

HUNTING BIGFOOT  
An American Play

By Theresa Giacopasi

**CHARACTERS**

ONE, a television hack, co-creator of Hunting BigFoot

TWO, a television flack, co-creator of Hunting BigFoot

TEDDY ROOSEVELT, who is BigFoot

NELLIE TAFT, who is BigFoot

WILLIAM TAFT, who is BigFoot

JOHN MUIR, who is BigFoot

KEN BURNS, who is BigFoot

P.T. BARNUM, who is in love with BigFoot

LADY BIGFOOT, who is BigFoot

DOROTHY PARKER, who is BigFoot

KATHERINE HEPBURN, who is Bigfoot

RICHARD NIXON, who is BigFoot

ELVIS, who is not BigFoot

LOREN COLEMAN, leading international cryptozoologist, who is BigFoot

RICK DYER, a hoaxer, who is BigFoot

REALITY REDNECK, a TV star, who is BigFoot

THAD, Tumbleweed Tiny House owner, who is BigFoot

SAGE, Tumbleweed Tiny House owner, who is BigFoot

THE MAINE HERMIT, who is BigFoot

**SETTING**

The Writers Room which is the theater which is America

**TIME**

Everything after the close of the Western Frontier

**NOTE**

Double- and triple-casting makes this play possible with 8 actors, who should be cast as creatively and diversely as humanly possible.

The play takes place in a workshop environment.

*The audience sits in the Writers Room for the new show "Hunting BigFoot." Conveniently, this room is also a performance space of some kind. ONE and TWO enter, or we happen upon them, scheming ideas for the show. Whiteboards, notepads, research materials, snacks and beverages should always be at their disposal.*

ONE  
Hemingway?

TWO  
Hemingway, definitely.

ONE  
I didn't think we'd be able to get away with *not*-Hemingway.

TWO  
No way could we do this without Hemingway.  
So, Hemingway started it.

ONE  
But, hang on, Hemingway couldn't have started it.

TWO  
Why not? It would be sexy for it to have started with Hemingway. It'd look good on a mouse pad. It'd look good on a Koozy.

ONE  
Hemingway when?

TWO  
The safari years.

ONE  
Which ones?

TWO  
The longest stretch of consecutive safari years.

ONE  
That would make sense. Ooh! You know who else? Carl Akeley, the taxidermy guy. Carl Akeley and Martin and Osa Johnson.

TWO  
No one knows who they are.

ONE

I'm sure someone here knows who they are.

TWO

Yeah, but this is a *theater* audience. That's not our demographic.

ONE

The Johnsons were the reality stars of their day!

TWO

But they were also overseas all the time. This is an American story.

ONE

An American myth.

TWO

Same thing.

ONE

No they're not.

TWO

Don't get precious on me, *writer*.

*By now, the six actors portraying the various BigFoots should start walking around the space, or should already be seated in the audience. Ideally they will be wearing BigFoot suits much like the one commonly agreed to have been worn in the Patterson-Gimlin film of 1967, but any number of more comfortable or affordable alternatives can be used.*

ONE

Okay, well, if we're saying that Ernest Hemingway was the first American to pose as BigFoot, then it had to start at a time when he *was* out of the country. Otherwise people would be all "where's Ernest?"

TWO

He hated that name.

ONE

He hated a lot of stuff.

TWO

Hemingway was in Paris in the 20s.

ONE

No, that might have been earlier. It might have been the tens.

TWO

The teens.

ONE (*skeptical*)

The nineteen-teens?

TWO

Fine, the tens.

ONE

How about he didn't really commit suicide, and it was after that?

TWO

That's like the 60s. That's too late.

ONE

Was it *in* the 60s, or was he in *his* 60s?

TWO

Who cares? It's too late.

ONE

So if it didn't start with Hemingway then who did it start with.

TWO

Well, who was around back then?

ONE

Sacajawea.

TWO

No!

ONE

Why not? It makes sense.

TWO

If it starts with Sacajawea, that means the real start was probably long before Sacajawea, because there were a lot of Sacajaweas before Sacajawea. And then that means the Hemingways *stole* it from the Sacajaweas, and then we have to get the lawyers involved, and slander, and libel, and race relations, and expensive apologetic commercials, and my job is harder than it already even is.

ONE

Lewis and Clark?

TWO

No! Pay attention, you sad sack excuse for a writer.

