

DIZGRUNTLED

A Play by Daniel Rover Singer

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Fantasy and reality clash when a movie director, hired to helm a documentary about how cartoons are made, finds himself at the world's most famous animation studio in the middle of a polarizing labor strike. Suggested by real events at the Walt Disney Studio in 1941.

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CHARACTERS

(Minimum 6 men, 1 woman playing multiple roles)

ALFRED WERKER, 45, a freelance film director

WALT DISNEY, 30-45, producer of animated cartoons

NORM FERGUSON, 28-38, animator of "Pluto"

ART BABBITT, 34, animator of "Goofy"

MRS. BENCHLEY, 50, a fictitious wife

HELEN BLUME, 30, an artist

COMMIE RABBLE-ROUSER

STUDIO GUARD

HUMPHREY, 25, an uptight studio page

ARTISTS/STRIKERS

CAMERA OP/SOUND TECH

HUAC CHAIRMAN

The action takes place at the Disney Studio in Burbank, California in 1941 (additional scenes span 1931-1947). Simplistic set units slide on and off quickly so that the action is continuous. Settings: Walt's Office, A Living Room, Animator's Office, Studio Campus, Soundstage, Screening Room, Café.

PROLOGUE

(AL WERKER, an enthusiastic, midwestern man of 45, enters and addresses the audience. Cigarette optional.)

AL:

Everyone in Hollywood was talking about Disney’s big new studio in Burbank. They called it a Dream Factory; a place where “magic” is made. Well I’ve been in the motion-picture business for twenty-five years, and I’m skeptical about magic. Movies are created by businessmen. But I’ll tell ya, when I was hired to direct a picture that would go behind the scenes at Disney’s, I was more than a little excited. I’d seen “Snow White,” of course. Who hadn’t? I think everyone and their DOG saw “Snow White.” It was a pretty good picture, and yeah, I cried at the end when Snow White is lying there in her glass coffin. The dwarfs are crying; the animals are crying; everyone in the theater was crying! But afterwards I was thinking, I never cry at the movies. Hell, I never cry at anything! But this Disney fella had gotten me to cry at a cartoon! A cartoon, for God’s sake! A bunch of silly drawings flipping past a camera lens. How did he do that? Is that magic, or is that just some kind of sentimental manipulation? So last year I went to see “Pinocchio,” and then “Fantasia.” Did you see ‘em? No? I guess they weren’t so popular. They didn’t make me cry. But they were beautiful. And this time I thought, this Disney fella’s a true artist. So when I show up at his studio, I’m wondering, is it really gonna be a Dream Factory, or is it gonna be chaos like everywhere else in Hollywood? *(Exits.)*

Act One, Scene 1: WALT’S OFFICE

(In front of a storyboard [a horizontal four-by-eight-foot bulletin board pinned with a series of sketches and dialogue cards] are NORM FERGUSON and ART BABBITT, two artists in their 30’s, with their shirtsleeves rolled up, vigorously enacting the story of a cartoon, and pointing to the sketches as they talk. WALT DISNEY, 39, looking debonair with a trim moustache, greased back hair and pullover sweater-vest, sits in a desk chair downstage center, facing upstage to watch the presentation.)

NORM:

So Goofy’s finally got his ass onto the saddle, but the horse is still acting like an obstinate S.O.B. He’s got this crazy look in his eyes. And the pompous narrator says:

ART: *(imitating a pompous Brit)*

All well-trained saddle-horses have a variety of gaits. First, the Trot. Note that the man is moving in perfect unison, as if Horse and Rider were One.

NORM: (*bounces as if riding a horse*)

The horse is trotting and Goofy’s bouncing up and down, ears and arms and legs flopping around like a rag doll, and all the time he’s smiling at the camera and tipping his hat, like he’s doing it perfectly!

ART:

Ahem! Narrator pipes in: “Only the magic of the slow-motion camera can do justice to the grace of this spectacle, as man and beast simultaneously undulate with the wave-like motion of a summer zephyr.”

NORM:

Great line, Art.

ART:

Thanks, Fergie.

NORM:

Now we actually slow the action down, so you can see Goofy’s legs flopping around in completely impossible directions, till he finally bounces off in front of the horse, bounces underneath it, and then, the horse starts riding Goofy!

(NORM and ART laugh heartily at this, but stop when they notice WALT does not join in.)

WALT: (*checking his watch*)

Is it almost over?

NORM:

Almost. Uh... (*Hurries along*) Goofy pokes the horse with spurs, Goofy whips himself with the riding crop, the Horse refuses to jump, Goofy goes flying into the river, etc. etc. Then finally:

ART:

“As horse and rider turn their footsteps homeward, the experienced horseman always walks his horse to the stable.”

(AL WERKER enters.)

NORM:

Then the exhausted horse looks right at the camera and says—

AL: (*winnying like a horse*)

Neighhhh! Sorry to bust in, but your secretary said you were expecting me.

WALT: Alfred! (*Rises, shakes AL's hand.*)

Come on in, meet the fellas. That's Art Babbitt and Norm Ferguson. This is Al Werker, he's directing "The Reluctant Dragon." (*AL shakes hands with ART and NORM.*)

NORM:

"Alfred Werker," I know that name. What was your last picture...?

AL:

"The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes."

NORM:

"Sherlock Holmes!" I stayed to see it twice.

AL:

Ah, you liked it?

ART:

No, he sat through it because his Pluto cartoon comes on first, and he likes to see how the audience reacts.

AL:

Oh...

NORM:

He's just kidding, Al. It's a swell picture.

WALT:

Have a seat. (*AL sits.*)

NORM:

So what's the gag with "The Reluctant Dragon?"

AL:

What do you mean?

NORM:

You going into the cartoon directing business?

AL (*laughing*):

No, I don't have anything to do with animation. I'm directing the live-action stuff. I guess you guys haven't read the script?

ART:

There's a script?

WALT:

Don't let them fluster you, Al. Animators like to think they're hilarious. Tell 'em what it's about.

AL:

See, we're telling the world about how cartoons are made here in the world's most sophisticated animation studio. We've got Robert Benchley, you know, the comic? We've got this story about him coming to the Disney Studio to pitch this kiddy book, "The Reluctant Dragon," to Walt. He gets lost and stumbles into the Art Class, the Music Stage, the Camera Department... meeting the artists and making a lot of jokes. And along the way, we show the audience how cartoons are made.

ART:

You show a bunch of drunks hunched over their desks for sixty hours a week?

AL:

No... no, of course not. For example, there's a bit where the cameraman is shooting cels of Donald Duck, you know, one at a time. Suddenly Donald starts talking to us from the camera deck, singing a song and showing off how he walks. Funny stuff, right?

NORM:

I've always wondered how cartoonists did that.

WALT:

Now boys, you know what really goes on here wouldn't make a very interesting picture. We'll use some good old-fashioned gimmicks and things to spice it up. We'll show people some real magic going on behind the scenes here. That's what people want to see.

NORM:

Walt, we really need to get back to work...

WALT:

Why don't you show Al what you've got. Maybe it'll inspire him.

AL:

Sure, that'd be swell, if you fellas don't mind. I need to observe some artists at work.

ART:

Why?

AL:

Well, you see, when Benchley stumbles into the Animation Building, he meets some artists who are working on a new storyboard. They sit Benchley down and use him like a guinea-pig. The story is told by the sketches, instead of with regular animation. We've even booked Alan Ladd to play one of the artists.

ART:

I'm speechless.

AL:

Yes, well, the point is to show the audience how important a role the storyboard plays in making cartoons.

ART:

Okay, well we're right at the end of this short called "How to Ride a Horse."

AL: *(Looking at the storyboard)*

Oh, look, it's Goofy. I love him. Some days I'm so clumsy I know just how he feels.

NORM:

We're just about at the end. The Narrator says: *(with the high-tone British accent)* "And now, as horse and rider turn their footsteps homeward, the experienced horseman always walks his horse to the stable."

ART:

When he hears that, the horse looks at the camera with a big, excited grin and says, "STABLE?!" And he takes off at a full gallop!

NORM:

Goofy's being dragged along by the reins. The rush of the horse slams the barn doors closed so Goofy slams right into them.

ART:

Then the horse sticks his head out.

AL:

I thought the doors were shut.

NORM: *(improvising)*

They're uh... Dutch doors. The upper part is still open.

ART:

The horse has a mouthful of hay and he's grinning as he chews. And... IRIS IN.

NORM:

The end.

(WALT sighs, then silently drums his fingers on the arm of his chair. NORM and ART wait nervously for their boss's response.)

WALT:

Needs a punchline at the end. How about that line from the beginning, something the Narrator says about some old philosopher?

ART:

“The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.” You want us to just repeat that?

