

The National Park Service

i.e. Bad-Ass-Lands

(A short play)

By Christine Williamson

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Synopsis

A scathing satire on the Fascist horror currently stirring in the White House. Also a call to #Resist.

Characters

| | |
|-------------|--|
| NEWS ANCHOR | A TV news anchor |
| ASSISTANT | News Anchor's assistant, wears a Drumpf toupee as needed |
| INTERN 1 | Station Intern, wears a Pussy Hat |
| INTERN 2 | Station Intern, wears a Park Ranger Hat |

Setting

The Situation Room of a major network news station. Could parody an existing channel, providing that channel is not FOX.

Time

The Evening News. Mid-January, 2017

Minimal Setting Options

This piece could be performed black box, but the major props pieces should be used.

Digital/Sign Resources

Tweets from the twitter account: Half An Onion @HalfOnionInABag

Horst-Wessel-Lied and Hail to the Chief can be found on wikipedia or youtube

TEXT Note: The dialogue referencing @HalfOnionInABag's follower numbers should be updated daily to reflect the account's status at the time of each performance.

Approximate Running Time: 8-10 minutes

(Lighting/Sound: Black out. The strains of Hail to the Chief infiltrate the darkened theatre. They grow louder. Lights fade slowly up, revealing a Prime Time newsroom with a NEWS ANCHOR, frozen in the midst of giving a report. The music swells as the lights brighten. Then... Bright Flash!)

(Sound: Music Cuts Off.)

NEWS ANCHOR

(Comes to life as music cuts off.)

—other news, the unelected British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has declared to her people and all the countries of the European Union that the United Kingdom firmly intends to have its cake and eat it too by enjoying all the benefits of EU membership without paying any of the dues or following any of its regulations.

...

I'm not sure that's how diplomacy works, but I'm sure it sounds good and looks good on twitter.

ENTER ASSISTANT

ASSISTANT

(Hands news card to NEWS ANCHOR.)

NEWS ANCHOR

Thank you. In other news... Is this right? You're sure this is right?

ASSISTANT

It's right.

NEWS ANCHOR

For the love of—

Exit ASSISTANT

NEWS ANCHOR

In other news... Half An Onion In A Bag, has been added to the terrorist no-fly list. That's right. Half An Onion... In A Bag.

Enter INTERN 1

INTERN 1

(Holds up sign showing Half An Onion's twitter profile pic.)

NEWS ANCHOR

This anonymous twitter account stands condemned for asking that most dangerous of questions, "What If?" What if...? That's the question folks. Half An Onion in A Bag asks,

NEWS ANCHOR – Cont'd

and I quote, “What if this account that is simply half an onion in a Ziploc bag ended up with more followers than @realDonaldTrump?”

INTERN 1

(Holds up sign showing the tweet.)

NEWS ANCHOR

When asked why the onion is doing it, we are told to reference the half-onion’s first tweet, “Bet that would drive him crazy.” Seeing as he’s bound and determined to make every American’s life as difficult as possible by destroying the foundations of our democracy, I consider this to be a most worthwhile goal. The half-onion’s current follower count is... 623,522. Scratch that.

(Gets out phone. Follows account.)

(Sound/Lighting: A twitter notification sound rings out.)

NEWS ANCHOR

623,523 followers. It’s a lot of ground to make up, but every little bit helps. What if.

Enter ASSISTANT

ASSISTANT

(Hands NEWS ANCHOR news card.)

NEWS ANCHOR

This just in. Onions are no longer listed as an optional ingredient for omelets on the White House’s breakfast menu. When asked for comment, Press Secretary Spicer replied, “The half-onion’s claim that it has a better cabinet is false.”

ASSISTANT

(Puts on Drumpf toupee.)

NEWS ANCHOR

But we all know the real reason is...

ASSISTANT

I hate onions. No one should eat onions. They’re terrible. Terrible food. Terrible food, onions. Onions make me cry. It’s an assault. They make me gag. My cabinet’s much better. Onions are awful. They should be illegal.

NEWS ANCHOR

Travelers that intend to fly are being advised to remove all onions from their sandwiches before entering security. Just. In. Case.

ASSISTANT

(Removes toupee. Hands NEWS ANCHOR news card.)

NEWS ANCHOR

A paparazzi... gossip ring?

ASSISTANT

(Nods.)

NEWS ANCHOR

A paparazzi gossip ring has filed a lawsuit against the White House.

Exit ASSISTANT

NEWS ANCHOR

The paparazzi claim the White House has stolen the template they use to create and spread click bait. They first noticed the theft when a sketchy story about Conway allegedly punching people at the inauguration surfaced. According to the paparazzi's representative, the parallels were glaringly obvious. I quote: "The unnamed sources and unsubtle hints about position-jockeying and inner circle squabbles are unmistakable. The realm of Kardashian butt profiles belongs to us. Make your own damn Propaganda template. It's not that hard. I'm sure your tiny hands can manage it." ...Ouch. You know its bad when the paparazzi have the moral high ground. You heard it here, folks. The White House is attempting to create a click-bate cabinet Reality Show to distract the American people from what matters. Will they succeed? Not if the paparazzi get their way.

(Sound/Lighting: The Sound of phones vibrating.)

INTERN 1

(Jumps, startled. Sets sign down and checks phone. Stares.)

Enter ASSISTANT

ASSISTANT

(Running with news card.)

The National Park Service has gone rogue!!!

Enter INTERN 2

INTERN 2

(Waves an American flag, running & grinning wildly!)