ONE

Okay right.

TWO

I don't care that you're going through a divorce. You're working now. So *work*.

ONE

Right, yeah, I'm here, (*yoga inhale*) I'm present (*yoga exhale*).

*They turn to the audience.*

TWO

This is a play about BigFoot called "Hunting BigFoot." It is also a play about a television show about BigFoot which is also called "Hunting BigFoot." The show isn't real. This is the Writers Room for the show. And we can't leave until it is written.

ONE

This is Part One of the play, which is about the TV show. This part is called "The Adventurer, The Rugged, The Athletic, The Believer: The Strenuous Life."

TWO

It is? Why?

ONE

Because that's what we're looking for in our BigFoot, right? That's why we're thinking Hemingway and adventurers. That's who we've got to be thinking of. That's who it would start with.

*One of the BigFoots removes its mask. This BigFoot is Teddy Roosevelt. He has not been summoned by ONE.*

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Don't be daft, you fool. It would start with Teddy Roosevelt, it would, by gum, it would start with me. I was the first BigFoot.

TWO (*to One*)

Roosevelt! That's perfect. Great choice.

ONE

I hadn't actually thought of Teddy Roosevelt –

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

How you could ever fathom an American myth without me is preposterous.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Look at you two. Look at the mess you've made of this venture already. Do you think that what you are doing is work? You can't sit in a room most days of your life and call it living, and you damn surely can't call it *making* a living.

"A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual."

For one.

Also,

"We do not admire the man of timid peace. We admire the man who embodies victorious / effort \_"

TWO

Can you gender neutralize this, please? *I'm* a woman. For example.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

"We admire the *man* who embodies victorious effort; the man who never wrongs his neighbor, who is prompt to help a friend, but who has those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life."

ONE

Oh we aren't talking about actual life, Mr. President, this is for TV.

TWO

It's a new package.

ONE

A fall-pilot-season, 12-episode package.

TWO

Franchising up the wazoo.

ONE

T-shirts.

TWO

Action figures. Sandals® promotional vacation packages.

ONE

Branded Subway® sandwiches. Branded shuttle train.

TWO

Branded days at the Ball Park.

ONE

It's called "Hunting BigFoot." It's just like that other show about finding BigFoot, only with a fresh new twist: who *is* BigFoot?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Only the single greatest beast ever to walk America whose head I don't have mounted in my study. What nonsense is this, gentlemen?

TWO

No no, we're doing a new thing. Never been done before.

ONE

Because we're making it up.

TWO

We're *conceptualizing* it.

ONE

So BigFoot is never really BigFoot, it's always someone in a BigFoot costume. But not a hoaxer, per se.

TWO

Well, let's not get ahead of ourselves. Standard Viewing Audiences love hoaxers.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

What in tarnation is a Standard Viewing Audience?

TWO

An expression.

ONE

The *overarching* idea is that it's always a famous American, you know? Hiding out, in BigFoot. Taking up the BigFoot mantle.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

What sport is there in that, you're retelling an over-told tale. You're troubling over molehills, gentlemen, that's what you're doing.

TWO

*Gentlefolk*, at least, Mr. President please.

ONE

It's a pretty great device. Built-in revelations. Twists! Turns! Who *is* that behind the mask?

TWO

Who Wore It Best? Who *is* BigFoot? Find out this September at 9/8 Central.

ONE

But it leaves us with all this world-building work. Why is this happening? How is this happening?



TEDDY ROOSEVELT

You pasty-skinned boneheads. It's happening because of *me*. I was the first BigFoot.

TWO

It makes perfect sense and I am not at all surprised.

ONE

"Bully," right? That's what Teddy Roosevelt always says, "bully"?

TWO

Bully for you, Mr. President!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I was 26 years old when I moved to the Dakota territories. There are some that would say I *retreated* to the Dakota territories, but they wouldn't say it to my face.

What were *you* doing at 26?

TWO

I had five roommates.

ONE

Masturbating.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

"This broken country extends back from the river for many miles and has been called always by Indian, French voyager and American trappers alike, the Bad Lands."

"After nightfall the face of the country seems to alter marvelously, and the clear moonlight only intensifies the change. The river gleams like running quicksilver, and the moonbeams play over the grassy stretches of the plateaus..."

*ONE and TWO are touched. All three see the landscape before them.*

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

"The Bad Lands seem to be stranger and wilder than ever, the silvery rays turning the country into a kind of grim fairyland."