WALT:

Yeah, ties it all up. Okay, thanks boys.

ART:

Is that it?

WALT:

That’s all I have time for.

NORM:

Jeez, Walt! We could really use more suggestions!

ART:

Come on, Fergie. These days, if it’s not a feature, it’s not worthy of Walt’s attention. We’re the bastard step-child.

WALT:

I wish I had time to be down there with you boys, but the truth is, there isn’t any money in shorts these days. We can make a lot more dough with features, so that’s where I gotta focus my attention.

ART:

Right. Come on, Fergie.

AL:

May I come visit you fellas? I thought, to make the picture more realistic, I should use some REAL animators, instead of just actors.

ART:

Hey, we’re almost as realistic as Donald Duck jumping off the page!

NORM:

Of course we’d be happy to, Al. Animators are all actors anyway. We just tell jokes verrrrry slowl-y.

ART:

One drawing at a time.

NORM:

Walt, you'll have to ease up on our footage deadlines if we're off being make-believe animators.

WALT:

If it's a problem, we'll hire some extras and put pencils in their hands.

ART:

Use us, Al. We're cheaper than extras.

WALT (*angrily*):

That's enough smart-aleck bullshit, Art. You're lucky to have this job, so stop complaining.

ART:

Just a joke, jeez. Pull in your claws, Mama Bear.

NORM:

Nice to meet you Al. See you later. (*EXIT ART and NORM, carrying the storyboard.*)

WALT:

Sorry Al, my fuse has been a little short lately.

AL:

Hope it's nothing serious.

WALT:

Oh, it's plenty serious. My brother Roy was in here an hour ago telling me that we're overextended at the bank and having a hard time getting more credit. The European market has disappeared thanks to that damned Adolph Hitler. And we were really counting on "Pinocchio" and "Fantasia" to be big hits.

AL:

They weren't?

WALT:

Did you see 'em?

AL:

Of course.

WALT:

What did you think?

AL:

They're amazing, Walt. "Pinocchio" was so... classy. "Fantasia" was kinda high-brow, I guess.

WALT:

High-brow?

AL:

Well, forgive me, but "Fantasia" seemed kind of experimental. And... long.

WALT:

And boring?

AL:

No! I thought it was... ahead of its time.

WALT:

(Sigh.) Why don't you cheer me up with your little picture?

AL:

Sure... Okay, now "Reluctant Dragon" starts with a card that says: "This picture is made in answer to the many requests to show the backstage life of animated cartoons. Any resemblance to the real world is purely coincidental." Hahaha! *(WALT is lost in thought and doesn't react.)* That's a joke there.

WALT:

I know, Al, just keep going.

AL:

Okay, heh heh. Tough crowd. Now we're at the home of Robert Benchley and the missus. He's hiding behind his newspaper as usual, and she's reading Benchley this fairy-tale called "The Reluctant Dragon."

(A living-room set slides on with 2 armchairs. AL steps into the set, sits, and holds up a newspaper, covering his face. MRS. BENCHLEY, a middle-aged matron, seated, is reading aloud from a large children's book.)

MRS B:

"So they set off up the hill, arm in arm, the Knight, the Dragon, and the Boy. The lights began to go out in the village, one by one, but there were stars and a late moon as they climbed the downs together." Robert, are you listening?

AL: *(annoyed)*

Go on.

MRS B:

“And as they turned the last corner and disappeared from view, snatches of an old song were borne on the night breeze. I can’t be certain which of them was singing, but I think it was the Dragon.” *(Pause.)*

AL *(finally peeking out at her silence):*

Go on, I’m listening.

MRS B:

That’s the end. And a very lovely end, too. *(Rising)* Robert, I’ve a wonderful idea. You should sell this book to Walt Disney.

AL:

You can’t. It belongs to your nephew.

MRS B:

I mean, the idea for a movie. I’m sure if you went to his studio and suggested it to him, he’d jump at it.

AL:

Me? Suggest a movie to Walt Disney? Why, I hardly know him.

MRS B:

Well, you hardly knew me when you suggested marriage.

AL:

And look at all the trouble that got me into. He can’t listen to every crackpot with a wild idea.

MRS B:

You might be the exception. All you would have to do would be go to the studio and show him the book.

AL:

I wouldn’t dream of it!

MRS B:

They’re always open to new ideas. Come on, I’ll drive you.

AL *(rising):*

Once and for all, I will not go to the studio. I will not make myself ridiculous! *(Turns to walk away and falls clumsily over the arm of his chair.)*

MRS. B:

Too late.

(Living-room set slides off with MRS B, while AL rejoins WALT.)

WALT:

Very funny! But it's a little dull in their house, don't you think? Why not move it to a more interesting location, like the back yard? Benchley can be relaxing on a raft in his swimming pool while she's reading.

AL:

You know, Walt, I was thinking... maybe showing off the new studio and mixing in some cartoons isn't enough. Maybe we *should* think about doing something more... realistic.

WALT:

Realistic?

AL:

Yeah, interviews with the animators, that sort of thing.

WALT (*with rising paranoia*):

Did they put you up to this?

AL:

No, I just thought...

WALT:

I will not let them turn our little picture into propaganda!

AL:

Propaganda?

WALT (*reining himself in*):

I— I'm sorry, Al. Didn't mean to jump on you like that. It's just that I'm worried. My artists have been talking with... union organizers.

AL:

What's their gripe?

WALT:

Well, you know, animated cartoons are pretty damned expensive to make, and the profit margin is slim, especially lately. I've got a staff of twelve hundred here now. I can't pay them top dollar, or get around to pat them all on the back every day. But I built them this big air-conditioned studio, with green grass everywhere, and a cafeteria, and art classes.

It’s a family operation. I want these kids to be happy.

AL:

Do you think they’ll strike?

WALT:

I hope not. These communists-for-hire stand by the fence and rile them up, get ‘em angry about nothing. If they keep this up, and the public gets to thinking I’m running some kind of sweatshop, it’ll kill us. If they picket our movies, and stop buying Mickey Mouse dolls, we can close up shop and go home.

AL:

Listen, we’ll make “Reluctant Dragon” just the way you want it; drawings coming to life, everybody having fun... that’ll get the public on your side.

WALT:

It’s funny... (*pauses, thoughtfully*) ...we’ve come so far the past few years. I’m so proud of these kids. But what we do is so much more than thousands of drawings, and making our own paints, and inventing new things... it’s about touching the audience in a way they don’t expect. Nobody thought cartoons could do that.

AL:

It must be hard to get your employees to understand that. I told a fellow at Fox I was working on a Disney picture, and he couldn’t figure out why I wanted to do a kiddy cartoon. I told him your pictures were very artistic, and asked him if he’d seen “Snow White.” He said, “Why would I go see that fairy crap if I don’t have kids?”—No offense.

WALT:

That’s okay, I get it all the time. Like the theater owners who complained they wouldn’t be able to charge full-price for a cartoon feature, and “Snow White” made more money than every other picture in ’38, combined! And get this: after Frank Lloyd Wright saw “Fantasia” he sent me a telegram. “I like the visuals,” he said, “but why did you have to use all that old music?”

AL:

You know, a lot of visionaries fail to find acceptance in their lifetimes.

WALT:

That’s very discouraging. Thank you.

AL:

Oh, things aren’t so bad, are they?

WALT:

Oh, everything’s fine. I’ve just got a lot of things on my mind. And forget what I said

about labor organizers. Everything’s fine. Just fine.

(WALT exits with the set. AL steps downstage.)

AL: *(to audience)*

Oh-ho man, the tension in that room was so thick you could slice it. Trouble in paradise, and I was the kid in the candy store. Sorry, I know all the corniest clichés. I just *had* to talk to those animators and get the real story. *(AL walks into:)*

Act One, Scene 2: ANIMATORS OFFICE

(NORM FERGUSON is tossing balled-up papers into a trashcan held by ART BABBITT. AL WERKER joins them.)

AL:

Ah, if you fellas are busy, I can come back later.

ART:

No, come in, Al. When you’re gripping a pencil so many hours at a time, you have to take breaks to keep your hand from cramping up.

NORM:

How’d you get mixed up in this? From “Sherlock Holmes” to a day behind the scenes at Disney’s? Kind of a strange assignment, don’t you think?

AL:

Are you kidding? I couldn’t believe my luck! Everyone in Hollywood is talking about this new studio. So I thought, “I’m gonna find out what’s it’s really like there, AND make a picture about it.”

ART:

But you’re NOT making a picture about what REALLY goes on here.

AL:

What? Oh, I don’t know. It’s about the wonderful new campus, how unique each department is, and how the characters leap off the page.

ART:

In other words, it’s a steaming pile of bullshit.

NORM:

Art, for God’s sake....

