

Big Ben and the Juice Fast

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Synopsis

A woman living alone, is forced to confront a lifetime of poor dietary choices.

Setting

A small apartment kitchen.

Time

Present day.

Cast of Characters

MEG - 20s to 40s, female, any race, lives alone, doesn't always make the best decisions.

BIG BEN - any age, gender or race because Big Ben is a very hungry cockroach.

A small eat-in kitchen, table with two chairs, a fridge. Darkness.

Meg enters the kitchen, her slippers shuffling against the tile. She bumps into a chair, curses under her breath.

MEG

Who moved this here?

Obviously, Meg moved it there, because she lives alone.

Meg slides the chair out of her way.

Faint sound of insects skittering. She freezes. Listens. Hears nothing. Continues her shuffle to the fridge.

Meg opens the fridge. The glow of the fridge reveals Big Ben, a cockroach, in the middle of the kitchen. Big Ben skitters towards the other end of the room. An insect skittering noise as he does.

Meg turns to look at the now barely lit kitchen. She can't see Big Ben where he is hiding in the shadows.

Meg returns to the fridge, bending inside and rummaging around. The sound of bottles clinking, food moving. She pulls out a box of old chinese food.

MEG

Leftover chinese?

She sniffs it, makes a face.

When did I order that?

She puts it back into the fridge, more shuffling.

(from inside the fridge)

Expired yogurt, no thanks. Ugh, I'm so hungry, why isn't there any food in here?

BIG BEN

Yeah, Meg, that's a good question. Why isn't there any food in there?

Meg stands up suddenly, bumping her head on the fridge. She curses from the pain, comes out of the fridge and slams the door shut.

The room plunges into darkness.

An insect skittering noise is heard.

MEG

Who...who's there?

More insects skittering. The glow of the cell phone in Meg's hand. She's pressing buttons.

I'm calling the police.

She moves towards the kitchen entrance, her slippers shuffling. She flips the light switch.

Lights flood the room, revealing Big Ben now writhing from the pain of the light on one end of the kitchen.

Meg, phone in hand, stands on the other end.

BIG BEN

(in pain from the light)

Ah, the light! The light! Why did you have to do that?

MEG

Cock roach!

Meg throws the phone and leaps onto the chair,
then onto the table.

Meg stands hopping from foot to foot, looking
at Big Ben. She screams.

Big Ben screams.

Meg screams again.

BIG BEN

(hopping from foot to foot like Meg)

Oh my god, why are we screaming?

MEG

Because you're a giant...disgusting...fat...talking cockroach!

BIG BEN

(flattered)

Thank you for calling me fat.

Beat.

Speaking of that...Meg, we need to talk.

MEG

I'm not talking to a cockroach.

BIG BEN

I have a name.

MEG

You do?

BIG BEN

I do.

MEG

(nervously)

What...what is it?

BIG BEN

Big Ben, at your service.

Big Ben does a flourishing cockroach bow.

Voice on Cell: dooo dooo dooo...your call cannot be completed as dialed.

Big Ben and Meg look at the phone on the floor, midway between them both.

Voice on Cell: dooo doo doo... please hang up and dial again.

Big Ben and Meg look at each other, then they both make a scramble.

Meg jumps down to the chair, then down to the floor as Big Ben skitters forward to the phone. He is closer and wins, snatching the phone and skittering back a step.

Meg realizes she's close to him and leaps back up onto the table.

Big Ben hangs up the phone.

BIG BEN

You were really going to call the police?

He pretends to talk into the cell phone, imitating a frightened Meg.

Oh, hello? 911? This is 223 West Chester Ave, Apartment 5a, there's a cockroach here, come help me.

Big Ben is now eye to eye with Meg on the table and closer than she would like.

MEG

Don't come any closer!

BIG BEN

Or else what? You'll throw your slipper at me? Be reasonable, Meg.

MEG

What do you want?

BIG BEN

What do I want?

It isn't what I want, Meg, it's what I need!

What WE need.

Food! We need food, Meg!

You've been starving us for months.

First, it was Weight Watchers and counting those damn points.

Seriously, I know they say eggs don't count, but not when you eat a dozen a day.

If I never see a hard boiled egg again, I would die a happy cockroach.

After that, we tried, what was it? The keto diet?

Don't get me wrong, I will bathe myself in meat and cheese all day.

I have, trust me.

But no carbs ever?

That's not healthy for us, Meg.

Now its juice fasting.

Juice fasting? That isn't a thing!

It's either fasting, or its juice.

I'm drawing the line. I've had enough.

Or in this case, not enough!

I have to maintain this figure, Meg, you think I can do that on juice?

And my children! All two thousand, seven hundred and eleven of them.

I can't come home every morning with fruit pulp and juiced kale.

Don't we deserve better than this, Meg?