It was then that I first saw the BigFoot.

ONE

Were you frightened?

TWO

Of course he wasn't frightened.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Of course I wasn't frightened.

"The farther one gets into the wilderness, the greater is the attraction of its lonely freedom."

TWO

So you were attracted to it?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

“Nowhere, not even at sea, does a man feel more lonely than when riding over the far-reaching, seemingly never-ending plains; and after a man has lived a little while on or near them, their very vastness and loneliness and their melancholy monotony have a strong fascination for him.”

ONE (*to Two*)

That’s a yes to being attracted to it.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Great Scott, man, it was a BigFoot! A walking ape! Man’s cousin, man’s ancestor, man’s alternate path. A humanoid shape against Dakota’s unearthly peaks, snowshoeing across America’s proudest landscape! Would you not have engaged it?

TWO

What did you do?

ONE

What did *it* do?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I gave it chase! I pursued it across acres parallel to that jagged North or South Dakota horizon, at great risk to my personal person.

TWO

So then you caught up with it?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

It was making a great and crooning call, but no kin came to meet it. It was as lonely as I out there in the great American West. And I called out “Tally / Ho” –

ONE

/ Hold on.

South Dakota isn’t the West.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

North Dakota.

TWO

Well, it is and it isn’t. It isn’t the West to you and I *now*, but it was the Wild West back then. Deadwood. Devil’s Tower. The Black Hills, the Badlands, Wall Drug, jackalopes, Wild Bill Hickok. Calamity Jane. Gold rush and gold panning and shoot outs. That was all South Dakota.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

North South Dakota.

ONE

Is a Standard Viewing Audience going to get that, though?

TWO

Probably not. And it's too much work to justify. No one is going to believe that BigFoot came from anywhere but the Pacific Northwest.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

What does all this matter to you trout-mouthed scullions anyway?

ONE

We are reimagining the BigFoot myth.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

It's no myth, boy.

TWO

It is, *man*. And it's one of the only ones we have native to America.

ONE

And it's time for a rewrite. That's what this play is about.

TWO

And the play can't end until we write the TV show.

ONE

And the TV show won't work if the audience doesn't believe BigFoot could have come from the Dakotas.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I know what I saw. I know what I did. I lived the Strenuous Life, and I remembered that beast climbing over the hellscape hills, and I remembered it years later when that fat walrus Willy Taft took my presidency away from me.

ONE

Ooh!

TWO

There's no way Taft was BigFoot, don't even try it.

ONE

But his wife could have been!

*ONE turns to the space or audience, summoning. One of the BigFoots removes its mask at One's command. This happens each time a BigFoot appears, with the exception of Teddy Roosevelt.*

ONE (CONT'D)

A BigFoot removes its mask. This BigFoot is First Lady Nellie Taft.

NELLIE TAFT

You shut your carnivorous mouth you old coot.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Nellie. Shouldn't you be drooling in a wheelchair?

NELLIE TAFT

Shouldn't you be using your inhaler, Theodore?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

This woman is a nobody. She could never have been BigFoot.

NELLIE TAFT

Nobody? This nobody gave all of you your precious pretty DC cherry blossoms. This nobody saved the country from a third term of this Americana wannabe.

ONE

A third BigFoot removes its mask. This one is President William Taft.

WILLIAM TAFT

Well, actually, my beautiful and plush lady flower, Constitutional Law is what prevented dear Teddy here from –

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

No one asked you, William.

NELLIE TAFT

Oh go read a book, William.

WILLIAM TAFT

Yes, dear.

TWO

Told you. Not Taft.

ONE

Fine.

*WILLIAM TAFT puts his mask back on and walks away sadly.*

NELLIE TAFT

I know what you're doing, Theodore. You got bored killing things in Africa so you decided to go traipsing through your National Parks, trying to take down a BigFoot, and when nothing showed you lied and posed as the beast for *McClure's*.

TWO (*to One*)

Is there a record of that?

ONE

There is no record of any of this happening because this is a play, and is made up. But I'm stealing it.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I posed as BigFoot to give hope to America after I – I, not your round rasping mound of a husband – closed the Western Frontier. I gave America its magic back. I gave it back its reason to believe in pioneering. Mine was the age of the Strenuous Life, and I continued it as long as I drew breath.