AL:

That’s okay, Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Babbitt, I’ve worked in Hollywood a long time. I know how movies are made: a lot of hard work and deadlines and egos and arguments. I’m sure your job isn’t easy. But I’m here to make a piece of entertainment. It may not be the truth but it’ll be a good picture and something you can be proud of.

ART:

The truth is, this fancy new studio is a disaster.

AL:

You’ve got to be kidding! You guys are the luckiest artists in the world. Nobody gets to work in a facility this nice. How can it be worse than that tenement on Hyperion?

ART:

The way we were all tumbled together on Hyperion helped us collaborate. There was a spirit of everybody helping each other out when we were all on top of each other.

AL:

The company’s more successful now. You’re just feeling some growing pains.

ART:

“More successful.” Hear that, Fergie? Wouldn’t it be nice for us to enjoy some of that success?

AL:

I’m sure you fellows are making decent money.

ART:

But we don’t get any credit.

AL:

Credit?

ART:

There’s no screen credits for our work.

AL:

I’ve wondered about that. It always just says “A Walt Disney Cartoon.”

NORM:

Company policy. Everybody’s told that from Day One.

ART:

The other cartoon studios give their artists screen credits. I suppose you’re getting screen credit for directing “Reluctant Dragon.”

AL:

Y...es... but... it's in my contract. I'm not a Disney employee.

NORM:

Ah, cruel irony! Can you twist that knife a little deeper?

AL:

Sorry, fellas, if it were up to me, I'd give you all the—

ART:

Look Al, why don't you go check out the fairy dust somewhere else? We got work to do.

AL:

What are you mad at me for?

NORM:

Don't mind Art. He's always grousing about something. It's in his blood.

AL:

What's the matter? Girl troubles?

ART:

How'd you guess?

AL:

I got a sense about these things.

ART:

I've been working till 9 all week. How can I have a sex-life when I'm chained to this place all the time?

NORM:

You shouldn't let it get to you.

ART:

Easy for you, you're married to your work. No matter what time I leave, you're still drawing. Don't you want to have some kind of life outside of this place?

NORM:

I don't care.

ART:

See? Pathetic.

AL:

Have you talked to Walt about all this?

NORM:

Yeah. No one can tell Walt how to run his studio.

AL:

Gotcha. Okay fellas, I'll get out of your hair.

ART:

Quick, while we still have some!

*(ART and NORM return to their game of basketball and exit with the set.
AL steps downstage.)*

AL: *(to audience)*

Did you hear that? This place is a powder-keg! I had a little free time so I decided to do a little Sherlock Holmsing of my own.

Act One, Scene 3: STUDIO CAMPUS

(HELEN BLUME, an artist, walks by in a hurry, looking upset and ignoring AL.)

AL:

Excuse me, Miss, can you tell me... Hey, I won't bite ya!

HELEN:

You've got some nerve, barking at me like that!

AL:

Forgive me, lady. I'm just a little lost.

HELEN:

I didn't mean to snap. It's just, um, not a good day.

AL:

I'm looking for the Live Drawing class.

HELEN:

Animation Building. You just came out of it. You new around here?

AL:

Yes. Alfred Werker. I'm directing "The Reluctant Dragon."

HELEN:

Really! Oops, I'm sorry. We're not supposed to chat with the men. Company policy, you know.

AL:

What a very unfortunate rule! So I don't suppose I get to know your name?

HELEN:

Probably not.

AL:

Darn. Well, sorry you're having a bad day. Anything I can do?

HELEN:

No. It's personal. Are you going to hear Walt's big speech?

AL:

Speech about what?

HELEN:

I suppose you're not an employee.

AL:

No, not technically. Give me a hint?

HELEN:

Sorry. I have to hurry.

(HELEN runs off.)

AL:

Hey, wait—! Nice to meet you too.

(ACOMMIE RABBLE-ROUSER, with a fedora pulled down over his eyes, approaches AL and hands him a pamphlet.)

AL:

Excuse me, do you know which building is the...

COMMIE:

Hey mister, take this and read it. You know this place is a sweatshop.

AL:

A sweatshop? Is that some sort of joke?

COMMIE:

No joke. What, you think the place is run by little dwarfs, singing away in their little diamond mine?

AL:

What are you talking about?

COMMIE:

Some of those artists are only making sixteen dollars a week, while the top men are getting three hundred. Does that sound fair to you? They work nights and weekends, too, for no extra pay. And no one gets screen credits, just the big boss, like he done it all himself. He's up there on his velvet throne, while they're all toiling like slaves in the trenches.

AL:

That's ridiculous.

COMMIE: (*handing AL a leaflet*)

There's gonna be a strike. We've got the Federation of Labor behind us. We're organizing a boycott. We'll picket the theatres. We'll turn this corn-field into a dust bowl, but we need your support.

AL:

Why are you doing this? Mr. Disney brings smiles to millions of faces.

COMMIE:

'S'matter, you never worked for a living?

(A GUARD enters, blowing a whistle.)

GUARD:

I told you, stay the hell off this property! I'll have you arrested!

(The COMMIE runs off.)

AL:

Who the heck was that?

GUARD:

Can I see your pass, please? (*AL shows his pass.*) Thank you, Mr. Werker. Don't pay any attention to those commie rabble-rousers. Where are you going?

AL:

I thought I'd check out the Art Class.

GUARD:

I'll have a page escort you. (*Talks into his walkie-talkie*) Send a page to the Animation Building for Mr. Alfred Werker. (*To AL*) Wait here, Mr. Werker.

AL:

Yes sir, Officer.

(The GUARD exits. ENTER HUMPHREY, a young, uptight studio page.)

AL:

That was quick.

HUMPHREY:

How do you do, I'm Humphrey, Senior Studio Page. It'll be my pleasure to escort you.

AL:

Really, you needn't bother.

HUMPHREY:

No bother at all, sir. Please stay with me at all times, as the studio guards have been instructed to spot unescorted guests and shoot on sight.

AL:

Wha—?

HUMPHREY (*deadly serious*):

I was kidding. (*Laughs without smiling. He's kind of creepy.*) This property is fifty-one acres; we wouldn't want you to get lost. Come along.

AL (*following*):

Fifty-one acres! Boy!

HUMPHREY:

That's right, fifty-one acres of eroded, sandy soil. Mildly alkaline but rich in deposits of cobalt and gypsum. Our campus was designed by architect Kem Weber and Walt himself, and built on the eastern flatlands of the San Fernando Valley.

AL:

What's this I hear about a labor strike?

HUMPHREY:

A labor strike? (*AL shows HUMPHREY the leaflet; HUMPHREY tears it up.*) Oh, don't pay any attention to the oddballs who hang out by the gate, sir. (*Back to his spiel*) The City of Burbank is named for a dentist, Dr. David Burbank, who bought this land back in

1867.

AL:

Is he still around? My wisdom teeth are killing me...

HUMPHREY:

Oh no, sir, he died in 1895.

AL:

Shame. So... you don't think the employees here are getting a raw deal?

HUMPHREY:

Balderdash, Mr. Werker. The employees here have the highest happiness rating of any studio in Hollywood. It's as if each worker is sprinkled with a handful of fairy-dust every morning on their way through the gate.

AL:

Is that so?

HUMPHREY (*pointing*):

This is the Animation Building. That's Ink & Paint, Camera, Editing, and Sound. There are underground tunnels so that art and equipment can be transported between buildings without getting wet in the rain.

AL:

You mean there's people walking around below me right now?

HUMPHREY:

That's right.

AL:

Like dwarfs in a diamond mine.

HUMPHREY:

Excuse me?

AL:

Nothing, I was just thinking, it uh... looks like a park.

HUMPHREY:

The landscaping is very important, Mr. Werker. The grass keeps dust to a minimum.

AL:

Dust?

HUMPHREY:

A speck of dust on the artwork, when photographed, would look huge when projected on a theater screen.

AL (*pointing*):

What’s in there?

HUMPHREY:

That’s a soundstage. You can’t go in right now, Walt’s meeting with the employees. Follow me please. Now over here is our air-conditioning plant, which produces... (*As HUMPHREY exits, AL ditches him and steps downstage.*)

AL: (*to audience*)

Holy cow, Walt’s making a speech? I can’t miss that! I wonder where the... Ah, guess I’ll just follow *everybody*.

(AL follows several ARTISTS, all talking excitedly, to:)

Act One, Scene 4: SOUNDSTAGE

(ART, NORM and other EMPLOYEES/ARTISTS are arguing. AL hides and observes.)

ART:

Wow. Everybody’s here.

NORM:

Must be important.

ART:

You bet your ass it’s important. Walt’s so scared we’re gonna join the union he’s shittin’ kittens.

