

Beauty & the Bigfoot

By

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Beauty & the Bigfoot

Can true love exist between the species?

Tara's world is anything but normal. Her father is known as the resident crackpot – just because he's on a personal mission to catch a Sasquatch. Despite all of the "Bigfoot evidence" cluttering their house, Tara never really believed in Bigfoot – until the day her father brought him home.

She affectionately names her father's prized catch 'Joe' and discovers there's something oddly familiar – and erotic – about him. With a media circus descending on her father's ranch and a showdown brewing with the local sheriff, Tara risks her life to save Joe.

When Tara finally succumbs to her animalistic urges, she learns that Joe is not exactly who – or what – he seems. Joe is more than a Sasquatch – he's her soul mate!

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CHAPTER 1

“Dad, what am I going to do with you?”

Tara shook her head and sighed as she entered the cluttered den. She adjusted the framed certificate from the Cryptozoological Society recognizing her father as a “Certified Bigfoot Investigator.” It hung on the wall in a place of esteemed honor—next to an 8-by-10 enlargement of frame 352 from the Patterson film. The infamous shot showed a female Bigfoot in mid-stride looking over her shoulder at the camera.

As much as she loved her dad, she had never understood his obsession with Bigfoot.

“Charlie MacAllister’s Bigfoot Museum” was her father’s pride and joy. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases were crammed with dusty paperbacks titled *It Lurks in the Woods* and *Some Call it Sasquatch!* Notebooks detailing his expeditions, sightings, and other “evidence” were stacked next to the loveseat. Scrapbooks filled with tabloid articles proclaiming *I WAS BIGFOOT’S BRIDE* and *BIGFOOT SIGHTED IN UFO* were strewn on the coffee table. Her mother’s antique china closet held plaster casts of Bigfoot tracks.

She opened the back door, letting in the fresh July air. The den needed to be aired out and cleaned, and she could only do that when her father went on a “field excursion.” If she was lucky, she would be able to vacuum and dust before—

“Tara! Tara? Where are you?” Her father raced into the den, then scowled as he spotted her. “What are you doing in here? Are you trying to clean again? What did I tell you about that?”

She stared at her father like he was from another planet. His medium-brown hair stuck up all over his head like horns, he hadn’t shaved in days, and his clothes were covered with dirt and brambles. It was no wonder why the whole town considered him a raving kook—among other things.

“Come on, come on! You’ve gotta come out and see it! I did it. I did it.”

“Now what?” she forced herself to ask. How many times had Dad rushed in with the “biggest discovery of the year” only to show her a photo of another Bigfoot track? She hated to dampen his enthusiasm, but she had been surrounded by Bigfoot paraphernalia for her entire life and she just wasn’t interested in it anymore.

“I got him. The big male. You know the one.” He gestured at a framed, grainy photo of something running through the woods. “Him.”

She rolled her eyes. Her father wasn't like other Bigfoot researchers who wanted to catch any old Bigfoot—No, Charlie MacAllister was on a personal mission to catch one *particular* Bigfoot. One he claimed had been living within five miles of their house for years.

“Why can't you have a normal hobby like other fathers? They play golf or watch NASCAR all weekend. They don't spend their lives running around in the forest, hunting something that isn't real,” she grumbled. “What is it? Another picture? A cast? More weird hairs? We have to talk. This whole Bigfoot thing is—”

“No, no, nothing so ordinary. Come see him!” Her father jumped up and down like an excited five-year-old on his birthday. “He's in the yard. It took me forever, but I got him on the trailer.” He grabbed her arm and pulled her out the back door.

“Dad, if this is a bear cub, or a—”

“No. You'll see. Now I'll finally be able to prove that I'm not the nutcase everyone in town thinks I am.”

She let her father drag her into the backyard. A breeze wafted toward her, and she wrinkled her nose. “What's that smell? Did you get skunked up in the hills?”

“Is that what you think it smells like? I thought it was muskier, like a ferret.”

“Or a wet dog that rolled in rancid garbage.” She came around the corner of the house and gasped. “Oh my God! What is that?”

She ran to the flatbed trailer and stared at the unconscious creature. It lay stretched out on its back with its hairy arms and legs shackled to the metal trailer frame. Dad had captured something, all right. There was no mistaking what it was. She had seen enough photos of Bigfoot to know him anywhere.

“You *did* catch him.” She looked at her father. “But, but...” For once in her life, she was speechless. She pointed at the trailer. “How—”

Her father grinned and folded his arms across his chest. “Well, now do you believe me? I told you I caught Bigfoot. You should listen to your old man. He knows what he’s talking about.”