Look at us.

Up in the middle of the night, raiding the kitchen for random scraps of food.

Is this who we are?

Is this what we've become?

I'm hungry, Meg.

I mean, really hungry.

The soul crushing kind of hungry.

And I'm a cockroach, I can live for a month without food.

Heck, I can live a week without my head.

But can you, Meg? Can you?

It's never too late to change.

Isn't it time we ate?

Long pause.

MEG

Oh my god, you're right, I'm so hungry!

BIG BEN

There's some mini-eclairs that expired two years ago, buried in the back of the freezer. We deserve this!

MEG

We do!

Meg hops down from the table and throws open the freezer. She starts digging inside. The sounds of boxes and crunching ice.

Big Ben waits impatiently, skittering back and forth as she digs inside.

Finally, Meg finds the box and pulls it out triumphantly, setting it down on the table like it is precious.

Big Ben and Meg stare at the box, then look at each other.

Together, they attack the box, tearing it open, mini eclairs spilling out everywhere. They scabble around, snatching them up and popping them into their mouths.

The sounds of munching and crunching of frozen eclairs.

Finally, content, they sit companionably side by side on the kitchen floor.

MEG

That was so good.

BIG BEN

So good.

MEG

You know, you're right. I do deserve better than this.

BIG BEN

Yes, we do!

MEG

I should be ashamed of the way I've been feeding my body. Dieting. All the time. You know, Ben...

BIG BEN

Big Ben.

MEG

Big Ben, sorry. You know, I think I've been on one diet or another since I was 16 years old. How sad is that?

BIG BEN

So sad.

MEG

Have you seen my bookshelf? How many diet books can one person own?

BIG BEN

Well, at least one hundred and seventeen, by my last count.

MEG

I'm starving all the damn time. And this juice fast, oh my god, it has been my worst idea yet.

BIG BEN

Amen, sister. You have no need to starve yourself, Meg. You are a beautiful, robust woman. Own it.

MEG

Yeah, I am a beautiful, robust woman. And you're right, it isn't too late to start living my truth! I'm done.

BIG BEN

You are?

I am.

MEG

Say it for me.

BIG BEN

I'm done with dieting.

MEG

Again.

BIG BEN

I'm done with dieting.

MEG

Louder!

BIG BEN

I'm done with dieting!

MEG
(standing, shouting to the world)

She's done with dieting!

BIG BEN
(standing, shouting to the world too)

You're done with dieting!

MEG

I'm done with dieting!

BIG BEN

They laugh and shout it a couple more times.
Finally, they stand face to face, holding hands in
the kitchen, smiling at each other.

There you go, Meg. Brava!
I feel we've really turned a corner. We truly have!

Meg nods and moves up to the kitchen sink,
leaning against it and listening as Big Ben talks.

Forget constant dieting and starvation. Forget worrying about calories and points and carbs!

You need to enjoy the good things in life. You are perfect exactly as you are.

Aim to be more like...well...like me! Like a cockroach!

Meg stands up, no longer relaxing against the sink.

Carefree, well fed, fat and sassy.

And don't forget, I live practically forever.

Meg turns her back to the audience, opening up the cabinet beneath the kitchen sink. She is rummaging around as Big Ben continues.

The sound of metal cans clinking.

BIG BEN

I am the poster child of contentment, if cockroaches were put on posters, that is. Well, for something other than pest control. Think they'd put me on a poster, Meg?

Big Ben turns to face Meg as she rises from the sink and turns, a giant can of raid in her hands, pointed right at Big Ben's face.

BIG BEN

Is that...raid? Whoa, Meg, you don't want to do that, do you?

MEG

You're a cockroach.

Big Ben starts backing away. Meg follows.

You're a nasty, dirty, disgusting cockroach.

BIG BEN

But I thought we were friends.

He tries to pull a chair in between them. Meg slides the chair out of the way, not missing a step, the can of raid still aimed at his face.

We ate mini-eclairs together. We live together!

MEG

You. Disgust. Me.

BIG BEN

I thought we had a moment!

Meg considers if they had a moment. She decides they didn't. She sprays him right in the face.

Big Ben screams and tries running away, but there's nowhere to go. He continues screaming as Meg continues spraying.

Big Ben falls down to the floor and Meg stomps on him a few times, then: CRUNCH!

Big Ben is dead.

Meg takes a staggering step back and throws the raid can on the floor.

MEG

Ugh, I hate cockroaches almost as much as I hate dieting.

Meg looks around the kitchen, notices one last mini-eclair still gripped in one of Big Ben's hands. She plucks it from his grip, pops it in her mouth.

The eclair crunches like Big Ben.

She licks her fingers loudly and shuffles out of the room. As she passes the light switch, she flicks it off. The room goes dark.

The sound of skittering.

END OF SCENE.