NORM:

It doesn’t really matter one way or the other, does it?

ART:

Doesn’t matter? Have you talked to anybody lately?

NORM:

Not much. My deadlines have kept me pretty busy—

ART:

Well, get your nose up off your desk and look around. There are artists who come to

work in the same damn clothes every day because they can't afford two pairs of pants. You know the painter Helen Blume? Since her husband took off, she has to support her kid and her mother on sixteen bucks a week. She was skipping lunch in order to feed her family. Poor gal's thin as a pencil. Last week she collapsed right on her desk.

NORM:

Gee, I didn't know things were that bad.

ART:

That's the problem. Neither does Walt.

NORM:

So all this union talk is just a way to get his attention?

ART:

Jeez, Fergie, where have you been? Don't you think the artists here all deserve to be treated fairly?

NORM:

I don't know. It sounds like commie-talk to me.

ART:

That's just what the business-owners say to make it sound un-American. They whine because it costs a little more to run a union shop. Unions represent the soul of the worker.

NORM:

I think that's your Russian blood talking, comrade Babbittski.

ART:

Hey, how'd you know my old last name?

NORM:

At the old studio no one could keep a secret.

ART:

Hey, here he comes.

(WALT enters and reads from a prepared speech.)

WALT:

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for giving up your lunch hour for this important meeting. We are facing a very real crisis—a crisis that threatens the heart of our whole operation. Now I've been in the cartoon business for eighteen years. It's never been easy; in fact, it's been a downright pain in the ass... I've struggled to make every cartoon better than

the last one, which also made it more expensive than the last one. Unfortunately, the profits were never larger in proportion. We’ve had our ups and downs, of course; Mickey Mouse and Snow White made us a lot of money, but there were hundreds of other pictures between and since that haven’t done so well, and that’s put us in a hell of a spot.

We’re at a crossroads now that will determine whether or not the art of animation will continue to thrive. To thrive it needs you, a dedicated and trained staff. Now I want you to feel you’re all treated fairly, and appreciated. I wish I could see more of you personally, but there’s twelve hundred of you, and only one of me, and only so many hours in the day. But if you’re doing good work, believe me, I hear about it.

Now I want to say that I think the future of this company has never looked brighter. But the disappointing box office of our last two features, along with the war in Europe, has pretty much shut down our cash flow. Now we could ask everyone to take a drastic pay cut, but we don’t want to. We could shut down feature production and lay half of you off, but we don’t want to. Or we could sell the company to another studio, and as you can imagine, we’re not about to consider that. Can you imagine me trying to work for someone else? (*EMPLOYEES chuckle at this.*) All I can think of is to try to keep things going the way they are; but with us all working together to reduce production costs wherever we can.

Now the company recognizes the right of employees to organize and to join in any labor organization of their choosing. However, the law clearly provides that matters of this sort should be done off the employer’s premises and on the employees’ own time, and in such a manner as not to interfere with production.

SEVERAL EMPLOYEES: (*variously*)

Booo! Aw, c’mon!

WALT: (*flustered*)

I’m sure you’ll... you’ll make the choice that you feel is right for yourselves, and I’ll be happy to go along with it.

SEVERAL EMPLOYEES: (*variously*)

Yeah right! Heil Disney! Baloney! etc.

WALT:

(*loses his temper and stops reading from the prepared speech*)

Now I’ve had just about enough of this! I heard there’s going to be a big union rally at the Roosevelt Hotel and I’m telling you plainly, I don’t want you to go. I can’t stop you from going, but these Communist organizers don’t know what’s good for you. I’m the only one who knows what’s best for my staff!

SEVERAL EMPLOYEES:

(*drowning out the end of his sentence*)

Booo!

WALT:

Now hear me out! Don't be fooled by those lying S.O.B's the union sends over. (*More booing.*) Anyone who signs with them will never swim in my pool again!

EMPLOYEE:

Hey Walt! Swimming in your pool doesn't feed my kids or pay my rent!

OTHER EMPLOYEES:

(*general agreement mixed with "Shut up, let him talk!"*)

WALT:

Listen, everyone. I appeal to your sense of fairness. Together I think we can solve this crisis.

EMPLOYEES:

(*variously booing, applauding, arguing with each other*)

(*WALT exits, while the EMPLOYEES remain to smoke and argue in small groups. AL eavesdrops on NORM and ART.*)

ART:

So I'll see you at the rally?

NORM:

Yeah. Where are you going?

ART:

Gonna start making up some signs! (*Exits.*)

AL:

Mr. Ferguson! Can I have a word with you?

NORM:

Sure, but call me Fergie, like everyone else does. Did you witness that whole speech fiasco?

AL:

Yeah. I had no idea people were so divided. I know it's probably none of my business, but... is Walt really so awful to work for?

NORM (*looks around*):

Walk with me a sec. (*The other EMPLOYEES exit.*) I don't work for Walt because he's a joy to be around. He's not. I'm here because—well—not very long ago, animation was just lots of crude gags, like a comic strip in motion. Cartoons weren't even popular. People used to groan when cartoons came on the screen because (*chuckles*) they were so

damned annoying! But Walt wanted something different. It wasn't enough to just move the character from A to B and do a bunch of crazy gags.

(The LIGHTS change as WALT, now 30, enters with the light of a projected film flickering on his face, as if he is watching a screen downstage. WALT looks disapproving; NORM joins him. It's 1931.)

WALT:

Fergie, that twenties style doesn't cut it any more. It's not funny. It's stale.

NORM:

But that's all I know how to do.

WALT:

I wouldn't have hired you if I thought that's all you could do. When you're in a theater and the audience is watching a cartoon, when do they laugh the most?

NORM:

When somebody gets hurt. Slapstick.

WALT:

No. I've noticed that the real laughter comes when they see something they recognize. Something they understand. Something personal.

NORM:

I... don't follow you.

WALT:

This dog of yours... he doesn't look like a real dog, right? Just the same-old rubber-ball-and-hose bits-and-pieces strung together. You stretch him and squash him flat and slice him into pieces and blow him up like a balloon... tired old gags. But people *have* dogs. They know how dogs behave. Dogs are funny when they act like people. When we look into their eyes, we know what they're thinking. "I wanna go for a walk! That bone looks good! I hate that damned cat!" You know, things like that.

NORM:

So... the dog should talk?

WALT:

No no no, it's much subtler than that. We should see it in his face. In his expression. Let me show you... *(WALT gets down on his hands and knees.)* We had this old hound dog on the farm. He would spend the whole day sniffing around... *(Demonstrates, looking very serious.)* When he found something interesting, he'd pause, and think, "What is that?" And then he'd react. It's the pauses, the changes of expression, the narrowing of the eyes. And I remember, he'd look at me like he was expecting

something, and if he didn't get it, he'd huff, like this... (*huffs*) ...like he was disgusted. Always cracked me up, because it was so human. (*Gets up.*) You've got to observe real life, and caricature it. Look, I want you to put a mirror up next to your desk. I want you to act out what you think is going on inside this dog's brain, real exaggerated, and then draw those expressions you see in the mirror, okay? (*NORM chuckles.*) You think I'm nuts?

NORM:

A little. You really think audiences will go for something subtle like that?

WALT:

I'd stake my life on it. Now this is costing me a fortune. I want to see your new footage in a week. And it had better be good!

(WALT exits. Projection effect ends. NORM returns to AL.)

AL:

He was right, of course?

NORM:

The audience ate it up with a spoon. And we all went nuts. We realized there were possibilities in animation we hadn't even begun to tap. We analyzed subtle things like cause-and-effect, anticipation, follow-through, weight, tension—then even subtler things, like softness, transparency, elasticity, depth. Things cartoons had never conveyed before. The more we study—the more touches of realism we caricature—the more the public loves our stuff.

AL:

That must be exhilarating.

NORM:

Some days I come to work at 6 a.m. 'cause I can't wait to get started. I think about work all night long. And when I do fall asleep, there's that damned dog in my head, chasing his tail, or a cat, or stuck on some flypaper!

AL:

And you take advantage of the art classes?

NORM:

Oh yeah, teachers, live animals, live models, the works.

AL:

You don't mind staying after work?

NORM:

And turn down a free education? No, I don't mind. We work long hours, sure, but no one's making us. It's hard work, no question. The pressure's tremendous. If Walt doesn't like your stuff, he tears you to shreds. But if you achieve something good, Walt's immediately building on it, pushing you to do more. More than you think you're capable of.

AL:

But Walt isn't drawing? He's just supervising?

NORM:

Walt knows he's not a good enough animator. He can't do the things he pushes us to do. But he's so good at encouraging us, challenging, inspiring us. We don't follow him blindly just because he's the boss; Walt's the boss because his ideas are the best.

