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IN SEARCH OF... SASQUATCH

[EXCERPT]

a play
by

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CHARACTERS

STANLEY WHITAKER, about 60.

BEVERLY WHITAKER, his wife, about 60.

TODD LARSON, 30s.

CRYSTAL WILLIAMS, 30s to 40s.

STAN, BEVERLY and TODD all speak with upper Midwest accents (i.e., Minnesotan or Wisconsinian). CRYSTAL speaks with no pronounced regional accent. Multicultural casting is encouraged.

SETTING

The living room of Stan and Beverly's home—a small rental house somewhere in the upper Midwest, in an outer-ring suburb, probably not far from the airport. It is decorated for Christmas: a tree with lights, wrapped presents under the tree, some other presents on a table waiting to be wrapped. A comfy chair, a couch and a television. The kitchenette is partially visible offstage. Doors lead outside and to the bedroom. A hallway leads off to the bathroom.

TIME

Shortly before Christmas. Just after sundown until the following dawn.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

(STAN, a man of about 60, sleeps in a comfy chair. From the television, spooky music and ominous narration. A commercial comes on. STAN wakes, picks up remote, changes the channel. A cooking show is heard. He picks up a mug and sips from it. Watches show. Pushes remote: a commercial. Pushes remote: back to the cooking show. He sips from the mug. Watches. Pushes remote: spooky music and ominous narration. STAN sips from the mug, or tries to. Looks into it, annoyed, as if the mug has played a trick on him. He speaks with a Minnesotan or Wisconsin accent.)

STAN

Beverly?

...

Bev?

...

Beverly?

...

(He sets down the remote, sets down the mug, puts a hand on each armrest, starts to push himself up, but grimaces in pain.)

Ah jeez.

(He sinks back into the chair.)

Beverly?

...

Mug's empty.

...

BEV!

...

(He watches TV. His eyes droop. He nods off. He snores.)

(A key in the door. STAN starts awake. The door opens. Behind a couple of grocery bags, BEVERLY enters. She is also about 60, speaks with a Minnesota/ Wisconsin accent.)

BEVERLY

You'll never believe who I run into at the Bunyan Mart.

STAN

Where you been, Beverly? I been calling you.

BEVERLY

I just told you, Stan, the Bunyan Mart. And guess who I run into there.

STAN

Mug's empty.

BEVERLY

What?

STAN

My mug. It's empty.

BEVERLY

So fill it.

STAN

I can't. My sciatica.

BEVERLY

Don't give me your sciatica.

STAN

Every time I try to get up, it's like a hot poker down my leg.

BEVERLY

Fine, then. What were you drinking?

STAN

Two percent.

BEVERLY

How about some diet cherry instead?

STAN

Your diet cherry tastes like goat piss.

BEVERLY

You drink so much milk you're going to turn into a G.D. cow. What's this you're watching?

STAN

In Search Of.

BEVERLY

In search of what?

STAN

Sasquatch.

(BEVERLY goes to the TV and turns it off.)

STAN

Ah, come on.

(STAN turns the TV on with the remote. BEVERLY turns it off by hand. STAN turns it on, BEVERLY turns it off.)

STAN

...

BEVERLY

...

(STAN turns it on, BEVERLY turns it off.)

BEVERLY

You do that again, Stan, I'm going to shove that clicker down your throat.

STAN

I got to watch *something!*

BEVERLY

You want to give me nightmares?

STAN

You don't even believe in Sasquatch.

BEVERLY

It don't matter. That show's going to seep into my brain and he'll be all over my dreams.

(BEVERLY goes to kitchenette, continues unpacking groceries.)

BEVERLY

So guess who I run into at the Bunyan Mart?
Stan? You hear me?
I said guess who I run into at the Bunyan Mart?

...

Joanie Larson. Guess what she told me.

...

BEVERLY (*continued*)

Stan?
Guess what Joanie Larson told me.
Don't you want to know what she—

STAN

Fill my mug, then I'll want to know.

(BEVERLY goes to get STAN's mug, takes it back to the kitchenette, opens refrigerator, takes out milk. STAN turns on the TV.)

BEVERLY

Jeez, Stan, what'd I just say?

STAN

You can't see nothing from in there.

BEVERLY

I can hear it. Mr. Spock's talking about Sasquatch right now.

