

RADIO PLAY

by Karinne Keithley
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PERSONS

SASQUATCH *sasquatch or wild man (ses-quac)*

TRACY *an eagle scout named Tracy*

FIONA *a scout and junior ethnomusicologist*

PLACE

A ranger station in the forests of British Columbia, equipped with shortwave radio equipment.

[Heard before anything else are several snippets of on-air broadcast of sasquatch, singing an improvised song like strands of old AM radio standards are poking out from what is otherwise an atonal, unmappable howl.

Then Tracy is heard talking into a hand held tape recorder about her approach to the ranger cabin, logging the date, location, and status of progress toward badge.]

TRACY

This log serves as a document for tracking and wilderness badges

Fifteen hundred hours.

Four-nine.

We've been traveling now for two and a half days.

We're approaching Haban arm from the east; from there we plan to skirt the coast of the Newman Peninsula until we reach Red Bluff Park.

Oh one hundred hours.

Four-ten.

Some signal ambiguity in our GPS equipment; we have decided to use the old maps.

Currently due south of Mac Donald Sterret.

Thirteen hundred hours.

Four-eleven.

We have had to take a diversion around Telkwa lake due to a fallen bridge. This will take us past Bear Island from where we'll follow Broughton Creek to the area of the station.

Nineteen hundred hours.

Four eleven.

Approaching the station from the south west.

We expect only a few more travel hours before reaching our destination.

[After that, the sound, almost like a theme song from some old relatively serious PBS interview show, a local network one.]

[The interview should be recorded live by Fiona]

TRACY

What is it like?

SASQUATCH

It's a tone, like anything else.

TRACY

Do you feel like you're in control?

SASQUATCH

Hmm.

TRACY

Or do you feel like that place of observation, that tunnel, is just a means of moving through a large amount of matter? And there's nothing to be seen in there but your own guidelines?

SASQUATCH

A lot of things are hard to stop doing.
The power is what recedes.
And you just have to pronounce dead all your other feelings.

[TRACY writes some notes for a while.]

FIONA

Um, I think you should take a listen.

[FIONA tunes in some interrupted, coded sound on the radio]

TRACY

Listen. Have you thought about hair?

SASQUATCH

Bodyhair? Yes.

TRACY

Have you thought about transgressions? I mean in terms of hair. In terms of grooming.

SASQUATCH

It's too much.

TRACY

I've thought about, like, what comes from wanting to have something over and over. The shift is-- meager. Very underwhelming. Yet you can't go back.

SASQUATCH

Yeah. And I think, save it. But save it for what?

TRACY

Look. Whatever you need to do. Cut it all up, destroy it, parse it, do whatever you need to. Make it sound real. Okay? You need to make it terrifying.

SASQUATCH

I've sprawled out on rocks, I've eaten. I've appeared. I appeared and I stank. I stank. And there I'd be, appearing and stinking and thinking how wonderfully I stank. But then I'd start thinking about stinking.

TRACY

I don't want to leave you. Okay? I don't think I want to leave you.

FIONA

What are you talking about?

SASQUATCH

Thinking about stinking. Sort of philosophizing. "A stink is the trace that does not dwell." I'd repeat it, as a motto.

TRACY

And that was?

SASQUATCH

The beginning of the problem

TRACY

Okay, sure. I can see that.

SASQUATCH

Fiona.

FIONA

Yes?

SASQUATCH

Are you all set up?

FIONA

Yeah. So Tracy you can go ahead with the questions.

TRACY

Okay.

Have you ever been a habitual drunkard?

Are you attached to any other beings in particular?

Define North America.