AL:

But doesn't it bug you that when people enjoy a Pluto cartoon, your name's not on it?

NORM:

That's a tough one. I don't agree with Walt's decision to keep our names off the shorts. So you add another title card, with the directors and animators' names, like the other studios do, real quick, for a couple of seconds. What's the big deal? It would mean the world to us. But no; Walt insists that every cartoon is a Disney cartoon. It's because he puts a little of himself in everything you see in a Disney picture. Sure, I draw Pluto. But Pluto never would have existed if Walt hadn't noticed this dog I'd drawn, and encouraged me to develop him. I mean, Walt was down on the floor, sniffing, for God's sake! And his expressions, with those crazy eyebrows going up and down! If you watch Pluto, those eyebrows going up and down are Walt's.

AL:

That's very enlightening.

NORM:

So, you putting all this in "Reluctant Dragon"?

AL (*laughing*):

Of course not. The studio stuff in "Reluctant Dragon" will be very uh...

NORM:

...Artificial?

AL:

Well, that's what I've been hired to do. Inside my head, I'm making another picture that tells the real story. I know, that's kinda hypocritical but at least it got my foot in the door so I can see what's really going on.

NORM:

Okay, I'll bite. What's really going on?

AL (*thoughtfully*):

I figure, with live-action films, you sympathize with the flesh-and-blood actors on the screen. Right? Even though the audience knows they're just pretending, it seems natural to take it to heart. But with animated drawings, there seems to be something supernatural going on. Like you fellows are able to take dust and breathe life into it. And not just with living creatures—inanimate things, too!—and make us really care about them.

NORM:

You've seen our flour-sack exercise?

AL:

No.

NORM:

When we break in new animators, we make them draw a sack of flour over and over. When it's hunched over, it looks tired. When it's arching the other way, it looks proud. This flour-sack can express an endless array of attitudes and emotions. Remember, “animation” means more than just movement. It means that whatever you're drawing has a soul.

AL:

And on the seventh day, you rested?

NORM:

If we're lucky. So have you had this chat with Art Babbitt yet?

AL:

No, why?

NORM:

You'll get a very different perspective, that's all.

(LIGHTS change; exit NORM; enter ART drawing a sign that says DISNEY UNFAIR.)

AL: (*to audience*)

I'll say this for artists going on strike: they sure know how to make a classy sign. (*To ART*) Mr. Babbitt—I hear they call you the Troublemaker.

ART:

I gave myself that nickname. I just can't stand by and see people mistreated.

AL:

I also heard that you and Walt used to be good friends.

ART:

Look, I don't have anything against Walt personally. I just think there are fairer ways to run a studio. You know, we broke our backs making "Snow White." We hardly saw our families. Walt told us, if it turned out to be a big hit, there'd be bonuses. Well, it made millions.

AL:

And no bonuses?

ART:

You're standing in it. Did he give us a choice? Did he say, "We'd like you all to donate your bonuses to the New Studio Building Fund?" No, he just re-invested the money in the Company like he always does, without asking us.

AL:

But the new Studio—

ART:

Oh yeah, I know, ooh-la-la! Air-conditioning, and volleyball nets, and lawns, but the truth is, we were on top of the world on Hyperion. Sure it was hot, and cramped, and we had lots to complain about, but the creativity flowed like electricity.

AL:

But you're one of the best-paid animators here. Why rock the boat?

ART:

Let me tell ya a story. You know the ending of "Fantasia," where pilgrims are going to church to the tune of "Ave Maria"? (*We faintly hear Shubert's "Ave Maria" playing; ART hums along for a moment, conducting with his fingers—then he speaks as the music continues underneath.*) That last shot, of the camera moving through a dark forest, gradually opening up to a glorious sunrise? Remember that? Two minutes long, over two hundred feet of film. One long, slow, continuous shot. No one had ever done anything like it before. Ultra-slow-motion backgrounds moving aside in minute little increments; lighting effects that would require long exposures. We had to build a horizontal multi-plane set-up, with 45 feet of track, across one end of our little soundstage. Built walls around it to make sure it was light-tight. Painted scenery on dozens of panes of glass, each mounted on a custom wooden frame that could be moved in any direction. And built a special camera stand on rubber wheels. Every rail and frame was marked off in tiny numbers to tell the guys how far to advance the camera and the artwork per exposure. The cameramen, the carpenters, the artists, everyone pitched in to build this big experimental set-up. They didn't even know if it would work. The

problem was, it hadn't been put on the schedule early enough, so there was only three weeks before “Fantasia” had its big premiere in New York.

So after a week of set-up, they're finally ready to start shooting. Click! Sit there absolutely still for a couple minutes for the timed exposure—you don't want to shake the floor, or bump into anything. Click! Turn on the worklights, adjust the camera and the artwork and the lighting, turn off the worklights, and settle down for the next exposure. Click. Every two minutes. Over and over, three thousand times. Averaging thirty frames an hour, this process took about a hundred and twenty hours. That's five days of shooting, if you work non-stop.

And you want to hear something crazy? They did work non-stop. The whole crew stayed in there, just in case something went wrong. They drank coffee; they sang songs to stay awake. They were so determined to get the job done, they just stayed in there and shot it till it was finished. Then the film went to the lab, and everybody went home to sleep. The film was perfect. Beautiful. Not a single mistake. Except for one thing. They had used the wrong lens on the camera, so not only did they get the shot, they got the wooden frames around the artwork too. A complete waste of time.

So they started over, now with just over a week left before the premiere. One shot at a time, hour after hour, that camera inched its way down the track. Then on the third day—earthquake. Everyone watched in horror as everything rocked and pitched. When it was over, everything was fine. Nothing was broken. But what if the artwork had shifted, just a little bit? If things had moved just a fraction of an inch, the scene would have a sudden jerk in it. They couldn't take the chance. They rolled the artwork and the camera back into starting position, and started again, this time with exactly six days left until the premiere.

The boys got very serious this time. There wasn't room for a single mistake. The pressure was incredible. It was like the whole future of animation was riding on this one shot. “Fantasia” couldn't be premiered without its last two minutes. They figured they'd all be out looking for jobs if they screwed this up. Six days later, they sent the film to the lab. It was perfect. It was immediately flown to New York, where a courier was waiting at the airport to deliver it to the theater, where the projectionist spliced the ending onto the print, with four hours to spare.

AL:

I'd like to meet those fellows, and shake their hands.

ART:

That's the problem. There's no credits on “Fantasia,” so the public will never know how many dedicated people rose to the occasion—invented a whole new set-up, went without sleep, gave everything they had to create something unique and amazing, despite the odds stacked against them.

AL:

But there was no one cracking the whip over these guys, right? They knew what they had to do, and they did it, without complaining, right?

ART:

Sure, there’s satisfaction in a job well done, and in team spirit. But this wasn’t some extraordinary call to action. This kind of thing happens EVERY DAY at Disney’s. We’re always being asked to do something that’s never been done—to explore, and invent, and dig deep inside ourselves to make sure we’re using everything we’ve got. If you’re doing that for yourself, it’s immensely satisfying. But when you’re working for someone else, and they take the credit for everything you create... well, after a while, you feel drained, and used, and resentful. You can’t help it.

AL:

No offense, Art, but I don’t think everyone agrees with you.

ART:

Maybe Walt could get away with it when this was just a little family business. But he has to learn that you just can’t treat people like this.

AL:

Y’know, the slaves who built the Pyramids probably felt the same way. But without their sacrifice, the Pyramids would never have been built.

ART:

You wouldn’t say that if you had been one of the slaves. So tell me... What did you think of the Wicked Queen in “Snow White”?

AL:

She was terrific.

ART:

And did you like Geppetto in “Pinocchio”? And the dancing mushrooms in “Fantasia”?

AL:

Of course. Wonderful creations.

ART:

Would you like to shake the hand of whoever drew those characters?

AL:

Of course I would.

ART:

Maybe someday the world will find out who he is.

(ART picks up his picket sign, stares at it, then confidently holds it aloft as we transition to...)

Act One, Scene 5: THE PICKET LINE

(ART is joined by other EMPLOYEES, carrying signs. AL observes.)

STRIKERS:

One, Two, Four, Three!
Disney, there's no strings on me!
Four, Three, Two, One!
Some... day, my raise will come!
Disney, you are really mean!
Put my credits on the screen!
Disney, you don't make me laugh!
Share the profits with the staff!
(They cheer and cat-call.)

AL: *(to audience)*

They had good writers, too, making up those chants! Verrry clever. Art Babbitt was all fired up, like the ringmaster at a circus.