NELLIE TAFT

However badly that was, you asthmatic city boy.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I'm surprised you can draw a breath considering your smoke-filled *saloons*.

NELLIE TAFT

Hit me with your biggest stick, Theodore. Baby got what she wanted. Baby got the White House. And Baby's made of Teflon.

No one will ever believe you were the first BigFoot. I certainly didn't take it over from you.

*NELLIE TAFT puts the BigFoot mask back on and flounces out as much as a BigFoot can flounce.*

TWO

Wait! Who did she take over for, then?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Don't listen to that cat scratch of a woman. BigFoot is me, it is mine.

TWO

I don't know. I'm gonna have a hard time selling this without an Oregon backdrop, or at least, you know, the pretty part of Washington state.

ONE

Sorry, Teddy, but she's right. BigFoot without sequoias is no BigFoot at all.

TWO

Redwoods.

ONE

They're the same thing.

TWO

And "redwoods" has better kerning for the posters.

ONE

Such a pro.

TWO

That's why they pay me the medium bucks.

ONE

We're getting closer. But I don't think it would have been Teddy. No offense, Mr. President, but wouldn't you have been busy doing, I don't know, your job?

TEDDY

I coursed the River of Doubt in the Amazon, toppled the beasts of Africa, I gave you the Panama Canal, and I *was* the first BigFoot, you buffoons. Why, you have no more backbone than a chocolate éclair!

*TEDDY ROOSEVELT, in his deep frustration, begins doing calisthenics.*

TWO

So who could it have been, then?

ONE

I got it.

Another one of the BigFoots removes its mask. This BigFoot is John Muir. You can tell because of the beard.

JOHN MUIR

Oh it gets really hot under there, I forgot about that.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

John Boy!

JOHN MUIR

Mr. President!

*TEDDY ROOSEVELT and JOHN MUIR embrace.*

TWO

You two know each other?

ONE

Of course they do. They co-founded the National Parks.

TWO

Can we get rights to a picture or something for the press packet? No one's going to know that.

ONE

Everyone knows that!

JOHN MUIR

Are you going around telling people you were the first BigFoot, dear friend?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Great Scott, John! I never took you for a nature-faker. You and I both know I'm strong as a Bull Moose. Who else could have been the first?

JOHN MUIR

Oh. But that was me, dear Theodore.

TWO

I always thought you were a poet or something.

JOHN MUIR

It's the beard.

ONE

That makes sense.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT (*suspicious*)

How did I never come to know you were a BigFoot?

JOHN MUIR

Well, people don't ask too much about what I did with my time, you know. They just kind of assume it's more of the same. Climb a tree. Pet the moss. Write about the moss. Hug a stream. People don't realize that, I mean in reality, that stuff doesn't take all that long. That's a lot of unaccounted-for time.

TWO

I read somewhere that you also walked across the entire country.

JOHN MUIR

Why anyone thought human feet could do that, I'll never know.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

These are weasel-words to me, old friend, I can't resist telling you. You always wanted everyone to think you loved those blasted trees better than me. Just because you were always sitting around in them. Sitting around in a tree is still just sitting around, by gum.

JOHN MUIR

I don't know what more I could say to convince you. Have I read you my journal entry about the cicadas?

ONE

Wait I have an amazing idea. If it works –

*As ONE begins to summon, another BigFoot takes off its mask. This BigFoot is KEN BURNS.*

KEN BURNS

I can vouch for John Muir.

ONE

Oh my god I can't believe it he's really here.

TWO (*to One*)

Who is that?

ONE (*to Ken Burns*)

Oh my god you're Ken Burns you're my hero.

TWO

Who's Ken Burns?

ONE

The man I want to become. Wanted to become. Oh what have I done with my life? No wonder Betty left me.

TWO

Is he like a show runner or something?

ONE

I can't let Ken Burns see me working for reality TV. Hide me.

*ONE tries to hide behind TWO, choking back sobs.*

*Meanwhile, TEDDY ROOSEVELT and JOHN MUIR compare the size of their walking sticks.*



KEN BURNS

There, there, new and sincere friend. It's okay. What is the distance, truly, between what I do and "reality"? We are all capturing our own realities, and you are living Your Truth. I am sure of it.

ONE

My last job before this one was writing for the Octomom.

TWO

Okay, okay, let's not start that again, let's come back to it, let's focus.

