

## The Sasquatch Murder: A Love Story

**Jeffery Viles**

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*The Sasquatch Murder is an accomplished and thoroughly enjoyable tale, the kind of book one is sorry to finish because it's such good company.*

No typical bigfoot tale, Jeffery Viles's *The Sasquatch Murder* is a genre-bending novel that mingles love, myth, reality, and humor in its big-hearted embrace of all creatures great and small.

Jake Holly has a problem. In the big woods country of the Pacific Northwest, he's accidentally shot a creature few believe exists. On close inspection, the deceased female shows so many signs of human kinship. Jake is stricken with remorse and wants nothing more than to dispose of the remains before he and the tiny, close-knit town of Aurora become national curiosities.

His efforts are soon thwarted. Unbeknownst to Jake, he's been seen by two others, the bigfoot's male mate and young Billy Lasswell. Billy mentions what he's not quite sure he saw on his blog, soon to be read and responded to by journalists on the other side of the world.

This complication gives the book narrative to spare, but further chapters up the ante. The White House wants to be kept abreast of the situation. The dead bigfoot's surviving partner carries the news back to the clan's cave, where, through a series of convincingly described utterances and gestures, the clan decides to march to Aurora to retrieve the body. Mindful of the creature's similarity to humans, the town sheriff seeks to avoid bad publicity by charging Jake with homicide.

Jake's co-conspirators include his girlfriend Jessica (whose father wrongly disapproves of Jake), Oscar the undertaker (whose mortuary houses the body), and other locals who hang out at the town tavern. Billy, whose blog triggered so much attention, has serious parent problems that lend a hard edge of reality.

There are chapters set entirely within the sasquatch clan and chapters that focus on foreign journalists and various White House staffers who ponder whether or not to tell the president. The focus shifts easily among all these actors. The pace is swift, and suspense heightens as the inevitable confrontation between humans and the sasquatch clan draws near.

One of the book's big draws lies in its characters, both human and not-quite. Portrayals are infused with empathy and gentle humor but are also realistic and free of simplistic sentimentality. Dialogue is deft, and descriptions tell not only what a character looks like but something about who he or she is. A forty-something woman in a bar, for instance, is succinctly sketched as a "blonde in a red dress so tight she looked shrink wrapped."

The world within the book is utterly credible, easily merging the fantastic and the realistic. The macro worlds of global journalism and Washington politics meld with the micro world of a tiny town and a mythical creature no one has ever seen.

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SUSAN WAGGONER (December 1, 2017)

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