ART:

(standing on a soap-box and addressing the crowd)

Ladies and gentlemen, animators, inbetweeners, cleaner-uppers, inkers, painters, and miscellaneous cartoonists: welcome to the Disney picket line! *(A whoop of approval.)* I'm happy to announce that in sympathy with our strike, chefs from several local restaurants will be serving us lunch every day of the week! *(Another whoop.)* Now I want you all to realize something very important. There are several hundred employees still at their desks inside that studio. *(Boos.)* They are not bad people; they are merely confused. They think it's okay for wages to be unfair; to be anonymous bees working in a hive; to give up their weekends when they could be with their families. That's what Walt wants them to think, because Walt says he *has* to exploit his workers in order to make cartoons. Well, the next time you see Walt, ask him if his new car or his new polo-pony is more important than the health and well-being of you and your family. *(Another whoop.)* And when you see a fellow-employee going to work instead of marching with us out here, ask them how they feel about preventing you from receiving the respect you deserve as an employee and as a human being! *(Big cheer. Someone hands ART a telegram.)* Listen up! Here's a telegram from the good people at Technicolor. Says they will refuse to do business with the Disney Studio until Walt signs the union papers. *(Another whoop.)* So when the next Disney movie comes out, we plan to picket any theater showing it to discourage people from buying tickets. Remind your friends not to buy anything with the Disney name on it. We're getting lots of attention from the press, so wave those signs with pride!

(Another whoop. ART steps off the soap-box and shakes hands with the STRIKERS. NORM enters and crosses, hoping to avoid ART, who meets

him.)

NORM (*sheepishly*):

Hey.

ART:

Hey... Where are you going?

NORM:

Back to my office.

ART:

Making a new sign?

NORM (*with difficulty*):

I'm... going back to work.

ART:

No you're not. A strike is only successful if everyone participates. If we give up, nothing will change.

NORM:

I know.

ART:

You know? Then what the hell are you doing? Don't be a coward. Grab a sign and get on the line!

NORM:

I'm sorry, Art. I'm sorry that some people don't get paid enough and I'm sorry about the long hours and I'm sorry that Walt won't put credits on the goddamned shorts. But you know what? I love my job. I love coming to work and I love what we're creating. And I can't stand around here another minute and watch us destroy everything. If it wasn't for Walt, I'd still be in New York, drawing the most goddamned awful dreck you can imagine. This job's a dream come true! I'm not gonna flush it down the can.

ART:

You're not flushing anything. After the strike, we'll go right back to work as usual, only things will be better.

NORM:

Bullshit, Art. Don't you know Walt at all? He's probably sitting up there right now figuring out how to fire everyone on this line.

ART:

He can't do that.

NORM:

He can do whatever the hell he wants. It's his studio. You think after the strike it'll be all love and kisses? He's hard enough to get along with as it is. You think I want him giving me the cold shoulder on top of that?

ART:

That's pathetic.

NORM:

That's Walt. I'll see you later.

ART:

Not if I can help it.

NORM:

What did you say?

ART:

I said go back to work, you cowardly kiss-ass.

NORM:

Hey! Just because I don't agree with your little strike, it's no reason to put our friendship on the line.

ART:

This little strike is more important than anything. You think Walt deserves your loyalty? He couldn't care less. The moment you're no use to him he'll toss you aside like dead wood. He doesn't give a damn about us!

(NORM can't hold back. He lunges at ART, who drops his sign and raises his fists to protect himself. They grapple briefly, but since neither wants to fight, they're just locked together nose-to-nose.)

ART:

You can't deny it, can you?

NORM *(pushing ART away)*:

Screw you.

(NORM exits. ART has a moment of regret, but then he takes a deep breath and holds his sign aloft.)

ART:

One, Two, Four, Three!
Disney, there’s no strings on me!

ART & STRIKERS:

Four, Three, Two, One!
Some... day, my raise will come!
Disney, you are really mean!
Put my credits on the screen!
Disney, you don’t make me laugh!
Share the profits with the staff!

(They cheer and cat-call. EVERYONE exits, with ART at the back of the group. AL approaches ART, stopping him from leaving.)

AL:

You know the next picture coming out is “Reluctant Dragon.” You gonna picket MY movie?

ART: *(with a big shrug)*

That’s the breaks.

(Exits, leaving AL, furious and miserable, alone onstage.)

Act One, Scene 6: SCREENING ROOM

(AL sits in a row of chairs, facing the audience, a folded newspaper in his lap. He is watching “dailies” on a movie screen; the LIGHT flickers on his face, and we hear the projector. He doesn’t like what he’s watching, and his disgust is rising.)

AL *(to an unseen projectionist):*

Ugh. That’s enough, Eddie! Thank you!

(The projection EFFECT ends. AL takes a drink from a flask in his pocket, and opens his newspaper.)

AL *(continued, to the projectionist):*

Hey Eddie, did you see the paper? The strike’s on Page One. “DISPUTE CRIPPLES DISNEY STUDIO.” Eddie, you still back there?

EDDIE *(offstage):*

Lunch!

(AL sighs and puts the newspaper down. He takes another drink and puts the flask in his pocket. He rises, and verbalizes the following—with intense feeling—directly to the audience.)

AL:

EXTERIOR, BUENA VISTA STREET, THE STUDIO ENTRANCE. Morning. Four hundred EMPLOYEES form a picket line. They wave their protest signs proudly, and shout in unison at those driving their cars past the guard gate into the parking lot. MEDIUM SHOT: The camera trucks along the line, glimpsing each STRIKER in turn as they shout; their faces angry; their voices strident; any remaining shred of sympathy or camaraderie with fellow employees has turned to the bitterest bile. ANGLE on an arriving car, which screeches to a halt. The door opens, and the DRIVER steps out, FEMALE, late '30's, carrying a purse. She takes a few steps towards the picket line and stops. CLOSE-UP on the DRIVER's face. DRIVER: "You want more money? Here!" CLOSE-UP on purse; her hand reaches inside and grabs a fistful of pennies. MEDIUM SHOT: The WOMAN throws the pennies at the STRIKERS. CLOSE-UP on a FEMALE STRIKER as a barrage of pennies hits her full in the face. She is stunned. Her lip quivers. Her eyes fill with tears. MEDIUM SHOT: tears pour down the FEMALE STRIKER's face. She sits down suddenly, because she is too upset to stand. Her protest sign falls onto the pavement. ANGLE on CAR: the door slams shut. The car drives past the guard. MEDIUM SHOT on the crying STRIKER. CAMERA dollies back to show more and more of the picket line, and the line of cars continuing to pour past the guard gate. And... FADE TO BLACK.

HELEN BLUME: *(a voice in the darkness)*

I know both of those women.

AL *(wheeling, startled)*:

I beg your pardon?

(HELEN BLUME emerges from the shadows.)

HELEN:

Are you really going to turn this awful mess into some silly movie?

AL:

On the contrary, Miss—?

HELEN:

Blume. Mrs.

AL:

Mrs. Blume, I was only thinking about how much more important a picture I could make if I wasn't following some nincompoop around on a guided tour of a make-believe cartoonland. I'm Alfred Werker, by the way. I'm directing a movie about the studio.

HELEN:

Yes, “The Reluctant Dragon.” I remember meeting you the day Walt gave his big speech.

AL:

That was you? Well, how nice to meet you at last. I did sneak in to hear the big speech. Man, did that ever backfire on poor old Walt. So are you an artist?

HELEN:

I paint the characters onto the celluloid. I don’t know if that makes me an artist. It’s just like doing a paint-by-number. I’m in the Nunnery with the other girls. Eight hours a day. Sometimes ten. Or more.

AL:

What are you doing up here?

HELEN:

I don’t like to eat in the cafeteria. Too noisy. I usually look for someplace quieter.

AL:

Ah. Well you’re welcome to it. Did you... bring your lunch?

HELEN:

I... must have left it at my desk. (*Turning to go*) It was nice seeing you again...

AL:

Mrs. Blume, just a moment. May I ask you a personal question?

HELEN:

Sorry, we’re not supposed to fraternize with the men.

AL:

But I’m not a Disney employee. Doesn’t that make it okay?

HELEN:

Um... maybe. Okay.

AL:

You have a child at home, and a mother? And your husband has, um... gone?

HELEN:

Oh, that awful rumor! I did not faint from hunger. My eyes were tired, and I was resting my head for a few minutes. Honestly, the way people gossip around here!

AL:

Forgive me. You were saying, you know both of the women I mentioned?

HELEN:

Yes.

AL:

That wasn't gossip, you know. I saw it myself as I was driving in.

HELEN:

I know. It's awful. They used to be best friends. I think that's why it happened. Sally was just devastated when Donna refused to join the picket line. She said it was like having your best friend slap you in the face— *(her voice chokes on a sob.)*

AL:

Here, please, sit down.