STAN

So don't listen.

BEVERLY

You want me to dump your two percent down the drain?

(STAN turns off the TV. BEVERLY fills the mug and walks it over to STAN.)

BEVERLY

You hear what Joanie Larson told me, you won't sleep for a month.

STAN

Why I want to hear it then?

BEVERLY

I don't want to be the only one not sleeping.

STAN

Jeez, and my sciatica.

BEVERLY

What's your sciatica got to do with it?

STAN

It's worse I don't get a good night's sleep.

BEVERLY

Stanley Whitaker, you're full of it.

STAN

Is so.

BEVERLY

Full, of, it.

STAN

I got it from sitting all day and then I had to lift that one bag.

BEVERLY

I bet you gave it yourself on purpose so you could live six months off the disability.

STAN

It was a big bag, Beverly.

BEVERLY

And now you in my hair all day and me waiting on you hand and foot. You're living the life a Riley, you are.

STAN

Jeez, lay *off*, would you? If I could work, I would.

BEVERLY

Whoa, Stan, settle down. I was just—

STAN

Giving me the business? It gets *old*, Bev. I was out of work for five years. That was enough sitting at home being useless for one lifetime.

BEVERLY

I'm sorry, Stan. I was just trying to lighten the mood. I never meant anything by it.

STAN

...
So? You going to tell me?

BEVERLY

Tell you what?

STAN

What Joanie Larson told you.

BEVERLY

I thought you didn't want to know. I thought your sciatica.

STAN

You're going to tell me sooner or later. Might as well get it over with.

BEVERLY

Okay, but what I'm going to tell you, you can't tell nobody else.

STAN

Why not?

BEVERLY

It's about...

(quieter)

It's about the government.

STAN

Every time I turn around it's you and the G.D. government.

BEVERLY

You should know. You used to work for them.

STAN

I do too still work for them.

BEVERLY

This what they pay you for, watching Sasquatch all day?

STAN

I'm on leave.

BEVERLY

Maybe you watch long enough you'll see Sasquatch try to sneak a gun on a plane, and you can call it in. You could make up for that one you missed.

STAN

Wasn't me that missed it, and you know it.

BEVERLY

Calm down. I didn't mean you personally. I meant all you guys at James Buchanan International.

STAN

So you going to tell me this story or not?

BEVERLY

Okay, but first you got to swear, you won't tell no one else.

STAN

I swear.

BEVERLY

Say what you're swearing to.

STAN

Cross my heart and hope to die, I won't tell nobody what you're about to tell me. So what the heck was Joanie Larson on about?

BEVERLY

You remember her son Todd?

STAN

Course I do. We used to play airplane, for crying out loud.

BEVERLY

So Todd was out driving in Birchwood Falls to this new job he just got, and—

STAN

What job?

BEVERLY

What?

STAN

What new job he just got?

BEVERLY

It don't matter what job.

STAN

You don't know, do you?

BEVERLY

Sure I know.

STAN

Then why not just tell me?

BEVERLY

It slows down the story.

STAN

You're the one slowing it down, not telling me.

BEVERLY

...

Comptroller. All right? So he was out driving to this new job he just got—

STAN

Comptroller? You kidding me? All that boy's done since high school is sit all day in his mom's basement, a joystick in one hand and a hash pipe in the other. If you don't know what job, just say so.

BEVERLY

...

I don't know what job. You happy? So Todd was driving to his new job—what job I don't know—when all of a sudden he had to take a whiz, *bam*, right that second. So there he is, with all of them new office parks out there, the ones look all alike, you drive by and you don't even notice them 'cause it looks like all they got in there is telemarketers selling french fry baskets or...

(During the above, STAN has turned the TV back on and muted the sound.)

BEVERLY

You want to hear the story, or you want to ogle your boyfriend Sasquatch?

STAN

I turned the sound off.

BEVERLY

What'd I just say?

STAN

Something about french fry baskets.

BEVERLY

So Todd pulls into one of them office parks and goes into the first building he sees. And right away he gets a funny feeling about this place, 'cause the halls are like a maze, and no furniture in any of the offices, and not a soul in sight. That is, until he comes to this door, and through a window in the door he can see a cubicle.

