

CZCON17 - a monologue by P. Calavara

So. What if I were to write a play?

But it's not so simple. Anyone with a mildly usable internet connection and a pen can pull that off. What I need is a play that people will notice, maybe. And for that you need a catch. Something to grab the attention, if only for a moment. I'm thinking... a play where the main characters are something special. Perhaps a Big Foot... with a Sasquatch, a Yeti, and a Skunk Ape. Perfect.

But now that we've blown the budget on costumes, we need a limiting factor, otherwise, nobody will ever be able to produce it outside of New York (or Hollywood: Ka-CHING!). So something like a drawing room piece: One set. Basic enough, easy to get the point across. *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf*, but, y'know, with Big Foot. How about... a hotel bar in the late evening during a cryptozoology convention. It's a bi-annual affair, and all of the cryptozoological animals attend. The Cryptids. Unicorns, Sasquatch, Chupacabra, etc. Is the Okapi still allowed now that he's official? Maybe there's a roundtable discussion about this very subject on the agenda for the final day. Wait. Doesn't matter. We're getting off-track.

So: the setting is this hotel bar, after the first day of the convention. These four are getting together because it's a thing they do at every one of these conventions. They're longtime friends, of course. I mean, these animals are all hypothetical, which brings with it great loneliness, but these four are more alike than different, so they've got a special sort of camaraderie that isn't necessarily shared with the other conference attendees. They've been through the ringer together. And yet, at the same time, they're all different from each other. They're all unique, lonely souls, living in their respective wildernesses alone. It's a perfect analogy for the human condition, which is really what the play is about. By the end the audience will see that, of course.

There's the setup, at any rate, these four: long friends, a little drunk, catching up, complaining about the Loch Ness monster, who is probably a perfect ass, even after you get to know him. The play begins after they've made the normal small talk (How are things. Have you seen whoever. Housing costs. Politics.) and we join them as they settle into that space old friends find after those first awkward moments they need to remember each other after a long absence. I'm pretty sure Chekhov said to ditch the first act of any play— people will figure out the setup

without needing it all spelled out, so we join our four as they've hit the portion of reunions set aside or gossip. OHMYGOD, did you see Unicorn got a horn extension? Jesus, who does the Kappa think he's fooling with that combover? Not that I should be throwing rocks in glass houses, but Igopogo got faaaaaat!

The wit will continue for the appropriate amount of time, funny, good time to draw the audience in. They'll chuckle and laugh, and maybe surreptitiously look up Igopogo or the Wendigo on their phone, while their wives elbow them to shut it off and be polite. It's okay. We're being esoteric. No judgement here.

As late evening passes the baton to night, the talk turns more serious. They commiserate about how difficult it is to continue going about not being seen as the city pushes further into their habitats. Maybe there's a light environmental message, but the crux of it is less that than the travails we all go through as we get older. The aches and pains, the realities of new responsibilities that make up the human experience, even as they make each of us feel more alone. Maybe we'll throw in an easy joke about how Skunk Ape can't seem to stop with his twitter, but the others don't really understand how it works. Midlife crisis. Technophobia. How the hell do you even read anything or keep up with anyone when it's just a million retweets of a monkey masturbating? Big Foot will send a tweet about how detached Skunk Ape is from the real world, and Skunk Ape won't even see it in his facebook feed, because something about cat-burgers will push it below the fold.

Yeti will lose it at this conversation and smash his phone. He's drunk, sure, but he's also going through some stuff.

This sudden outburst will stop the banter, and the four of them will realize how adrift they all are. How beneath their unique circumstances just how much more alike they are than not. The audience will realize how much more alike they all are than not. The theater will have a moment. It's cool, though, Yeti was due for a new phone upgrade anyways, so it's not like it was even a huge loss, though we all know it is. We can tell he's telling the truth but also lying. We'll wonder if he's even aware. We'll wonder if we're even aware of how often we do this very thing.

It's last call, and the four of them wrap it up with shared memories from past conventions and former lives— nostalgia. Sasquatch tries to gin up excitement for the keynote address tomorrow, a last swipe at easy humor, but it's too late for that: the night has turned to melancholy, which is what nights do. It's how we know that the play is coming to an end. Someone will have a line that seems an important summing up of the important themes from the night's entertainment, and someone else will have a throwaway joke line that, upon reflection, the audience will realize was the real heart of the performance.

The lights in the hotel bar dim, and they hug it out, glad to have each other; the audience glad to have seen this glimpse into the soul of man, before chuckling to themselves that they learned something about humanity from a Sasquatch, a Yeti, a Big Foot, and a Skunk Ape. Maybe they'll blog about it.

And, in the end, when the curtains drop, and the actors take their bows, I'll decide that maybe, just maybe, doing all the hard work of writing a play won't really be worth it, when I can probably just dash out a quick monologue that nails the pertinent points, themes, and jokes just as well as a play ever could.

End.

Note on/to actors. This piece is performed by someone playing P. Calavara, and may be performed by either a woman playing the part of Polly Calavara, or by a boy playing the part of Perry Calavara, or vice versa. We wrote the play together. Polly Calavara often dresses sort of shabby-chic. Perry Calavara tends to dress nicer, but to look more ragged and sloppy. He lacks confidence and is shy, whereas she is gregarious and outgoing. Perry should be played as giving undue consideration to his thoughts, overthinking the details, and being completely driven by compulsion. Polly shoots from the hip, speaking without thinking, letting her ideas come as they will, and is completely driven by compulsion. They both have a sort of frantic energy to them, but Polly maintains her cool much better than Perry does. Still, though, we're both damaged goods and should be played that way. Mom liked me best.