What did you look like when you were born?
Have you ever thought about wearing a costume?
Have you ever practiced sympathetic magic?
Syncretic magic?
What is superstition?
What is the constitution?
If you were, um, say you were at a fancy party in heaven, what do you see coming round on the tray of hors d'oeurves?
Do you have a way of keeping track of time?
Do you think that time needs to be kept track of?
Why do you forget the names of people you know?
Is it because you refuse to remember or because you can't record?
How is it that you can stand to stay in one room all of a sudden?
Will you stay here, do you think?
Are you interested in owning your own home?
How many times a day do you check the news?
Are you concerned at all about the fact that you, uh, you know, killed, the ranger?
Do you ever envision yourself doing something heroic?
Doing something smart? Solving a problem of enormous complexity?
How long does it take to cultivate a stank?
Did you ever meet anyone that really understood you?
If yes, then who, and where, and what came of it?
Is there an order or an operation that you follow?
That you want to follow?
What is the difference between compulsion and self-image?
Do you ever make choices based the geographic distribution of appearances?
Do you consider the time of day of appearance? In relation to light?
Are light and appearance related or rather, is a sighting the same category as say the unconfirmed sensation that you are in the house?
Do you read the reports of sightings?
If yes, do you enjoy reading the reports of sightings?
Do you like killing things or do you just get frustrated?
Do you consider consistency a virtue or is it something to be avoided?
Do you want to travel to other places in the world?
In particular do you have any interest in the Himalayas?
Have you ever experienced a sensation of hopelessness?
Do you have anything that you practice daily?
What is your favorite sound?
Do you believe things now that you didn't believe before?
Have you ever loved anyone? Or considered that you might get loved?
What do you think about this question of categorization?
Have you ever witnessed anyone try to hoax a sasquatch appearance?
How many things is it possible to love at one time? People? Places?
Is it possible to experience euphoria if you're totally alone?
Have you ever felt euphoric in the company of someone else?
Are you glad that Fiona and I found you?
Is there any relief for you in staying in one place?
What's your opinion on the intrusion of, um, technology, into the wilderness?
Can you go for any significant amount of time without howling?
Is speech a critical part of thinking? Do you ever talk to yourself?
How did you learn English?
Do you know other languages too?
What's your opinion of French Canadians?
Do you remember what you did yesterday?
Are you aware of your own thoughts?
If you change the way you think about yourself, can you still be Sasquatch?

Do you think you'll want to listen to this recording years from now?
If someone tries to capture you, will you resist them?
Kill them?
Go with them?
Does anything unnerve you? Do you have nightmares?
Are you considering a new, um, career, or whatever?
If you are going to die some day, is there another sasquatch you can couple with? I mean, are you interested in being a progenitor?
What would you wish for your children, if you had them?

[SASQUATCH thinks for a long time.]

SASQUATCH

I can't say.

TRACY

Okay.

[A very long awkward pause. Sasquatch howls. Or something does. It's hard to tell. The howl is a very low back of the throat type thing.]

TRACY

Do you have normal memories? I mean, are you able to remember things or is your knowledge like, um, action based?

SASQUATCH

"Have you ever been a habitual drunkard?"

TRACY

How about advice. Do you have any advice?

SASQUATCH

Don't build houses.

SASQUATCH

Tracy.

TRACY

Yes?

SASQUATCH

You should destroy this recording. It'll be too late, but destroy it anyway.

TRACY

Um, okay.

[Radio noise; they listen for a while. The sound they are tuning in is complex, it seems like it should mean something. Like a signal.]

SASQUATCH

What is this?

FIONA

What you hear there is an anthem. It's slowed down, probably an old recording replayed on the wrong speed. I can't quite place the country. Perhaps one of those semi-autonomous provinces of Russia? Ingushetia? Somewhere like that. The words are wrong, they're faked. The noises in the background are helicopters. Those are probably real, but there's no way to know for sure.

It's put together in a pretty cunning way. Does it have a message? It is composed by a rule of messages? It's possible that the process of construction is actually based on embedded messages that are never actually meant to be deciphered. It could be undecipherable or rather anti-decipherable. And if so the messages are left there just to provide a, worldly, I guess, texture.

It sounds like there are field recordings layered into it to make it sound real.

It could also be a fake message. Is it a hoax? Who is the intended recipient? And what happens if they interpret the phony message? These are the things you have to ask yourself.

TRACY

(Fiona's working on her cryptography badge.)

FIONA

If it's a cut up of an anthem then we have to ask ourselves, is this some kind of coded communication between, like, freedom fighters? We have to ask yourself, will I be endangered if I happen to crack it?

That sound there is authentic. It's actually a recording glitch. A tube problem. Okay. That voice is made to sound as if it's a loop of tape, but it isn't. If you listen very carefully, you can hear lots of unrepeatable variegations.

[on the radio a voice:

*"and believe in the outcome.
and believe in the outcome.
it is very bad
we live and hope for
will all be a reality
and believe in the outcome
before these things happen
it is very bad"*

but the signal gets lost]

TRACY

A woman named Midori Sato went to look at Roppongi Hills, this crazy luxury high rise compact city in Tokyo. A journalist asked her what she thought about it and she told him, "I would like to die in an apartment on the top floor."

TRACY

What is it about dwelling that changes you categorically?