Her mind whirled. How was it possible? After twenty years of searching, her father had done it. He had actually captured Bigfoot.

“Go on, take a look. Don’t be afraid of him. He’s knocked out.”

Tara brushed a strand of black hair away from her face and bent closer to the Bigfoot. It looked almost eight feet long. Every inch of its muscular body was covered with dark brown hair. As in all the “official” reports, it didn’t really have a neck—its head seemed to sit on its shoulders. “It’s just like the one in frame 352.”

“Yes, I know. Except this one’s male.”

She leaned over the Bigfoot’s waist and peered at its groin. The hair grew longer here, but she noticed something brown lying limp between his legs. She poked it with her finger.

“Tara! Leave that alone.”

She bolted upright, embarrassed. What had come over her? Her father had just captured a mythological creature, and the first thing she did was look at its penis. She took a deep breath and sniffed the air. Bigfoot didn’t smell as bad as she’d first thought. Instead of reeking like a skunk, he smelled like musky cologne mixed with something sweet.

“I bet he’s popular with the females. His feet are twenty-three and a half inches long. You know the joke, ‘Big feet, big something else.’” Her father chuckled. “His hands are a foot long. Look at his face. What do you think?”

She studied Bigfoot's face. He had a wide, sloped brow and a strong jawline, but no hair on his nose or around his lips. And his nose was pointed, not flat, as had been reported by other researchers. She scowled. Now that she had taken a better look at him, Bigfoot didn't resemble an animal at all. He looked like a hairy man.

"Dad, he's too human-looking to be a Sasquatch. Are you sure this isn't a—" She stopped herself. The word "hoax" wasn't allowed in her father's presence. "A man in a suit trying to fool you?"

"Nope. I tested for that. Watch this."

Her father yanked a clump of hair on the creature's inner thigh. The skin moved with the hair. He parted a section of hair, exposing light brown skin underneath. "If you scratch him, you get bits of skin under your nails, like dandruff. That wouldn't happen with a suit. Trust me, I checked him out. He's real."

"But..." She shook her head. Why did she suddenly feel so light-headed? Was it the shock of seeing something that by all logic couldn't be real? Or maybe it was finally realizing that her father wasn't crazy. "What are you going to do with him... whatever he is?"

Her father's hazel eyes sparkled as he took a crumpled sheet of yellowed paper from the back pocket of his faded jeans. She immediately recognized it as the

“Plan When I Catch Bigfoot” that was always stuck to the refrigerator.

“First, I call that biologist-primatologist from the University and get him down here to authenticate. He’ll probably want to take our friend back to Seattle for tests. You know, DNA, hair samples, blood work, and who knows what else.”

He nodded a few times, then continued rattling off from the paper. “And then there’s the media. I won’t go local, to Hades in a handbag with them. They’ve been making fun of me for too many years. Besides, they never return my calls anyway.” He shrugged.

“I’ll get in touch with the big networks and let them feed the story to the local stations. All the magazines will want to talk to me, too—*National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, and of course, *Bigfoot Times*.”

“Oh, of course. Why wouldn’t they?” She touched Bigfoot’s chest and was surprised to find that the hair felt soft, not coarse like an animal’s pelt. His chest muscles twitched under her hand, and she yanked her palm away. Was he waking up?

“Dad—”

Her father circled the trailer, rambling on. “I’ll need to hire a lawyer to protect my right of ownership, and an

agent to sift through the book deals, TV specials, personal appearances, and endorsements.”

“Dad—”

“I want the whole world to see him. I’ll have a pay-per-view event, live from Las Vegas. I’ll bring him out onstage and—”

“Are you out of your mind? You can’t do that. What if he gets loose like in *King Kong*?”

He ignored her. “Who could I get to host it? Too bad Leonard Nimoy is gone. He did such a good job narrating *In Search Of*... Maybe that alien researcher guy with the big hair would do it. I’ll —”

“Dad!” She grabbed his arm and spun him toward her. “You won’t be able to do any of that. If nothing else, this is an endangered species. The Department of Wildlife would have a coronary if they knew you captured a Sasquatch.”

Her father frowned. “You know better than that, Tara. It’s called Sasquatch over the border. Down here, he’s Bigfoot.”

He had her on a technicality, and she rolled her eyes. “This is no time to split hairs. You have to let him go.”

His mouth dropped open. "What? Let him go? Never! I spent the last twenty years trying to prove these animals exist. I finally catch one and you want me to set it free? No way." He shook his head.