(Sound/Lighting: As NEWS ANCHOR takes the news card, The Star Spangled Banner begins to play.)

NEWS ANCHOR

So it has! In defiance of a Presidential gag order barring the discussion of any and all science by government agencies, the South Dakota Badlands continued to tweet facts about climate change for several hours before the social media account was wrested from their control. An alternative National Park Service account has since sprung up and remains committed to championing free speech and environmental science! That's right. The National Park Service. An organization dedicated to protecting our public lands and preserving them for future generations. Our children and our children's children. The National Park Service has had the nerve to stand up to the tyrannical threat corroding the veins of this Nation. It will continue to safe guard morality, educating us about Nature, teaching us to appreciate the Earth beneath our feet, the sky above our heads, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. The National Park Service! I salute you!

ASSISTANT

Trump plans to sell off our National Parks to private corporations.

(Sound/Lighting: Music abruptly cuts out.)

*A sobering silence settles over the News Room for several beats.
Then...*

INTERN 1

Yellowstone National Park.

INTERN 2

The Grand Canyon.

ASSISTANT

Monument Valley.

NEWS ANCHOR

Mammoth Cave National Park.

...

I love Mammoth Cave National Park. I went there as a kid. My Grandma took me. We walked all thru the caves while a nice Park Ranger told us cave facts and made sure nobody got lost. We learned about gypsum and stalactites... and cave crickets. Blind fish. Petrified bats... Did you know, if you touch a stalagmite, the oil on your fingers will stick to it, and prevent it from growing larger? Think of that. A living pillar of rock that's been growing taller and taller for thousands of years, and a single touch—a single, careless touch—by a little kid can stop its growth for all eternity. Tiny. Careless. Fingers.

...

It's a lot easier to destroy something than it is to create.

...

The Park Service uses templates, too. Scripts, if you will. To answer common questions from tourists. Questions like, "Where do the bats fly out of from the caves each night?" My Grandma discovered this. She wanted to watch the bats, you see. A massive cave, longest in

NEWS ANCHOR – Cont'd

the world. Clouds of bats must've been exiting it each night. To hunt. But instead of saying, "Sorry, ma'am. We can't tell you where the bats are because we don't want lots of people disturbing them," the Rangers gave Grandma the script. "Ma'am. These bats are the size of your thumbnail. They do not fly out."

INTERN 1 & 2

(Share confused looks.)

NEWS ANCHOR

You have to say it with the Southern Accent. Kentucky. Three times my Grandma asked that question. Three different Rangers, in three different places, on three different days of the trip. "Ma'am. These bats are the size of your thumbnail. They do not fly out." No real answer. Just deflection. She was quite perturbed. But didn't show it. At least, not 'til the end.

ASSISTANT

(Puts on Drumpf toupee.)

INTERN 1

Will you release your taxes?

ASSISTANT

Only the Media cares about my taxes.

INTERN 2

Aren't you concerned about rising Hate crimes?

ASSISTANT

The World's a hateful place. Lots of Hate. Lots of anger.

INTERN 2

Do you know what nuclear war is?

ASSISTANT

We'll show 'em who's Boss!

INTERN 1

Women are people, too.

ASSISTANT

You're Fired!!

NEWS ANCHOR

A sobering thought. To fire the media for daring to do it's job. Which we've been so lax in doing up 'til now. Reading our scripts. Asking the safe asks. Don't rock the boat. Don't

NEWS ANCHOR – Cont'd

piss off management. We know who management's owned by, after all. They failed to realize how badly they'd be displaced. Fascists don't share power. You fall in line. Or Die. But let's NOT come to that, shall we? There's still time. Time to ask questions. Time to break scripts. Time to save this nation before it falls to the black, oil-slicked pocketbooks of filthy, hate-mongering one-percenters who think the little we have left should be theirs too. The pyramid scheme is over. The Base. Must. Crumble.

...

Is this a Call to War? No. Not in the bloody sense of the word. But remember. The next time you're brushed off. The next time you're not given official answers. The next time blatant discrimination and hate speech is forced upon your person or the people around you, Speak up! Ask the hard question! Ask the real question! Ask the impertinent, old lady question. Because we're not as dumb and easily led as they want to believe! The next time you're told, "Ma'am. These bats are the size of your thumbnail. They do not fly out," you open your mouth. Look them straight in the eye, and say,

"Well, what do they? Crawl on their elbows?!"

...

Because that's what this Administration intends for us to do!

(Sound/Lighting: Explosions shake the stage.)

INTERNS 1 & 2

(Swap their Pussy hat and Ranger hat for army helmets. They get down on the floor, crawling and elbowing along as if moving thru WWII trenches.)

ASSISTANT

(Grabs a Nazi flag and starts waving it menacingly in the background.)

(Sound/Lighting: Red flashes and the sounds of bombings and air raids engulf the theatre as the strains of Horst-Wessel-Lied swell to fill the room.)

ASSISTANT

(Grinning madly, waves flag in time with the Nazi anthem.)

NEWS ANCHOR

(Puts on a Nazi army helmet and makes elbow crawling motions as INTERNS 1 & 2 crawl nearby. As the fire and bombings intensify, NEWS ANCHOR drops to the stage and joins them moving thru the war zone.)

(Sound/Lighting: Light, Sound, Chaos. Smoke machines if available. War and flickering shadows engulf the stage. Then finally, in one loud, terrifying crescendo...

Black Out!!!)

FINIS