SASQUATCH

It's simple: do you gather things to you or do you pass through.

TRACY

So appearing in say, someone's garage, even if you hang out for a long time or come back over and over-- that's different from dwelling there.

SASQUATCH

Or here. Can I play a song?

[He plays Beatles' "Come Together"]

TRACY

How long have you been here?
In this station I mean.

SASQUATCH

157 days.

TRACY

You kept a tally?

SASQUATCH

I've been keeping a diary.

TRACY

Oh. You can write?

SASQUATCH

Yes, I can write.

TRACY

So you're a pretty quick study then. Because I assume you wouldn't have written before, I mean, I wouldn't think you would have written anything down before you came inside.

SASQUATCH

Showing up, whether in a place or a body of knowledge, is the same thing. So really it's not study, in the sense of accruing something bit by bit, but simply the permission you give yourself to show up there.

It's not hard for me, it's not as if I'm emerging from some primordial ooze you know. The division between wild and not wild is not, what- historical.

TRACY

Sure, I mean I wasn't saying

SASQUATCH

It's a question of permission. Do I give myself permission to make the distinction in the first place, and cross it in the second.

Can I read you something from Marcus Aurelius?

TRACY

Okay.

SASQUATCH

"Be not disgusted, nor discouraged, nor dissatisfied, if thou dost not succeed in doing everything according to the right principles; but when thou hast failed, return back again, and be content if the greater part of what thou doest is consistent with man's nature, and love this to which thou returnest; and do not return to philosophy as if she were a master, but act like those who have sore eyes and apply a bit of sponge and egg, or as another applies a plaster, or drenching with water... And remember that philosophy only requires the things which thy nature requires; but thou wouldst have something else which is not according to nature. It may be objected."

TRACY

Can I see that?

[reading]

"I am composed of the formal and the material, and neither of them will perish into non-existence, as neither of them came into existence out of non-existence. Every part of me then will be reduced by change into some part of the universe, and that again will change into another part of the universe, and so on forever. And by consequence of such a change, I too exist..."

TRACY AND SASQUATCH (who quotes from memory)

"For nothing hinders us from saying so, even if the universe is administered according to definite periods [of revolution]."

TRACY

What do you care about? Do you experience care? Did you before?

SASQUATCH

Not as a phenomenon, not named, no.

TRACY

Tell me why you want to stop being wild

SASQUATCH

I don't.

TRACY

Do you see yourself in many places at once?

SASQUATCH

Well I used to be in many places at once, but in order to do that, you can't- I didn't see myself. Seeing yourself is...

TRACY

What you're doing now.

SASQUATCH

Do you mind if I sleep for a while? I need to sleep.

[He sleeps.]

TRACY

When you're out on an, um, appearance, what do you see? I mean, what do you tune into?

SASQUATCH

Joints. Wire. Vehicles. People doing the wrong thing. I see weakness. openings. I don't like it. I don't like to see it. But it's useful.

TRACY

Do you plan attacks?

SASQUATCH

For example, I think a lot about plants, and the way they can sense you coming. But is sensation the same thing as knowing?

TRACY

I don't know

SASQUATCH

I'm confused about this.

TRACY

Have you spent significant amounts of time underground?

SASQUATCH

Have you?

TRACY

Yes. Sure.

SASQUATCH

Do you like it? Being underground.

TRACY

It feels productive.

Do you think about productivity?

SASQUATCH

No.

TRACY

But you are considering recording yourself. You think about recording.

SASQUATCH

Yes. And fraud. I spend a lot of time thinking about fraud.

TRACY

You think about fraud.

SASQUATCH

Fraud.

SASQUATCH

Terror is a kind of joining without social contract. You try to make it personal. Terror isn't personal. It can't be. It's not a relationship. It's more like a completely non-contractual intrusion into deeply personal space. Incredibly close but alien. It's staggering. It's really stunning. A complete withdrawal, complete disappearance, is possible, but only for a wild man. And if it leaves a residue of fear, that's only a function of a kind of compensation. Like trying to recontextualize the experience onto the plane of all the everyday social experiences.

Things are beautiful when they appear. The transgression of wildness has to do with trying to stay on, staying even for a moment. This is the cause of violence. That's the only way to extract yourself from that situation of dwelling, lingering. Yet lingering becomes unavoidable. But amazing. Tender. But the most holy experiences, and maybe you're too young to have had any, but I won't underestimate you Tracy, but the most holy experiences are... They come all the way up to you. All the way. But without obligation. Without a trace. And the desire to retain them is a perversion. It's a debasement of everything that it is in the first place.