"Everyone in this two-bit town has made fun of me for years. I put up with them calling me a crackpot, a loon, a man who sees monsters, because all along I knew these things were real. I just couldn't prove it. So now who'll have the last laugh? This is my one chance to shove Bigfoot in their faces and make them see the truth. But don't worry," he said, patting her shoulder. "I won't let anyone hurt him. He's too valuable."

She sighed. Experience had taught her there was no way to reason with her father when he got into one of his obsessive moods. He'd been so adamant that there were Sasquatches in the woods that she had accepted his odd quirk, like some people naturally took for granted that ghosts and UFOs were real.

She had indulged his odd hobby all her life, humoring him each time he went out on an expedition. What harm was there in combing the woods and camping out in search of a mythical beast? Never in a million years did she ever think he'd really capture Bigfoot.

"And what will happen when the news gets out? Sheriff Hackbarth warned you about causing public

disturbances and getting people riled up about Bigfoot. He said he'd—"

"He can go eat his hat! George Hackbarf knows as well as I do that these animals are real. He's seen 'em, too. Only he's too much of a pantywaist politician to admit it. It's bad PR for the sheriff to see monsters. Bigfoot could crawl into his bathtub and he'd deny it existed."

She chuckled. Dad never cursed or used foul language, but he made his opinions known through colorful—if not bizarre—sayings. His rivalry with the arrogant sheriff went back as long as she could remember. "Okay, so what are you going to do with," she gestured at the trailer, "him?"

"He goes in the Bigfoot Barn, where else? I got it all set up and waiting." He unhooked the trailer from the pickup truck and rolled it down the hill toward a huge metal shed.

"I sank iron posts into the concrete when I poured the foundation. I'll chain him up in there a while, keep him on hold until the scientists get here and take a look at him." He opened the oversized door, flicked on the light, and wheeled the trailer into the shed.

She watched as her father set a two-inch thick plywood ramp on the back of the trailer. He unfastened the chains from the trailer frame, then half-slid, half-

dragged the unconscious creature down the ramp. The plywood tilted to one side. Bigfoot rolled off and landed on the floor.

Tara ran into the shed. “Be careful. Don’t hurt him.”

She couldn’t think of him as a Bigfoot—except for the shape of his head, he looked like a really tall, hairy man. She stared at him for a minute. Something about his look, or his scent, reminded her of camping. Why did she suddenly have a craving for marshmallows?

“Don’t make a fuss, Tara. They’re built tough. That fall won’t hurt him any. Besides, do you think I’d ruin my life’s work?” her father asked as he looped a chain through a metal ring in the floor.

“Will that hold him when he wakes up? He’ll be mad and—”

“Don’t worry, I’ve got this all figured out. It’s part of the plan.” He leaned the plywood ramp against the wall and backed the trailer out of the shed. “He’ll be able to move his arms and legs a little, but not too much. They’re strong, but I know this one—”

“This one? There are more?”

“Of course. Did you think the stork delivered them wearing diapers? There’s more of them up in the mountains, but—”

“Then what’s to stop them from coming down here and rescuing him?”

Her father’s eyes brightened. “You think they will? If they do, maybe I can catch a female and have a breeding pair. The scientists would love—”

“I can’t believe I’m hearing this. Dad, you have to let him go.”

“Nonsense.” He ushered her out of the shed and switched off the light. “Let’s leave him alone to sleep it off. I’ve got a lot of calls to make,” he said as he closed the door. “This is the find of the century. Think of it, Tara, we’ll be part of zoological history. We’ll be famous.”

“Yeah, and so will he. But at what price?” she groused. No matter how important this “discovery” was, it wasn’t fair to chain up an innocent animal and hold him captive in a strange place. Scientists would stick him with needles to study him—or worse. She bit her bottom lip and glanced back at the shed. Whatever Bigfoot really was, he certainly didn’t deserve this.

* * *

“Yes, that’s right. I captured Bigfoot. No, no, I’m as sober as a preacher having supper with the Pope on Christmas. Uh-huh. I’m holding a press conf— Hello?

Hello? Frilly-girdle-wearing nincompoop. Bugger on you then, you Commie.”

Tara chuckled and rinsed off the supper dishes. That was the third network that had hung up on her father. Her heart went out to him. For twenty years he’d tried to capture something that people didn’t believe existed, and now that he had succeeded, nobody wanted to listen.

“You know, Tara, from the way folks are acting, you’d think I was trying to tell them that I just flew back from Jupiter with Elvis.”

