

A Fresh Start

by Jayme Kilburn

Jayme Kilburn
220 E. State Street, Apt 4
Ithaca, NY 14850
805-403-3813
jayme.kilburn@gmail.com
jayme-kilburn.com

Characters:

Margaret: 20s-50s

Matt: Margaret's Fish (*he is always very bored and probably wears goggles*)

Neighbor

Super

Bed Bugs: Margaret's Bed Bugs (*can be played by Neighbor and Super*)

Scene 1:

Margaret is moving boxes into her new apartment. She is upbeat, hopeful, it is a start of something new and exciting. Margaret brings in a box from offstage and plops it down. Maybe she makes an exhausted sigh. She sits down (maybe on the box) and looks around the room. She smiles. She is a planner so she begins to visualize where she wants to put things in the space. Maybe from offstage or maybe from a pile of stuff she grabs a fish bowl and places it on a table. Matt, as fish, is already laying on the table. He looks bored. Maybe he has some green coral stuff around him. Maybe a plastic house. The Bed Bugs are also laying in the apartment. They have sunglasses on. They are laying in the corner...out of site.

Margaret

This is our new home, Matthew. Look around. What do you think? I know, it's small. But that's New York. Right? We'll spend all our time outside anyway. That's what blogs say at least. I know you know I'm a bit of a homebody but that is going to change. Matt, I have a vision of my life. How I want it to be. I want to be someone who has a glass of wine with friends after work. But stops at two because after two I get tipsy. And then I say something like, ooooo I'm so tipsy. But somehow I still stop drinking even though it would be much more satisfying to continue to feel tipsy which will turn into drunk which will turn into me doing something embarrassing and wanting to run away to a small town and quietly collect Golden Girls figurines. That's not the life I'm going to live anymore! From this point on I am a two glasses of wine kind of gal and someone who meets friends for drinks instead of coming home and watching Dateline with a \$7.99 carryout large pizza from Dominos and eats it all by myself because the crust is kind of thin so it's really like a sandwich. I'm not that gal anymore. But don't worry. I am going to get you a fish friend to hang out with since I will be decidedly absent from the apartment. Maybe even an aquarium with special exotic fish. Would you like that? Or would you feel inadequate? It doesn't matter! You are important, Matt. You can swim with exotic fish and still be important. And this apartment will be beautiful. This is so exciting, Matthew! It is all really happening!

A neighbor walks by and peeks in.

Neighbor

I've always wanted to see this place. The last people in here had a family of six. I thought it must've been a real big apartment. But it's pretty small, huh. I wonder where they all slept.

Margaret

I'm Margaret. I just moved in.

Neighbor

Yeah, I know. The boxes tipped me off.

Margaret

Would you like to come in? I'm not going to hurt you. I'm a nice person. I'm starting a new life and I'm now the type of person that offers tea and cookies to neighbors. You can stop in whenever you like and I'll always have cookies prepared. I'm just that kind of a gal.

Neighbor

This is New York. I don't know what you have.

Margaret

I don't have anything. I moved from Minnesota. People in Minnesota don't have sex so we don't have any STDs either. It's really awesomeul. That's a word I made up...it's a mix between awesome and awful. I don't think STDs pass through cookies anyway.

Neighbor

I'm talking about bugs lady. More to the point. Bed bugs. You can't be too careful around here. That's why I always walk around with these booties on (*points to feet*).

Throughout the play there are weird moments. Right now, for example, I think it would be funny if the Kill Bill siren plays. Maybe Margaret notices it and the neighbor doesn't. This is the beginning of her madness...or maybe she is becoming sane and we are the mad ones????!!

Neighbor

What's that? A fish? You know you can't have pets in this place. That's a big violation. You could be kicked out for that.

Margaret

Oh! Please don't tell anyone. It's just a little bitty fish. He doesn't make much of a mess. I think he poops but I don't really see it. I would really hate to have to re-home him.

Neighbor

If it were my fish and someone said I couldn't have him in my apartment I'd move. You're a monster. (*Looking around*) Put down some caulk.

Margaret laughs.

Margaret

You said "caulk" that's funny.

Neighbor

Put down some goddamn caulk around your baseboards. That's where the bugs get in. Be careful, Margaret. (*Menacingly*) Be very careful.

Neighbor leaves.