BEVERLY (*continued*)

And in this cubicle are two guys, side by side, each one wearing a headset and his hand on a joystick, and like five screens in front of them. And one of them screens showed a view from the air, like the camera was following this van driving down some road.

And the guy on the left moved his arm, and it was like the camera was diving down, getting closer to that van. And the other guy, the guy on the right, pushed a button, and the whole screen flashed white. When the white faded away there was the van, lying on its side, with smoke billowing out of it. And then this guy climbs out, and he's like brushing himself with his hands, like he's trying to brush the fire off his clothes, you know?

And then Todd heard somebody yell Hey! So he just started booking it and turning corners until he found a door out. He got back in his car and sped off with four or five guys running after him. And then he went home to Joanie and when he was done telling her this story, he said Goodbye, I don't know when I'll see you again. Then he took off, and Joanie ain't seen him since.

(STAN turns off the television.)

Well, that got your attention.

STAN

Where'd you say this was?

BEVERLY

Birchwood Falls.

STAN

Huh.

...

...

BEVERLY

What you thinking there, Stanley?

STAN

It's a big stinking pile of B.S., is what. I mean, think about it. Would someplace running drone attacks on Whatchamcallit-stan really have such crappy security somebody like Todd Larson could just blunder in?

BEVERLY

It's not any worse than the airport. You'll let any idiot with an AK-47 sneak it through in his carry-on.

STAN

How many times I got to tell you, Bev? It wasn't me.

BEVERLY

I know it wasn't you. I just hope they find whatever moron was responsible and can him.

STAN

They probably never will. They don't got no record who was on that lane when the weapon got through.

BEVERLY

How can that be?

STAN

The hard drive failed and they lost all the logs. Pffft. Kaput.

BEVERLY

Well, ain't that convenient.

STAN

Convenient or not, that's what I heard. Anyway, my point was, it's awfully far-fetched somebody like Todd Larson could just blunder in on something like that.

BEVERLY

You think the far-fetched part is Todd walking in on them and not the fact somebody's running drone attacks out of some office park in Birchwood Falls?

(STAN shrugs.)

BEVERLY

You *know* something. You know something you're not telling. I never said nothing about no drone attacks, but you knew right away that's what it was.

STAN

Ain't it obvious?

BEVERLY

Not to me. I had to have Joanie explain it to me, since I'm just a nurse in the ER. But you work for the Airport Security and Safety Agency, which is part of the Homeland Protection Authority, and I bet *they* know exactly where every drone joint in the country is.

STAN

I screen *bags*, Beverly. That kind of thing's way above my pay grade.

BEVERLY

I tell you they're running drones practically out of our backyard, and you don't even bat an eye.

STAN

That's 'cause the whole thing's a big load of B.S. Which is a good thing, 'cause if I really believed what you just told me, I'd be in one hell of a position.

BEVERLY

Why? 'Cause you used to work for ASSA?

STAN

Number one, it's A.S.S.A., not "ass-ah." Number two, I'm on medical leave, so I do too still work for them.

BEVERLY

Oh, right. You're keeping an eye out in case the Loch Ness Monster's got an underwear bomb.

STAN

I'm just saying, I believed a single word of what you just told me, I'd be duty bound to report it.

BEVERLY

You would not.

STAN

I swore an oath, Bev. I'd have to, I didn't know the whole thing's a load of B.S.

BEVERLY

This is Todd Larson we're talking about. You used to sneak him near beers on the Fourth of July when he was twelve years old. He stayed in our house for two weeks after his dad died. He called you Uncle Stan 'til he was a junior in high school.

STAN

Jeez, Bev, calm down. I just told you, far as I'm concerned it's all baloney, so there ain't nothing to tell anyway. So where is he now?

BEVERLY

Nobody knows. His phone goes straight to voice mail. Joanie thinks he turned it off so they can't track it. If he's smart, he would've chucked it by now. 'Cause a the video.

STAN

What video?

BEVERLY

When he saw what was going on, he whipped out his phone and videoed the whole thing. Joanie said he said he wanted to prove to himself later he wasn't just having a flashback from all the acid he done when he was younger. She said it was kind of hard to make out on that tiny screen, but once Todd told her what was going on she could see it clear as day. You still think it's B.S. now?

STAN

...