“Maybe you should—”

He waved her off. “I’ve been made fun of, laughed at, and hung up on before. A few more calls and—”

A loud shriek interrupted him. She jumped and dropped a plate in the sink. “What the hell was that?”

“Come on, Tara. You know what that was. You’ve heard the vocalizations before. I’ve got dozens of recordings just like that.” Her father opened the refrigerator and took out a package of hot dogs. “Time to give our new friend a snack.”

“I was going to make those for lunch tomorrow.”

“Have soup,” he called out over his shoulder as he hurried into the den. A second later, he came out carrying his rifle.

“What are you going to do with that?”

“It’s for insurance, in case he needs another horse tranq. Come on, I want you to witness this. Hurry up!”

Another ear-piercing shriek echoed in the night, and the hairs on her arms prickled. The wild sound reminded her of a screeching panther or a roaring bear.

“Bring some apples and bananas. We’ve gotta keep him quiet. If he yells like this all night, he’ll have everyone in town up here nosing around. I don’t want them to see him until the unveiling tomorrow.”

“Are you sure I’m not adopted?” she shouted as her father raced outside.

She took an apple and a banana out of the fruit bowl. “It’s no wonder why I can’t get a date in this town. People think I’m just as nutty as he is. I must be, going along with this,” she grumbled. “And now I’m talking to myself... wonderful.”

When she got to the shed, her father was waiting by the door.

“Now, whatever happens, don’t be nervous.”

“Right... if the eight-foot-tall hulking creature attacks me, I’ll just give him an apple.”

Her father opened the shed door and flipped on the light. Bigfoot yowled and shielded his eyes with his forearm. The heavy chains allowed him to move his arms and legs, but he couldn’t go far.

She entered the shed and hung back behind her father, unsure if she should get closer.

“Go ahead, yell and holler all you want,” her father taunted. “You ain’t getting out of those irons. They’re bolted down. I got you good, didn’t I?”

Bigfoot bellowed. The deafening roar echoed in the metal shed. He raised his hands and tried to bite through the chains holding him.

Tara watched as his brown eyes narrowed to slits. He growled and glared at her father. She recognized the look—it was rage. “Dad, the gun is pissing him off. Take it outside.”

“Don’t be silly, Tara. He’s an animal, how—”

She stepped between her father and Bigfoot. “He’s an intelligent creature. He knows what hurt him. Don’t forget, animals are a lot smarter than we think. People taught a gorilla how to use sign language. Don’t you think he can figure out who brought him here?”

Her father moved closer to Bigfoot. It snarled at him, barring its fangs. “You keep quiet, unless you wanna go back to dream world,” he said, brandishing the rifle.

“Leave him alone.” She pushed the rifle barrel down and turned to Bigfoot. “Easy, boy, it’s okay,” she said in a soothing voice.

Bigfoot tugged on the chains and snorted. His actions reminded her of a black bear she’d seen chained to a trailer at a traveling circus. The sad, defeated look in its eyes had just about broken her heart. It pained her to see Bigfoot struggling and desperately trying to get free.

“I won’t let him hurt you,” she said, crouching down in front of Bigfoot.

“Tara, be careful. He’s wild.”

“I’ll be fine. I bet you’re hungry, aren’t you?” She held the banana out to Bigfoot. “Go on, take it.”

Bigfoot glanced at the banana, then at her. After a second, he snatched it from her hand.

She looked at her father over her shoulder. “See? He’s... Ahh!” She squealed as Bigfoot grabbed her around the waist and pulled her to his chest.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelli A. Wilkins is an award-winning author who has published more than 100 short stories, 19 romance novels, and 5 non-fiction books. Her romances span many genres and heat levels.

Beauty & the Bigfoot, a paranormal-comedy, was published in September 2017.

Kelli released ***Trust with Hearts***, a contemporary romance, in July 2017. Her third gay romance, ***Four Days with Jack***, was released in June 2017. Kelli's trilogy of erotic romance novellas, ***Midsummer Night's Delights***, ***Midwinter Night's Delights***, and ***Ultimate Night's Delights*** was published in spring 2017.

Loving a Wild Stranger was published in January 2017. This historical/pioneer romance is set in the wilds of the Michigan Territory and blends tender romance with adventure.

Kelli's third Medallion Press romance, ***Lies, Love & Redemption*** was released in September 2016. This spicy historical western is set on the Nebraska prairie in 1877.

Her writing book, ***You Can Write—Really! A Beginner's Guide to Writing Fiction*** is a fun and

informative guide filled with writing exercises and helpful tips all authors can use.

Kelli posts on her Facebook author page:

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