You there, male-Shonda Rhimes. You're vouching for John Muir having been the first BigFoot?

KEN BURNS (*documentary voice*)

It was 1867 when John Muir took off from Indiana on his famous thousand-mile walk to the Gulf.

TWO

We are looking for redwoods at the moment. Are there redwoods in Indiana or the Gulf?

ONE

Sequoias would also be totally acceptable, sir.

TWO

Redwoods. Stay on-brand.

KEN BURNS

I'm sorry. It's hard not to give context. Symptom of the job.

TWO

Which is...?

ONE

He's the most masterful documentarian in America!

KEN BURNS

You two are right to keep digging. "Good history is a question of survival. Without any past, we will deprive ourselves of the defining impression of our being."

*TEDDY ROOSEVELT and JOHN MUIR have a gentle stick-fight.*

KEN BURNS

John Muir was our country's first human BigFoot.

I've spent my life creating this my art: the documentation of this great country and its history. And more often than not, when I arrive on set at The Founding of The National Parks or The Secret History of the Shakers, someone is desperately trying to pass on the burden of Being BigFoot. I've been BigFoot myself any number of times. You cannot simply shrug off the material after immersing yourself within it for so long.

KEN BURNS (CONT'D)

“I subscribe to William Faulkner’s view that history is not just about what we were before but who we are now.”

ONE

That’s beautiful.

TWO

That’s boring.

ONE

Show some respect!

TWO

No offense but we’re trying to actually have people watch the show. I’m sure your work is great and has its audience, but we’re trying to do something on a larger scale.

ONE

You have no idea how dumb you sound right now.

TWO

This is showbiz! We need pizzazz, we need sex, we need – something for the masses! What about circus? Who were the circus guys? One of the Ringling Brothers or something.

ONE

I don’t know, they’re all interchangeable. And acrobats give me vertigo. What about carnival? Or like a sideshow freak collector, like... P.T. Barnum?

P.T. BARNUM (*from beneath the mask*)

Stuff and nonsense!

*P.T. BARNUM removes his mask. He is angrily pointing at John Muir, who ceases the stick fight.*

P.T. BARNUM

You’re telling me *that’s* her? What are you trying to pull, you scamp? On me? On ME? P.T. BARNUM? Author of “The Art of Money-Getting”? Do you think that that particular art is anything but shrewd? There may be a sucker born every minute but P.T. Barnum is not one of them!

KEN BURNS

I’m so sorry. But I’m not sure I understand you.

P.T. BARNUM

You’re telling me, you’re saying that that hulking lump of a *talking monkey* was BigFoot?

JOHN MUIR

That's not very polite.

P.T. BARNUM

Nor was it meant to be!

ONE (*to Two*)

Wait, are we not promoting this as a "talking monkey" thing?

TWO

I was thinking more a "walking monkey" thing.

ONE

Don't monkeys usually walk?

TWO

With enough art design it'll seem profound.

P.T. BARNUM (*to One and Two*)

Quite so, quite so. You know what I always say, and heed my advice, boys –

TWO

*Folks*, folks, what's wrong with "folks" –

P.T. BARNUM

"Without promotion, something terrible happens..."

P.T. BARNUM AND TWO

"Nothing!"

TWO

Wait.

That was you? That's my favorite quote! When I first made full publicist I got it tattooed on my...

Foot.

KEN BURNS

Thank you so much for your invitation and your... fascinating company. But I think I'll be taking my leave, now.

*KEN BURNS exits.*

P.T. BARNUM

You think that one was good? How about:

"Nobody ever lost a dollar by underestimating the taste of the American public."

TWO (*fanning its eyes*)

That's one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard.

P.T. BARNUM

I've always thought that was the most beautiful. People always want to talk about the other stuff I said. Things like:

"A lovely nook of forest scenery, or a grand rock, like a beautiful woman, depends for much of its attractiveness upon the attendant sense of freedom from whatever is low; upon a sense of purity and of romance."

ONE

It seems more fitting for the subject at hand, at least.

P.T. BARNUM

Quite so. Beautiful women! Romance!

ONE

Um. I meant nature, but...

P.T. BARNUM

And as I was saying before we became so distracted by my impeccable marketing skills, there's no way in seven hells that that there... *specimen*, was ever the first BigFoot.

JOHN MUIR

I should have written less about the Sierras. I never get any respect.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Come to, John Boy, stop dallying about and hit me.