BEVERLY

I *got* you, Stan.

STAN

He could've faked that video. Or he could've just downloaded it from the Internet. You know, I bet that's what he did. He downloaded it, said it was his, and made up a whole story to go with it.

BEVERLY

What for?

STAN

For fun. Just like he did when he was a kid, remember? He'd always go around telling everyone about some story he said he just read in the Star-Herald or saw on Geraldo. He'd spin it out for ten minutes, and every question you asked he'd have an answer for, and he just looked so dang earnest that even though you knew it was just a load of horse doo, you'd half believe it anyway.

BEVERLY

I'd forgot about them stories. Remember the one about the tractor runs on lemonade?

STAN

Or the one about the weatherman and the dwarf?

BEVERLY

Or the priest joined the bullfrog and the reindeer in marriage? Wait. That one was true.

STAN

It didn't come true 'til three years later.

BEVERLY

But it *did* come true.

STAN

But when he told it, it was complete B.S. Just like every other one of his stories.

BEVERLY

And poor Joanie'd fall for it every time, hook, line, and lure.

STAN

And now she's fallen for it again. Mark my words, three days from now he's going to turn up again, and they'll both have a good laugh.

BEVERLY

You're probably right.

STAN

You look like I just told you there ain't no Santa Claus.

BEVERLY

It was kind of exciting, thinking maybe it was true.

STAN

Can I go back to my show now?

BEVERLY

You don't want to miss it if the Abominable Snowman's got a box cutter in his shoe.

(STAN turns on the TV. Closing credits.)

STAN

Ah jeez, you made me miss the end.

(The phone rings. BEVERLY answers.)

BEVERLY

Hello? Hey, there, Barry. Oh, you know, hanging in there. Yeah, he's right here.

(to STAN)

It's Barry. From the airport.

STAN

I know where Barry's from. The heck is he calling for?

BEVERLY

Dunno. You want to talk to him?

STAN

Yeah, sure, why not?

(BEVERLY holds the phone out towards STAN, but does not move toward him.)

STAN

You going to bring me that phone or what?

BEVERLY

'Cause why? Your sciatica?

STAN

It's like a hot poker, Bev. You going to bring me that phone, or you going to make Barry wait all night?

(BEVERLY crosses, gives phone to STAN.)

STAN

You were the one had sciatica, I'd've brung you the phone right away.

BEVERLY

You're *welcome*, Stan.

(BEVERLY returns to the kitchenette and continues to put away groceries.)

STAN

Hey, Barry, what's up?

Really? What?

Come again?

You're kidding. How the heck they do that?

(Alarmed, STAN looks around to see where BEVERLY is. He sees she is still in the kitchenette. He lowers his voice for the rest of the call.)

You said it was a done deal. You said that drive was wiped clean and without them logs the investigation would blow over and I could go back to work. What kind of IT guy are you, you can't even delete a file so it stays gone?

This is my dang *job* we're talking about here. You know what, Bare? I want them hockey tickets back. You told me it was a done deal, but now it's not, so you owe me them tickets back.

That's right, the whole dang season. And another thing, if I'm going down, there ain't no way I'm going down alone.

Barry? Bare? Bare. Bare. Bare. Stop crying, okay? Pull yourself together. I didn't mean it. Let's hug it out, okay? I'm hugging you right now, through the phone. All better?

Now, how long you think we got before they reconstruct them logs?

STAN (*continued*)

Okay, Bare, here's the deal. Between now and start of business tomorrow, you and me are going to put on our thinking caps, turn them up as high as they'll go, and come up with a way out of this.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, it's going to be all right. And you know what? You come up with something, you can keep them tickets.

That's right, the whole season. You'll've earned them. Talk to you soon.

(STAN lowers the phone and stares into space. The phone emits an off-hook warning. BEVERLY comes into the living room, takes the phone from STAN, and hangs it up.)

BEVERLY

You all right, Stan? You look like you just seen your own ghost.

STAN

I'm fine.

BEVERLY

What'd Barry want?

STAN

He, uh... Work stuff.

BEVERLY

You were talking awful quiet.

STAN

It was classified.

BEVERLY

...

STAN

I'm telling you, it was *classified*.

BEVERLY

Whatever you say.

(BEVERLY starts to head back to the kitchenette.)