Margaret

Well, Matthew. He seemed nice. I think. Maybe he was mean. Or maybe he was a tough love sort of guy. A little salty. A little sweet. I can't believe he said "caulk." Do you think he was flirting with me? I don't usually go for the real forward types but this is my new life. If he sends me a penis picture I will know for sure he likes me. If anyone slips a penis picture under the door I'll ask him out. Hold me to that, Matt. Don't let me wimp out.

Matt

Okay Margaret.

Margaret

Okay, Matt. (*Pause*) This is going to be the start of a wonderful new life.

Scene 2:

Margaret is all moved in. She has a sweat band around her head and is doing an exercise video. I recommend a Richard Simmons video. She can be doing the video for as long as you like. When she gets tired she can get herself a towel. She then goes to the fridge and pours herself a tall glass of coca-cola. Matt is throwing a ball in the air, or maybe playing solitaire. Whatever it is, he's bored. The bed bugs might be in a slightly more visible place.

Margaret

That video was really hard.

Matt

No it wasn't. It was easy.

Margaret

No. It was definitely hard. I know you don't understand because you have a natural swimmer's body but some of us have to work on ourselves.

Matt

You shouldn't be drinking coke. You're gonna get diabetes.

Margaret

It has electrolytes. I need to replenish my electrolytes. Gosh. You're cranky today. I've been here for two months and still haven't found a job yet, Matt. New York City folks have such high expectations of what a person should look like. My chubby body and TJ Maxx clothing is not cutting the mustard here. I need to get in shape and find some clothes that are really fashionable

or something. On all those movies about girls who move to the big city they take off their glasses and get nice clothes and everyone likes them. If I get in shape I can buy nice clothes and then I'll find a job and then I'll find a boyfriend who actually likes me and wants to spend time with me and not just some guy I meet on the internet who wants to eat Taco Bell while I silently cry in the corner...like has happened to other girls I know.

Matt

When am I going to get a friend?

Margaret

Soon. I have to get a job first. Besides, I'm not working so you have me all to yourself. Lucky ducky. Lots of people would pay to hang out with me all day. No one in New York it seems but lots of people in other less populated places. But once I have a job I am going to be so busy with my new life it will be very important for you to make new friends. Just to warn you. Because sometimes you don't make friends that easily. You are kind of stand offish. Get it? Off Fish? Nevermind.

Matt

Okay.

Margaret

Let's talk about this later. I think there's a movie coming on on that channel that shows what's on other channels.

Margaret sits down ready to watch the movie. She starts to itch her arm. She pulls up her sleeve and discovers three pronounced red welts. The Kill Bill siren plays.

Margaret

Oh no.

Matt

You got bed bugs, girl.

Scene 3:

Everything in Margaret's apartment is wrapped in plastic. She wears a hazmat suit. Or, a bojangled version of a hazmat suit. She is frazzled and squirting rubbing alcohol everywhere. The bed bugs are in a prominent place.

Matt

Let's go outside today, Margaret. This place is depressing.

Margaret

I know it's depressing, Matthew. I KNOW it's DEPRESSING. I live here too. It's not like I don't live here. And what do you care? You are swimming around. You have a bunch of water in your home. You have a little plastic house to hide in. Nothing has changed for you! Look at my beautiful apartment. It's all going away. My nick nacks and doo dads are covered in plastic. I can't have people over now.

Matt

You don't have any friends, Margaret.

Margaret begins to weep openly. Perhaps very frighteningly.

Margaret

Do you see what's happening here? They are tearing us apart. This is what the bugs want. Do you see? The bites are just a symptom of what is larger. They want to find your weakness. They want to peel it back and expose your inner workings. The thing that makes you tick. The thing that you are afraid of. They won't stop until you and I are at each other's throats. They won't stop until we are both alone. (*Margaret swats at herself thinking there are bugs on her*) That's how cults do it. Wake you up in the middle of the night. Don't let you talk to your family. We can't let them tear us apart, Matthew.

Matt

I'm just saying you need to put things into perspective. The bugs can only take what you are willing to give them.

Margaret

That's good. That's very good. The bugs will only take what I'm willing to give them. The bugs will only take what I'm willing to give them. (*Laughs*) The bugs will only take what I'm willing to give them. Yes, of course. Of course they can only take what I'm willing to give them. So I will just give them everything then. I will just give them everything and then they will go away. Yes. That's very good Matthew.

