

Bigfoot Walks into a Bar

by S. Asher Sund

Some claimed seeing him that first time in the grocery store staring in at the pints of Haagen-Dazs, his breath fogging the glass as his head rested against the heavy freezer doors, stinking in his Sasquatch suit. The second time he was in the dairy section, delicately fingering an egg while sitting cross-legged on the floor, sobbing for several minutes until he was helped up and ushered outside by a security guard.

Some said that it was not wise to encourage these rumored sightings. Even if the sightings were real, these people claimed that he was nothing more or less than a lunatic of a man dressed as a Sasquatch who not too many years earlier had claimed to have been taken advantage of by a real Sasquatch. They called him Doug, or sometimes, more jocularly, Bigfoot Doug. More than likely, however, or so they suggested, Doug was only a figment of collective imagination, a phantasmagoria summoned up by our communal subconscious as a defense mechanism to help deal with the more painful personal experiences of loss and anxiety.

We did not know what that meant, for one thing. We believed in Doug, for another. We believed that it was good and prudent and wise to believe in him. On special festival days, we laid out plates of banana mush mixed with honey, oats, flax seed, and fish oil—Bigfoot Doug's favorite treat—decorated and seasoned in its various minor ways, so as to entice him to eat it and bring the chosen household a year of good luck.

The naysayers suggested that it was not good to encourage these silly rituals. Even if he were real, Bigfoot Doug would obviously need some serious help and medication, if not probably electroshock therapy, if that were still practiced. But again, we the believers were not so sure. Doug was part of us, was he not? If Bigfoot Doug needed help and/or medication and/or electroshock therapy, then wouldn't we all need help too, living with whatever small or large childhood scars haunted us still?

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One night Bigfoot lumbered into a bar in his stinking suit as we were drinking our beers and watching silent sport reruns on the flatscreens positioned strategically around the room. He came up to where Brian was sitting, looked as if he were considering sitting down on a stool next to him, but at the last moment took Brian away, thrashing and screaming. We didn't realize what was going on at first, or more honestly we didn't think it was our place to get involved. We thought we'd see Brian in a day or two at the latest, after he emerged from Bigfoot's lair, wherever that was—the basement in his mother's house, we suspected.

The problem was that not only did we not know where Doug's mother lived, but when later questioned by the police, we could not remember whom his mother was. Doug, it seemed, when we started putting the facts together, was motherless, proving the point for the haters among us that he was not to be believed in. The only ones that could claim with any authority not to have mothers were Adam and Eve, Satan, and the popular 1980s American saxophonist Kenny G.

But Brian, too, was an enigma. We hardly liked Brian. He was quite unremarkable in every way. He could have died in a bad accident, and upon hearing the news, we would not have raised much more than our shoulders, as in a shrug. *Shit happens*. But Brian's abduction enveloped him now, or the memory of him, in an aura of respect and esteem.

Why Brian and not Bill, or Jerry, or the other Brian, the overlarge fellow with the perennial sweat rings in his armpits? Why not Belinda or Jen or any of the baristas with their bad attitudes in the two coffee shops bookending the main strip of downtown? Why not the host of unforgettable homeless people? Be our guest, Bigfoot: take them all; chew them up; swallow them down; shit them out. But Brian was like a joke waiting for a punch line that would never come.

He was sitting closest to the door and was about thirty pounds lighter than the nearest patron, which, some have suggested, made him more a victim of a crime of opportunity rather than a deliberate

or delectable prize. Others insisted that this was missing the point. Whether by design or not, *Brian had been chosen*. Of this latter group, a faction said that this was a good thing. They revered him and began to set out glasses of IPA, Brian's favorite beer, along with Doug's favorite mush, on festival days. An equally staunch faction claimed that it was definitely bad. To be chosen was not good. Regardless of where one sat on the good-bad continuum, most of us had secret lists of those we hoped Bigfoot Doug would take next. And yet these people always remained, unclaimed, sitting on bar stools next to us here to this very day.

