You don't have to forage for everything you know.

Bear: It's all I know.

Narrator: Option seven, the perpetration of the crime. *(Alice walks in. Bear has hand in peanut butter jar. There is peanut butter all over its face. Bear hangs head. Leaves. While off stage Bear can switch mask to new one and wipe off hand.)*

Alice: *(calling after)* We both know what happened!

Bear: I need to bulk up!

Alice: You won't hibernate forever! And when you're done...!

Narrator: Confessions. *(bear is asleep in tree. Narrator talks with Alice from the side of the stage.)*

Alice: It's just... dull now.

Narrator: That's understandable.

Alice: I mean before, there was a bear in here. It always keeps you on edge. I got used to the adrenaline... the fear of mauling... the constant snip-ness.

Narrator: It's not like he's dead.

Alice: No. No, it's not. *(looking up)* How do you think he stays up there?

Narrator: The tree seems taller.

Alice: Don't change the subject.

Narrator: How does the bear talk?

Alice: Touché.

Narrator: Spring is finally here. *(bear wakes up)* Fast forward. *(Alice is raking leaves on the floor. Narrator walks in.)*

Narrator: I'm chopping it down.

Alice: Why? It was just getting used to it. There was such a lovely display of fall colors. I've never seen something like this before. I mean who ever looks at peach trees in autumn? Everyone always turns to your oaks and your beeches in the fall. And then there was the harvest. Want fresh peaches? Got to the living room?

Narrator: I didn't get any.

Alice: You were scared of the bear.

Narrator: He threw pits at me.

Alice: Did you poke him?

Narrator: *(reluctantly)* Yes? *(bear nods)*

Alice: Well there you go. *(exit)*

Narrator: *(collapses in center stage, lifts head)* Option eight, the darker side of things. *(bear cackles)*

Alice: *(entering)* Well fuck. You poked him again didn't you.

Narrator: Fuck you. Call an ambulance.

Alice: If I call an ambulance then they find out about the bear, and the tree. Then they'll find the tree too. I don't want to explain that to my super. "Oh yeah. The tree? It just got there. Like he's gonna buy into that." Then I have to chop it down and they kill the bear. *(bear gasps)* Face it, you're going to have to crawl out in the hall. Then after I clean up the blood trail we'll call an ambulance. We'll tell them you were... knifed by a hobo!

Narrator: Except I was mauled by a bear!

Bear: Lightly mauled.

Narrator: Fine I was lightly fucking mauled by a bear. I'm bleeding here. *(Alice drags Narrator off stage by the arm)*

Narrator: Option nine, role reversal.

Alice: *(in tree)* My apartment, my tree.

Bear: Lets have some respect for personal space here. I came with that tree. The tree and I are a package deal.

Alice: It's nice up here. That platform you built is really cool. What's the pillow made of?

Bear: Pigeon feathers.

Alice: Ewww.

Bear: Come on... tell me you miss the little bastards. I dare you.

Alice: Well I don't own a car so it's never been a problem before.

Narrator: Option ten, departure.

Bear: *(holding suitcase)* I'm leaving.

Alice: Why?

Bear: It seemed the thing to do.

Alice: But who'll be in the tree? *(Narrator looks ready to volunteer Alice glares)*

Bear: I don't know. I could call in someone from the union.

Alice: You have a union.

Bear: Card carrying member. *(shows card)*

Alice: Neat. Could you?

Bear: Yeah. Bill would be great for this job.

Alice: Then it's settled.

Bear: *(moving toward exit, to Narrator)* One more time? For old times sake?
(Music starts, possibly "You've Lost that Lovin' Feeling" but many songs will work here. Narrator is about to object, Bear mauls. Lights down.)