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I Saw the Sasquatch

A large silhouetted figure descended from the ridge where the McBride fire was still raging. He was maybe two hundred yards away. I prepared to shout at him, to ask if he was okay.

A handful of geese shrieked and flew overhead. The strange man looked up at them, and I saw the light hit his face and illuminate it for the first time. That's when I saw who he was. What he was.

"Sasquatch."

I said this under my breath. My arm was still at my head, about to extend. I pulled it down and hid myself behind a rock.

Sasquatch. I *think* Sasquatch. It *seemed* Sasquatch. I wasn't sure Sasquatch. What else could it be? Lost, confused, naked basketball player? Amnesiac linebacker, hit on the head, survived a plane crash?

I peeked over the rock.

No, definitely Sasquatch. Big Sasquatch. A prime, healthy, iconic iteration of the Sasquatch. Was Sasquatch a species, or an individual? I couldn't remember. I hadn't listened enough, read enough, anytime the issue came up. What a waste of time, that I couldn't find fifteen minutes to read the Wikipedia of the Sasquatch. Though I'm sure that page would be written by condescending skeptics. "This mythical beast," it would say. "This debunked hoax." "This legend, this hallucination, this creature that is *not*."

Oh but he is.

I pulled out my phone to get my camera ready. It was a tragedy that my real camera was broken, though now seeing the whole arc of this encounter, I could see how this was probably how it went with Sasquatches. Cameras break mysteriously just before he appears, almost like he has sent out an energy field ahead of him that cracks lenses. A great silencing of the means of recording so he can walk in peace.

I looked over the rock and Sasquatch was now a hundred yards from me. Definitely not a sir. Definitely a Sasquatch. My hand was shaking as I took out my phone and swiped the screen to open. It stayed black. I remembered that you don't swipe the screen to open it, you press the button on the side. How had I forgotten how it worked?

I pressed the button. It asked me for my PIN code. 438916. My old street address as a kid plus Joe Montana's number. I entered the digits and somehow got one wrong. The phone rejected it by shaking, like a dog refusing his medicine.

No. This is the code, Phone. I would fight against the invisible force the Sasquatch sent out. I would will it to not be so. 4389, the house on Sandalwood Way, the beige, unassuming house with a young maple in the front yard that was probably not so small anymore. 16. Joe Montana to Jerry Rice for the touchdown. Joe Montana to Dwight Clark in the back of the end zone.

The phone awoke from its slumber and let me in. I clicked on the camera icon. A message popped up:

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"Camera would like to access your location – Allow – Don't Allow"

Yes, yes, allow, fuck it, tell the world where I am. It'll be important if/when Mr. Sasquatch claws out my stomach and I am left bowel-less in the valley next to Pine Ridge. Tell the people at Google or Apple where I am.

Another message:

"Camera would like to access your microphone – Allow – Don't Allow"

Why does a camera need a microphone? Yes, okay, Allow, allow, maybe I should be taking video after all, maybe Sasquatch will give an interview on record. They found Deep Throat after all, didn't they?

I peered over the rock. Fifty yards until Sasquatch would be on top of me. He walked with such a purpose, like he was late for a meeting at Loch Ness.

Okay, Phone, seriously, let's get this camera up and–

"Your battery is at ten percent. Please consider charging soon."

Yes, I will consider that. I will make a note of that. I will plug it in and keep it plugged in. I will fill it up past a hundred percent, just let's move on and–

"There is a new version of OS. Update now?"

Jesus no, we do not need to fix bugs at a time like this. Just let me, just let me–

"ALERT – WILDFIRES IN YOUR AREA – PROCEED WITH CAUTION"

Yes, yes, caution. I will proceed with caution. Can I get through–

"You are below ten thousand steps today. Walk more?"

I'll walk more. I'll be such a good walker.

He was twenty yards away now. I could throw a football to him, like Montana to Rice. Like Montana to Clark. Back of the end zone. Can Sasquatch catch? Or should he just be a blocker?

"You have new podcasts to download. Is now a good time?"

Yes, let's download them now, this is a great time to load up on podcasts for that future possible moment of boredom. What even is boredom?

I held the phone up to my face and tried to focus the camera on the Man, the Half-Man, the Fallen man, the Lost Man. Who was more a man than this man? Not me. I hadn't even walked ten thousand steps that day. To be honest, I didn't walk ten thousand steps most days. I would in the future. I would. I would walk with a purpose, like Sasquatch.

Seven yards away now. I could almost lateral a football to him. Montana to Roger Craig. He looked late and worried, like he was leaving a home he would never return to. He looked upset and encumbered. I wondered what he would do when he noticed me, but now I almost figured he would just turn to me and say, "Oh. You." Not like he would know me personally, but that he would know my *type*. Like, he would think we

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were all just the same person, the way we think Sasquatch is just one individual. It didn't matter how many of us there were, we were all ugly and smelled horrible and we crinkled plastic and destroyed the world around us. What was the use in getting to know any one of us when we all had the same habits and agenda?

Two yards away. I could step up and avoid the pass rush and hand the football to the Sasquatch. We would win the game and celebrate and I'd start to lift him up on my shoulders and then look at him and laugh and say, "No, I go on *your* shoulders." And we would laugh. Maybe we could be friends. Would he like to draw pictures together? Is that how we could bond?

My camera was ready. I held it up to take in the image of the Sasquatch. The camera was trying to focus, and kept going in and out of blurriness, like it was saying, "Wait, *what?* What is this? This isn't a baby or a brunch. *What?*"

And then the camera did focus. It became crisp and clear. The Sasquatch had slowed his walk to look at a tree, and the little box on the camera had determined what was face and what wasn't, had accepted that this wasn't human but still deserved the dignity of portrait mode, blur the background, get more brightness on the features, shade the edges.

He stopped next to me, still didn't see me. Though, couldn't he smell me? Wouldn't he have a great sense of smell? Had the smoke dulled that?

The fire was still on the mountain, but it didn't seem as menacing as before. Not because it had gotten smaller. Now it looked to me like just another living thing wanting to survive. I could see that the fire had children, and a home, and that its life was even more fleeting than mine.

The Sasquatch looked at a little bird in a tree, a warbler or something, giving a tiny sharp *Twee-Deee* into the smoky air.

My camera was ready. Access was allowed. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't take his picture. All the people who would not believe me ever after, who would thrash their teeth and say, "Why? Why wouldn't you take his picture? If you really saw him, why not?"

I know they would never understand, but it didn't matter. They *were* all the same person. Everyone I ever met was. Except for this creature. I suddenly didn't care about impressing any of them. It didn't matter.

I turned off my phone and put it away.

"Are you sure? Are you sure?"

Yes, I'm sure. I've never been more sure of anything.

The Sasquatch put out a force, yes. It wasn't like what anyone said it would be. It wasn't aggressive or demanding. It was, if I had to compare it to anything, like Montana to Clark in the back of the end zone. It cut through time. It disarmed me.

If I said any more than that, you certainly wouldn't believe me.