*The stick fight resumes.*

P.T. BARNUM

I remember her like it was yesterday. I was out West on a tip to a hot new piece for the museum.

This was back before Bailey or the Ringlings. I was a solitary hunter then, on my own when it came to bringing new acts to the American people.

I was on a trail miles from civilization when the sound first turned my head to her. Her shapely figure darkening the horizon. Howling like a monkey, but also, like a woman.

The purest example of femininity I ever did see in a specimen.

The BigFoot.

JOHN MUIR

Well, that's a nice thing to say.

P.T. BARNUM

She was never you! You were never her.

No one was ever her.

P.T. BARNUM (CONT'D)

I spent the rest of my career chasing her, to no avail. No matter how many Bearded Ladies I found, how many I bought – I mean, hired. They were never her.

ONE

Ohhh I like where this is going.

*TEDDY ROOSEVELT wins the stick fight. JOHN MUIR yields, and puts his BigFoot mask back on, exiting.*

*A LADY BIGFOOT enters the ring, coyly maintaining her distance from P.T. BARNUM and keeping her mask on.*

P.T. BARNUM

It was a Tuesday, I'd never forget that. I had taken a walk by myself, even though my guide said not to go forth unguided, I did it anyway because that guy doesn't own me.

I was taking bigger strides than I needed to, to see what that would be like. I was masterfully and manfully inhaling bigger breaths, to match my strides, and also to puff out my chest – expansively – and I thought about how if a woman were to see me right now, I would look very masterful and manful and expansive to her.

And then I spotted her.

Her figure, imposing but supple and subtle, moonlight bouncing off the whirling tendrils of her silken hair. Her eyes, mournful and wary and filled to the brim with that ephemeral yet eternal object we call the soul.

I moved toward her as if in a dream, as if underwater. I moved toward her because I could not stand in her presence another moment and not move toward her.

*ONE orchestrates their movements like a conductor.*

ONE

The BigFoot strikes a feminine pose. She and P.T. Barnum mirror each other's movements, starting slow, just dreamlike gestures, testing the waters – will you raise your arm when I raise my arm? Wiggle your fingers when I wiggle my fingers at you?

Do you see me?

Do you move as I do?

Do you share my glee, my fascination, my fast unstable beating heart, my shortened breath, my awe? Do you share my baleful joy, my three-quarter turn, my clumsy partner-less waltz?

Will you share my bed, will you share lazy mornings and late nights with me, car trips and grocery stops, mistakes and petty arguments? Will you share your womb with my future children? Will you share your future with me?

Will you dance with me here in moonlight on this bare and vulnerable ridge of America? Will you let me come closer? Will you let me come closer still? Will you tell me you love me as I know you must, as you must, as I love you? Will you love me? Will you love me? Will you love me?

P.T. BARNUM  
Will you love me?

LADY BIGFOOT  
*(Shakes her head no really emphatically)*

ONE  
Dammit. I liked that angle.

TWO  
She doesn't seem to be into it, Mr. Barnum.

P.T. BARNUM  
But you must, you must! Can you not love me?

LADY BIGFOOT  
I can't, I can't, you know that I can't!

P.T. BARNUM  
But why! That's the question that's kept me up at night, since that moment I first saw you, never to see you again – why did you run from me? Why was our love not enough for you to stay? Do you know how many creatures that would have run, how many of them have stayed for me? The Fiji Mermaid, Tom Thumb, Jo Jo the Dog Faced Boy – a boy I bought only because he reminded me of you, because he brought me some brief semblance of peace. For years I tried to tell myself that Annie Jones, greatest of the Bearded Ladies at the American Museum, could be you, could make me as happy as you made me that one night in the moonlight in America. But Annie never could.

ONE *(to Two)*  
Hey, Annie could be BigFoot.

TWO  
Annie who?

ONE  
Jones, the one he just said. Wasn't she that sharpshooter girl? You know, the one who shot the turkey when she was twelve and then did all those rodeos.

TWO  
That was Annie Oakley.

ONE  
Shoot.

TWO  
It's okay, save it, we can use it later.

P.T. BARNUM

Please tell me. Please. I've spent my whole life wondering what I could have done to make you stay.

*The LADY BIGFOOT hesitates, an awkward silence, no one knowing quite what to do. ONE has an idea.*

ONE

Oh that might be nice. Yeah. That's an angle. Let's see.