TRACY

Is this to me? Or are you talking about yourself?

[Radio noise, a snippet of an antiquated radio drama: a woman speaks in the voice of old, articulate America:

"I'm just an ordinary woman. But something terrible happened. I fell in love. I didn't know that such a violent thing could happen to such an ordinary woman"...

Switch the signal, coded noises, then a bit of Tchaikovsky, the grand duet from the Nutcracker with it's lovely, simple, descending line.]

TRACY

Do people you scare ever scare you back? Is that, is that tender? A tender feeling? When you know they know you're in the house?

SASQUATCH

It's like coming up on a plant. It's the same way the plant feels.

TRACY

What, stuck?

SASQUATCH

Plant level knowledge. It coheres.

TRACY

Do you believe that knowledge comes in levels?

SASQUATCH

Obviously knowledge comes in levels.

TRACY

And where is plant level?

SASQUATCH

Very, very high.

SASQUATCH

These people who are coming. Are they intelligent?

TRACY

Is that something you're worried about? Yes. Is that okay? Yes, they're pretty smart.

SASQUATCH

Okay.

[FIONA changes the station. music:

Dylan: "Fare thee well my own true love"

They listen for a while.]

TRACY

Why do you want to be known?

SASQUATCH

Do I?

TRACY

Isn't that why you're doing this interview?

SASQUATCH

Oh. I don't know.

TRACY

So you've been in this station for 157 days. Is there anything that you miss? Something out there?

SASQUATCH

Well, yes: garages. I really like to be in a garage. When the little girl of the family comes out to let the dog out to the run and she's forcing herself to believe that you're not there. I really miss watching little girls try to will fear away. They manage to do what they need to, you know, let the dog out, but they never stop knowing that you're there. That is a tender feeling, I guess.

TRACY

Do you consider yourself an impossibility?

SASQUATCH

I think everyone considers themselves impossible.

TRACY

Does it bother you that most people think you're impossible?

TRACY

Is there anything you want to ask them? Or any kind of, um, public statement that you want to make?

SASQUATCH

Not that I can think of offhand. What made you want to record this?

TRACY

Well, for my radio badge for one.

How did you set all of this equipment up anyway?

SASQUATCH

Oh. There was a manual. It was already operational. I just read the manual to learn how to send the signal.

TRACY

Anyway, can I read you something?

SASQUATCH

From Marcus Aurelius?

TRACY

No, from a Bigfoot website.

SASQUATCH

Okay.

TRACY

"There is no way someone would walk around in a fur looking coat in the middle of hunting season, and in the middle of nowhere, just to pull a prank."

"I was long range glassing for game. The other side of the Eel River was about 500 yards. Too far to shoot but you could spot game well. Interspersed brush and large wild grass meadows. I could see a total of a mile of distance from east to west. A great vantage point I used often. I had been seeing lots of movement. Birds, some deer, and a herd of 15 cattle or so. They were virtually all the copper color of Herefords. As I glassed the brush around them. (Pigs will sometimes hang around cattle.) I watched what I first thought was a huge boar sitting up under some Manzanita and Doug Fir. Once in a while it would move a little which is how I first saw it. It was at the top of the meadow about 50 yards above the closest cows--a cow and young calf. I looked at some other areas and when I looked back it was gone. I thought it had moved farther up under the brush but when I dropped the binoculars I could see what looked like a man walking down at an angle to the cattle. I remember wondering what anyone would be doing over there without a gun, not wearing a hat, and wearing a heavy coat?"

The meadow rose up to a finger ridge, with a steep feeder creek on the other side. I had been over there and knew that the gully ran up and over the first line of hills by the river. I put the glasses on him for 30 seconds or so before he went over the top. He was at least 6 feet tall compared to the cattle which I figured were 4 feet tall at the shoulders. He was walking bent forward. In no apparent hurry, and never looked at the cattle that I saw. He was greyish in brighter light and solid black when in shade. After he went out of sight I began to think I had seen something odd. That place at that time I knew our group were the only ones with hunting rights in the area. Also, I could never see a face. Even from the side. It was like he had on a hat to shade his face but I know he did not have a hat on. I was 16 at the time and not aware of anything like a bigfoot. My Grandfather, who I was with at the time hadn't either. He thought it must have been an Indian on the res checking the cattle. But I know that cattlemen use horses in that country, always have. It wasn't long after this sighting that I saw the Patterson film. I have spent much of my life in the woods, know every animal, bug, and most of the plants. I track and stalk game all the time. I have seen lots of bear and cougar, and of course wild pig. I even saw three beautiful bright white deer not far from there. I found out later they had been planted."