Margaret takes off the hazmat suit and the plastic from the furniture. She is laughing like a crazy person.

Margaret

Look Matthew. I'm doing it. I will give them everything they want and then they will go away. They will go away and then I will exercise again and I will look pretty and put together like the women I see on the subway who wear heels and walk up the steps even though I am sure that it must hurt them. Maybe they are so petite and strong that it doesn't hurt them. But it hurts me. It hurts me, Matthew. I can't walk up the stairs in heels. I can't even sit in heels. But this time is different. I bought makeup and pants that do that thing where they flair out at the bottom. And a shirt that buttons up that you wear real effortlessly but it looks very classy. And when you look good you feel good. Look good feel good. Look good feel good! My apartment is a reflection of who I am. I am someone who has it together. I am someone who makes coffee in the morning

and puts it in one of those to go cups that you don't throw away. I am someone who goes to the gym at lunch time and I am someone who has two glasses of goddamn wine after work and then says I'm tipsy and goes home. I am someone who knits fucking hats in the winter for her friends and builds birdhouses with her significant other on the weekend after going on a wine tour. I am someone who watches her friend's kids as a trial run because I'm in the planning stages of having kids of my own. But then me and my partner find out kids are a lot to handle and as we hand back the kids with spaghetti on our faces we look at each other and say "maybe we should just get a dog" and then we laugh and laugh and fall into the couch and make love knowing that we are free and young and have perfect motherfucking bodies. I am someone who matches their underwear even though I know no one will see it all day. Yes. That is the type of person I am. *(Margaret grabs Matt and holds him to her face)* Yes, Matt, you are right. They can only take what I am willing to give them. I am a new person now so they can have anything they want.

Matt

Girl, you've gone crazy.

Margaret

You're wrong, Matthew. I finally see everything clearly now. They can only take what I am willing to give them and I am willing to give them everything. I love you Matthew. I love you so very very much but you are holding me back. I have sacrificed everything to make you happy, my love. But it is time I start sacrificing things in order to make me happy. I thank you for making me smile with the funny way you eat your food and the funny way you poop and the funny way you hide in your house when I tap on the tank. I will remember you forever, Matthew. But I have to walk into this new world without any baggage. Here, bed bugs, I give you my most cherished friend.

Margaret sacrifices Matthew in some dramatic fashion. Maybe stabs him? You can be creative.

You have everything now.

Bed Bugs

We want blood, Margaret. We want blood.

Kill Bill siren. Bed Bugs come to Margaret and each take a part of her body and eat. Blood runs down their faces. You can do some fun blood packet stuff here. The gorier the better. Maybe they all make out with each other? It gets weird.

Scene 4:

Margaret is walking around a new apartment. She is wearing heels and looks very put together.

Super

Here are your keys.

Margaret

Great, thank you.

Super

The building is pretty quiet during the day. It's a good time to move your stuff.

Margaret

I don't have any stuff. I'm making a fresh start.

Super

Okay. Well, good for you I guess. The mailboxes can be tricky so you might need to wiggle the lock a bit. If it's a big problem let me know and I can fix it for you.

Margaret

Have you ever had any problems with bugs?

Super

We have an occasional cockroach but this building is pretty clean. We never got hit with the (*whispers*) bed bug epidemic. It gives me the heebie jeebies even saying the word. Anyway, I take care of this place and I expect you to do the same. The tenants here have a lot of pride. They never litter in the lobby and they throw little parties once a month to celebrate how wonderful it is to be alive. Not like beer drinking parties, always very business casual type of parties. Sometimes they have themed parties but we have a petition going around to get rid of those. It's an apartment building for put together people.

Margaret

Thank you. I think I am going to be very happy here.

Super

Personally, you look like you'll fit right in. If you need anything my number's on the fridge. Welcome to your fresh start.

The super leaves. Margaret looks around and sighs with relief. She puts down her purse and takes out a small plastic container. She kneels down and opens the container.

Margaret

This is our new home now, sweeties.

(Bed bugs come from offstage and find a comfortable spot in the space. Maybe in the audience. Maybe Matt is one of them.)

Bed Bugs

Thanks baby, you know we love a fresh start.

End of Play