The opening strains of "I Enjoy Being A Girl," from the musical Flower Drum Song, begin to play.

TWO

A song? Really? The producer will never give us the budget for music rights.

ONE

Shhh. Wait til you see where I'm going at least.

LADY BIGFOOT (*singing*)

I'm alone, and by me that's only great!  
I am proud that my silhouette is single,  
That I walk with a quick and churlish gait  
With my eyes straight ahead, no time to mingle.

I adore being dressed in something monstrous  
While my peers are all dressing to the nines.  
On I roam through the windy and the wondrous  
Far beyond their safe paths and roads and signs!

When I have a new persona,  
A disguise I can call my own,  
From Oregon to Arizona –  
I enjoy being alone!

When men say I'm fake and stupid  
And my teeth aren't teeth, but foam,  
My happiness is undisputed:  
I enjoy being alone!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I dare say you've been jilted my boy! And by a BigFoot, no less! You belong in your own Freak Museum.

LADY BIGFOOT

Oh, knock off. I'm just trying not to lead the poor scamp on even further.

P.T. BARNUM

My love, what are you on about?

ONE

The Lady Bigfoot removes her head to reveal – Dorothy Parker!

P.T. BARNUM

Oh gods! It's hideous!

DOROTHY PARKER

“Don't look at me in that tone of voice.”

TWO

I mean, I love Dorothy Parker, but she doesn't seem to fit the mold of what we're doing here.

DOROTHY PARKER

It surprised me too. But when I caught wind of what Amelia was doing I just couldn't resist it. I can never resist a good ruse.

TWO

Amelia?

DOROTHY PARKER

Earhart. You know, the one with the planes and the scarves? You like her, you'd know her if you saw her.

TWO

You're saying Amelia Earhart was BigFoot?

DOROTHY PARKER

How else was she ever gonna shake that loathsome mouth breather, George Putnam? Lord knows he couldn't take a hint. How many pairs of pants was she gonna have to wear before he understood the nature of the situation?

ONE

Which was...?

DOROTHY PARKER

If I have to spell it out for you, then you're no friend of Dorothy.

TWO

Oh man!

ONE

I knew it.



TWO

Are you serious?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT (*to Barnum*)

What does that mean?

P.T. BARNUM

Blast if I know.

ONE

It means she was gay.

DOROTHY PARKER

“Heterosexuality is not normal, it’s just common.”

TWO

Oh this is good, this is too good, tell me more. So she posed as BigFoot – to escape the closet? To stay in the closet but relocate the closet?

ONE

Doesn’t the whole “disappearing forever” thing kind of accomplish that?

DOROTHY PARKER

Not really, since they never discovered the wreck that she staged. And even so, she’s gotta do something with her time, right? She stumbled onto the gig while searching for this commune she had heard of up in Oregon, and she couldn’t stop raving about it. BigFoot life this and never having to shave that, she really wouldn’t shut it.

P.T. BARNUM

I won’t believe it. You weren’t there. You didn’t see it happen. The sheer animal magnetism between us.

DOROTHY PARKER

Sorry, pal, but there wasn’t anything to see. The truth is that it was me on that moonlit and vulnerable ridge of America that night, and the truth was that I was just hungry. I thought maybe I could scare you outta some scraps. A girl’s got to have her three square, you know.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

So it *was* you beneath the mask, young lady?

DOROTHY PARKER

Don’t you “young lady” me, you patriarching old fool.

P.T. BARNUM

That is the President of the United States you’re speaking to, woman!

DOROTHY PARKER

And I'm a writer for the *New Yorker*. Our relationship is predetermined.

P.T. BARNUM

So that's it? I've been pining all my life after – after a bookish, shriveled-up old maid?

DOROTHY PARKER

Not just that. I'm a drunk, too.

P.T. BARNUM

I won't have this, madam! I will not have it! History will know the truth! I'll go down in the annals!

DOROTHY PARKER

That's just what Amelia said she *wouldn't* do for George.

P.T. BARNUM

Infernal woman! Hell raiser! Scourge!

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Come come old chap. That's not sporting at all. Shall we go have a whack at a punching bag, like men?

P.T. BARNUM

That sounds quite nice actually, Mr. President.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

We take our leave then, gentlemen, to go and hit punching bags square in the belly, and probably to bench press heavy things, and quite manfully at that.