SASQUATCH

Secret identity is an emblem.
We bury these things but they tend to flower.
They flower in the wrong sphere.

TRACY

Are you energized?

SASQUATCH

What?

TRACY

Are you energized. Does being in here energize you?

SASQUATCH

What?

TRACY

Are you pumped up?

SASQUATCH

Yes, I guess. Yes, I think I am.

TRACY

And what I'm getting at is, is that dangerous?
I mean for me and Fiona? Is this dangerous?

SASQUATCH

Oh, well I couldn't tell you. I mean,

TRACY

You don't plan

SASQUATCH

Planning is a terrible way to go about the things that matter most to you, Tracy.

TRACY

Are you giving me advice?

SASQUATCH

Whatever might happen, you shouldn't worry about it right now.

TRACY

The whole thing could turn?

SASQUATCH

It does.

TRACY

It could turn quickly

SASQUATCH

It has, but, don't think about it right now, okay?

TRACY

What about transference?

SASQUATCH

I can tell you this: look for the bullets.

TRACY

I don't follow.

SASQUATCH

This is a secret: did you know that a very bad man had to undergo a total soul transfusion? I know because they needed my, er, this bird I know, they needed her powerful beak to make the hole. The hole for the soul.

TRACY

What?

SASQUATCH

But you rarely notice.

There are birds everywhere, but you rarely notice, do you? And people change, you know. They change a lot. But you rarely think about the birds, do you?

TRACY

What?

SASQUATCH

Other worlds are possible.
Live with the living.

TRACY

Are you giving me advice?

SASQUATCH

A comet won't shoot through the home of a woodsmouse.
Comets do shoot through the homes of woodsmen.
Between you and me. Between us. Antiquity is not worth it.

TRACY

What?

SASQUATCH

The worth of words is nil
This hand is worth nothing
This is because why? Because you arranged some flowers on a table
and behind a window hoped that nothing bad would transpire?
The gap will be irreparable.
Have you thought about holes?
About bad holes?
Not wormholes or transfer points
Not about little pits for roasting animals or catching thieves
but real holes?
We do not observe ourselves.
We can only imagine.

TRACY

what?

SASQUATCH

Tedium is audible
Other worlds are possible.
Super natural is better nature.

TRACY

Okay. I think I understand.

SASQUATCH

I want to play something.

[He plays "Come Together" again]

TRACY

Do you know much about Canada?

Do you want to read from your diary?

SASQUATCH

Yes. Okay. *[flips for a while]* I'll read Day 38. "Something wild is captured on film- it's no longer wild?
Recording automatically makes the wildman into a fraud. Not because it might be a hoax, but because

recording actually makes wildness fraudulent. Categorically. Because to record is to capture and to be captured is to be inside and to be inside is to dwell. Which is to be human which is categorically *not* wild.

TRACY

Wow. Thanks.

What kind of music do you like?

Do you like dancing?

[hint of a howl]

What's your opinion on electricity?

SASQUATCH

Did you say that you recorded me when I was singing on the radio?

TRACY

Do you like reggae music? I like reggae music.

What do you think is the worst feeling in the world?

Do you have parents?

Do you consider yourself related to beasts that have, you know, scientific names?

Do you want a scientific name?

SASQUATCH

Answer my question.

TRACY

If you could choose a scientific name, what would it be?

Would you group yourself with homo sapiens?

SASQUATCH

Answer my question.

TRACY

Yes. Yes, I taped it.

Well I didn't tape it, Fiona did. She's studying to be an ethnomusicologist. And I was working on my radio badge and my tracking badge and so. We both make tapes.

SASQUATCH

Play it.

TRACY

What?

SASQUATCH

Play me a tape.

FIONA

Play number 24, the B side.

TRACY

Yeah, okay. yeah, that's a good one.

[some fumbling]

TRACY

Okay, for anyone listening out there, this is a recording by Fiona Reiver and Tracy Tullside made on April 13th, the first known recording, and the last authentic one, of the bonafide Sasquatch.

[howling version of Beatle's "Golden Slumber"]

[howling increases in volume]

[After the song ends, there is empty air, then a snatch of Tchaikovsky, then static, the sound cuts out.]

End of Play.]