(They sit. AL offers a handkerchief; she takes it.)

HELEN *(wiping her eyes)*:

I'd rather not talk about it, if you don't mind.

AL:

I don't mind. But remember, I'm not an employee. You can say whatever you like, if it helps you feel better. *(After a pause)* Could you tell me why you decided not to join the picket line?

HELEN:

I don't know where else I could get sixteen dollars a week. If I joined the strikers, how would I pay for my flat? It's only two rooms, but the landlord won't let me stay for free, and who knows how long the strike will last?

AL:

Do you have other family you can stay with?

HELEN:

No. We moved here from Michigan two years ago. My mother came with us. Mitch and I wanted to be actors. He was working on a picture last summer while I was having our baby. He met someone else, and by Christmas he was gone. So here I am working on an assembly line, painting cartoons in a giant henhouse.

AL:

A henhouse? *(Realizing)* Say, I'm going to be shooting a scene in the Ink and Paint Department this week. May I put you in the shot? Painting a character on a piece of celluloid?

HELEN:

Oh, I suppose that would be fine.

AL:

Come on, let's go get some lunch. My treat?

(There is a moment of “chemistry” as they look at each other.)

HELEN *(smiling)*:

Thank you. “Helen,” my name's Helen.

(She exits. AL steps downstage.)

AL: *(to audience)*

Well, whatdaya know? There's a dame in this story! *(Straightens his tie.)* I dunno if I got a chance or not, but meet me back here in fifteen minutes and I'll let you know! *(Exits.)*

(Intermission)

Act Two, Scene 1: PARK BENCH ON CAMPUS

(HELEN sits eating a brown-bag sandwich; AL enters.)

AL: *(to audience)*

Tick tock—a few months later, Al has a girlfriend! Lucky me, she's a doll. But you'll see—nothin's ever easy. *(He joins her on the bench.)* Hi Helen!

(He kisses her cheek; she looks around furtively.)

HELEN: *(embarrassed)*

Oh, such a silly old habit, making sure no one's looking.

AL:

Your supervisor said it was perfectly okay for us to date. I'd never put your job at risk. You know that.

HELEN:

Thank you, sweetie. Here. *(She hands him half a sandwich.)* Thanks for the groceries. If it weren't for you, my family would be living on rice and beans. How's the footage from Ink and Paint yesterday?

AL:

Perfect. I certainly picked the prettiest chick in the whole henhouse.

HELEN:

I was nervous.

AL:

You looked very professional.

HELEN:

The other girls are so jealous. Being in the picture *and* dating the director. Lucky me.

AL:

You deserved a bit of luck.

HELEN:

Al, when is the strike going to be over?

AL:

How would I know? Neither side is budging an inch.

HELEN:

Isn't there something you can do?

AL:

Me? I don't even work here.

HELEN:

That's the point. Maybe it takes someone from outside to convince Walt to change his mind.

AL:

Me, convince Walt? Ha-ha, baby, nobody can convince Walt of anything. He's one of the most stubborn men I've ever met. You know that's one of the reasons his pictures are so good! He knows what he wants and he doesn't stop until—

HELEN:

Al, stop defending him! He's killing his own company!

AL:

Helen, keep your voice down...

HELEN:

I can't help it. You're not an employee, so you don't know what it feels like to cross that picket line every day. It's like being in the middle of a war!

AL:

Baby, there's nothing I can do.

HELEN:

Yes there is. You have access to everyone: to the strikers, to Walt, to people like me. Walt won't come down and talk to us. But you can talk to him. You've got to!

AL:

It's none of my business!

(HELEN, deeply upset, crumples up her lunch bag and rises to leave.)

HELEN:

Then neither am I.

AL: *(rising)*

What do you mean?

HELEN:

If you're not willing to help resolve the strike, then I can't keep seeing you.

AL:

Helen, be reasonable. I'm a movie director, not a diplomat.

HELEN:

Don't movie directors have to deal with stubborn, egotistical actors on the set? I'd think you'd be an expert at it.

AL:

Well, sort of...

HELEN:

Then pretend these men are actors.

AL:

But I'm not their boss! They don't hafta listen to me. Maybe... Maybe you should just quit your job.

HELEN: *(furious)*

Ooh! *(She throws her wadded up lunch bag at him.)* My ex Mitch was a big coward. Couldn't even face me when he wanted to break up. I'm through dating cowards. Do something about this strike, or find yourself another girlfriend!

(HELEN exits.)

AL: *(to audience)*

I had a feeling it'd come to this. Time to put on my Big Director pants. *(AL strolls into...)*

Act Two, Scene 2: ANIMATORS OFFICE

(NORM's drawing at his desk; movie camera, lights, and sound equipment are focused on him, with a CAMERAMAN and a SOUND TECH ready to roll. AL enters.)

AL:

And... Action!

(NORM is looking into a small mirror and panting like a warm dog. This goes on for about ten seconds. NORM seems distracted.)

AL:

And... Cut!

NORM:

I'm sorry, Al. Maybe you should get Alan Ladd to play me.

AL:

This is the last close-up I need, I promise. You just need to look happy. Can you just pretend to be happy for a few minutes? *(NORM glares.)* Guys, could you give us a minute? Take five.

(CAMERAMAN and SOUND TECH exit.)

NORM:

I don't know how actors do it—how they smile when they're having a shitty day. I swear, in all my footage this week... Pluto's a completely miserable son-of-a-bitch.

AL:

Sorry, Fergie. Listen, I told Helen I'd try to do something to help settle the strike.

NORM:

Helen? Hey, that's right! I saw you leaving the lot with her yesterday, looking very cozy.

AL:

Yeah, we've been dating. She's terrific. Might be serious.

NORM:

She’s lucky she can get away from the Nunnery at a decent hour.

AL:

She works late all the time. Tons more work for the painters picking up the slack from the strikers. Some nights I go hang out with her mom and little girl to keep ‘em company. Sweet little family.

NORM:

Well, you’re a lucky man. Don’t tell Art, he’d be so jealous he might explode.

AL:

I need to talk to Art. I want to help the strikers. There must be something I can do to help end this mess.

NORM:

Art’s up in Walt’s office now—maybe they’re working something out.

AL:

Why doesn’t Walt—argh! I’m gonna give him a piece of my mind.

NORM:

Them’s fightin’ words, Al. But if there’s anyone on this lot who can talk some sense into Walt, it might be you. What d’ya say?

AL:

I think I need a drink first. Wanna join me for a nip?

NORM:

(pulling out a bottle of booze from a drawer)

Sit down. You’re never far from liquor in this office. *(Opens bottle and is about to pour into a couple of paper cups.)*

AL:

Just... gimme the bottle.

(NORM hands the bottle to AL, who takes a long drink. AL and NORM exit with the set.)

Act Two, Scene 3: WALT’S OFFICE

(Enter WALT and ART.)

WALT:

Art, we can't get anything done with that picket line up.

ART:

That's the point.

WALT:

That's bullshit, Art! How can we settle this if you won't stop being so damned pig-headed?

ART:

We'll settle this when you recognize our union.

WALT:

Most of them don't want a union shop!

ART:

Most of them are intimidated by you, Walt! You dazzle them with talk about improving the art form—that it takes mindless dedication to following orders, and meeting impossible deadlines, and succumbing to the pressure of working long hours with no extra pay—just for the glory of being part of your factory! They don't want to vote to unionize because they're scared that if the vote fails, they'll lose their jobs.

WALT:

I'm not that intimidating.

ART:

Sorry, Walt, but you are. You're a moody bastard, and some people run for cover when they hear your cough coming down the hall. Since I started working here, I've only heard you compliment somebody's work twice. Twice!

WALT:

It's not my style to hand out compliments. Everyone knows that.

ART:

Well—we've all worked hard to expand OUR abilities. Maybe you could work on YOURS.

WALT:

If I walked around telling everyone what a good job they were doing, they'd get complacent. What makes our product good is my driving everyone to keep at their best. People know I approve of their work when I don't criticize it.

ART:

Hearing nothing is not the same as being appreciated. These artists are starved for some

recognition. It's not enough to just go to the pictures and swell with pride when your work whizzes by on the screen. I'm tired of talking this out. If you want us back on the job, sign the papers. Then you can work us as hard as you want, as long as you pay us overtime and put our names on the goddamn screen. Every other studio's signed up. Warner Brothers, MGM, Universal. You're the only hold-out.

WALT:

We are not every other studio. If you can't understand that, then you can go work at one of those other studios.

ART:

What? Are you firing me?

WALT:

Yes, get out of here.

ART:

You can't fire me for wanting to join a union. That's illegal. I'll sue. I'll bring down your whole operation.

(AL bursts in, quite tipsy.)