P.T. BARNUM

Quite so.

*TEDDY ROOSEVELT and P.T. BARNUM exit.*

TWO

Finally he's gone.

ONE

Barnum?

TWO

Roosevelt. There's just something I can't stand about the guy. What a narcissistic windbag. I don't see how someone like him ever stayed under a mask. You may be right. Maybe he didn't engineer BigFoot after all.

ONE (*to audience*)

No one engineered BigFoot. This is a play about a television show called “Hunting BigFoot.” We are creating the show, and we ourselves have been created.

(*to Two*)

I think we need to talk.

TWO

Not now, not with *Dorothy Parker* here, do you know how highly quotable this woman is? Take notes, you idiot!

ONE

It’s just I think I’m losing the plot a bit.

DOROTHY PARKER

The plot to what?

TWO

Ms. Parker, would you perhaps be interested in writing our opening narration? Just the stuff that goes under the title graphic. You know, “blah blah something clever...*this* is ‘Hunting BigFoot’.” We could pay.

DOROTHY PARKER

I’ve done worse for less. And less for worse.

ONE

It’s just that, Dorothy Parker was alive a heck of a lot later than P.T. Barnum, so people probably wouldn’t believe that she was the BigFoot he saw.

TWO

Who in our target demographic is gonna put that together? It’s fine.

ONE

But even from a design perspective, I mean, are we still gonna go with sepia-toned for the flashbacks? Or now do we do more of an early *Mad Men*, late 50s vibe?

TWO

They’ll figure it out in post.

ONE

That’s putting a lot of creative control in post-production’s hands.

TWO

Oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t realize I was working with such an *auteur*. Did you get full creative control on Octomom?

ONE

You don't have to be cruel about it.

TWO

I just forgot that I'm working with Ben Ferns.

ONE

His. Name. Is. Ken. Burns.

DOROTHY PARKER

If it makes a difference, gents, it could've easily been any number of women like Amelia or me.

TWO

What do you mean?

DOROTHY PARKER

Well, as long as there've been women in this country, there've been those of us that run screaming into the night, begging for anything other than our torpid male-ridden reality. Women have been BigFooting since Betsy Ross.

TWO

Betsy Ross was BigFoot?! That's fantastic! We can definitely use that in promos.

ONE

But Betsy is way out of the historical scope of our BigFoot so far!

DOROTHY PARKER

It doesn't have to be Betsy. There were plenty of us at any given time. Why, if Kate Hepburn wasn't BigFoot at some point I'll eat my hat.

ONE

Katharine Hepburn, huh? Now that I could work with.

*The BigFoot that is KATE HEPBURN takes off her mask.*

KATE HEPBURN

Well howdy-do there fellas, I know you're not flapping your gums about little old me.

TWO

What does Katharine Hepburn have to do with it?

KATE HEPBURN

Well sure, I was BigFoot, you know how these things happen sweetheart: one moment you're sopping up the limelight, the next thing you know the big lugs down Hollywood way are hollering at you to be more feminine, and to stop wearing pants on the golf course.

DOROTHY PARKER

They didn't want you on the golf course to begin with.

KATE HEPBURN

Dotty! You grand old dame, you sure do know how to give a girl a run for her money. How'd you ever guess what I was up to? You do have a small noggin for all that thinkin you're always doin.

DOROTHY PARKER

My head's a perfectly normal size. It just looks small from way up there.

ONE

Okay –

DOROTHY PARKER

You giantess.

ONE

So you two know each other, then?

KATE HEPBURN

“Enemies are so stimulating.”

DOROTHY PARKER

What did I ever do to earn your enmity?

KATE HEPBURN

Don't you remember your cute little theater review, Dotty?

DOROTHY PARKER

All I did was compliment your range.

KATE HEPBURN (*quoting the review*)

“She” – meaning me, fellas – “ran the gamut of emotions from ‘A’ to ‘B’.”

DOROTHY PARKER

For you, that's a compliment.

TWO

So why exactly did you seek out the role of BigFoot, Ms. Hepburn? Big fan by the way.

DOROTHY PARKER

Why do you think? *Ms.* Hepburn got tired of having to hide what she was after.

KATE HEPBURN

All I did was ask Scott to deliver a pert brunette to my dressing room. All the fellas did the same.

ONE

Scott who?

KATE HEPBURN

There was always a Scott.