AL:

Mr. Disney! Sorry, I have to speak to you!

WALT:

Not now, Al.

AL:

No, listen. "Reluctant Dragon" is hogwash. It's an insult to all these wonderful artists. I want you to take my name off of it. I quit. Oh, hi Art. I'm dating Helen Blume. Please don't explode.

ART:

What?

WALT:

Fine. It's in the can anyway. We can finish editing without you. And I'll make sure your next assignment is directing traffic downtown. Now will you get out of here?

AL:

No. You don't frighten me, Walt—not like you frighten everybody else. I know, you're the big genius with the big ideas, but you have no right to run this place like a fascist state.

WALT:

Get out of here before I lose my temper.

AL:

I came here to say this and I'm gonna say it. You had a really nice operation here. A real Dream Factory. And if you'd've recognized their union, your little assembly-line would've kept marching right along. But now everything you've built has busted into twelve hundred little pieces. Everyone's angry, and bitter, and miserable. And why? Because you're a stubborn, egotistical fool.

(WALT lunges at AL, but ART gets between them.)

ART:

Easy, Walt, he's drunk.

WALT:

I don't care. I'll clobber the son-of-a-bitch.

ART:

Come on, Al, let's get you out of here.

AL:

A man who can't see through the eyes of his employees has no right to be their employer, Mr. Disney.

ART:

Come on...

WALT:

No, wait. Wait. Art, go on. I need to talk to Al. Don't worry, I'm not going to kill him. Go on.

(ART exits. WALT opens a desk drawer, pulls out a bottle of bourbon and pours himself a shot. He drinks it, then pours another.)

WALT:

Sit down. Give me a minute to catch up. *(Drinks the second shot)*

AL:

I guess I kinda flew off the handle there, Mr. Disney.

WALT:

I hate being called "Mr. Disney." Just "Walt."

AL:

Sorry, Walt.

WALT:

I was kinda hoping you'd stay on my side.

AL:

I was, but... I don't understand what you've got against giving the boys credits on the shorts.

WALT (*passionately*):

Because what we're selling is Walt Disney. It's a name the public knows and understands. When they see the words "A Walt Disney Cartoon" on the screen, they know they can expect a certain standard of quality. If they see a lot of other names up there, it's confusing; all that consistency goes out the window. Y'know, when we first started making cartoons, it was like we were lepers. We didn't win awards or get invited to parties. It was like we smelled like ink and paint, or something. Now, after all those years of training, and hard work, and dedication, we've made it. Academy Awards, worldwide recognition, this beautiful studio... and why? Because I never stopped believing that cartoons could and should be as good or better than live-action films. And all that effort, and growth, and success, is summed up in one name—Walt Disney.

AL:

Times change. The studio has to change too.

WALT:

So, everything we've achieved, it's finished? That's it?

AL:

No, but you'll have to invent some short-cuts—ways to make cheaper pictures.

WALT:

No more "Fantasias" or "Pinocchios"?

AL:

You'll figure it out.

WALT:

There's so much more I wanted to do. Something inside me is never satisfied. I can never just stand still. I have to explore, and experiment. Sometimes I resent the limits of my own imagination.

AL:

You could see a psychiatrist about that.

(The intercom buzzes; WALT picks up the phone.)

WALT:

Yes, Dolores? Who? Ah, sure, put him on.

AL:

Do you want me to go?

WALT:

No. *(Into the phone.)* Hello. Yes, Mr. Whitney, what can I do for you?... Washington knows about my labor dispute? Dammit. Listen, the papers are giving a very one-sided report of this whole disaster, and... what? Sure, I'd love to hear your proposal... You—you mean you want to use my characters for propaganda films? Oh, what then?... South America?... Me, on a good-will tour? No, I'm no good at that kind of thing... Oh! That's different. But I can't leave in the middle of this strike... Ah. You mean give the union organizers what they want?... Gosh, I—I need to discuss it with Roy and the wife. Yeah. Okay. Call me back tomorrow. Thanks. *(Hangs up, paces in deep thought.)*

AL:

What was that?

WALT:

It sounds crazy, but Uncle Sam wants me to go to South America and make some cartoons. They think it'll encourage the locals to support the Allies rather than the Nazis. And they want to pay for the whole thing.

AL:

Don't underestimate the power of Mickey Mouse.

WALT:

But... in exchange...

AL:

I get it. They'll settle the strike. You'll come home to a union shop.

WALT:

You think I should do it?

AL:

Of course you should. Get out of town. Enjoy the beach. Make some cartoons. Drink some tequila! When you come back everything will be settled and you can get back into your old groove.

WALT:

But it won't be the same. I've always looked after these kids—kept them working during

the Depression when no one else could. To call a strike instead of taking a democratic vote was just plain ingratitude. And the lies they spread, the headlines in the papers about me exploiting them, running a sweat-shop, and rolling in wealth! That hurt me most, when the fact is that every damned thing I have is tied up in this business. The thing that worries me is that people only read headlines and never take enough time to find out the truth.

AL:

Don't worry about the public, Walt. They'll be back on your side as soon as your next cartoon comes out.

WALT:

No, it's too late. I can hear them now. "The Reluctant Dragon?" Isn't that the latest picture from that slave-driver Walt Disney? I hear he keeps his artists chained up in a dungeon!" No, I'm finished. The Communists have won.

AL:

What are you talking about?

WALT:

That's it! I hadn't realized it before. The Communists are trying to take over. That's their scheme!

AL:

To take over the studio?

WALT:

To take over the country! They start by organizing the workers. See, that way, they'll gradually rise to power, so they can overthrow the government!

AL:

Do you have any idea how silly that sounds?

WALT:

It happened in Russia!

AL:

Well, last I heard, we don't have any czars to overthrow. Listen, you're not descended from the idle aristocracy. You worked your way up from nothing. You're the American Dream come true. Nobody can take that away from you, including labor unions.

WALT:

I'm just so disgusted, and discouraged. I don't know what I'm saying... *(He chokes up and puts his hand over his eyes, as tears come on.)*

AL:

Oh, now, Walt. Come on. I know it looks pretty bleak right now. But these kinds of storms always blow over. Maybe it won't be the same, but it'll be business as usual before you know it.

WALT:

Maybe I should just quit. Do something else for a while.

AL:

You can't quit. You have kids, right?

WALT:

Yeah. Two daughters. (*Shows AL a framed photo on his desk.*)

AL:

Aw. Sweet.

WALT:

Yeah. I'm taking them to that little amusement park on La Cienega Sunday.

AL:

That'll be fun.

WALT:

I suppose. I wish it wasn't such a dingy place. Bunch of dirty, beat-up old rides, trash everywhere. But the girls seem to like it. I just sit on a bench with the other parents, eating peanuts and bored as hell.

AL:

It ought to be fun for the grown-ups too.

WALT:

That's what I was thinking. Wouldn't it be swell if there was grass, and trees, and things, maybe a bandstand? Someplace nice, like a park, y'know? And the midway rides could be freshly painted, and the workers could be cheerful and friendly.

AL:

Ha! That'll be the day!

WALT:

You know, I've got that piece of property across Riverside Drive, maybe I could build a little park, right here at the studio. Have a little train that goes around, maybe a little village, with some old-fashioned shops, and a theater, and things.

AL:

And booze?

WALT:

No! No booze. Not sleazy, like Coney Island.

AL:

You know, when my folks visited L.A. last Christmas, they wanted to see movie stars and glamor, and they went home disappointed. There wasn't anything to do in Hollywood, they said.

WALT:

It's the same when we get visitors here at the studio. People want to meet Mickey Mouse and Snow White, and all they see are a bunch of sweaty guys bent over their desks. *(They both laugh.)* Y'know, when I was a farm kid, it was such a treat to go into town. Watching them pull taffy at the candy store. Putting a penny into the mechanical band organ. Silent movies, petting the dalmatians at the fire station, riding the horse-drawn streetcar... It all seems so far away now. Life is so much busier, and faster, and louder, and dirtier. I wish I could bring that whole Main Street with me and plop it down in L.A.

AL:

You could go back there and visit.

WALT:

Oh, I have, but it's all changed. All the things I loved about it are gone. Time marches on, y'know? It's just... days like these, I wish I could go back to the way it was, and get an ice cream, and sit in the shade, and listen to the band concert, y'know?

AL:

I think everybody wants that. Simple pleasures. That's your gift.

WALT:

What do you mean?

AL:

You know, when you're watching a Disney cartoon, you laugh, and you cry... you feel sympathy for the little guy... You recognize the things about the characters that are familiar—that seem true. And when it's over, you feel better. I don't know—you feel like someone out there understands you, and that you're not alone. You're connected to the world, and respected. Reassured. You feel like everything's going to be okay. That's what your pictures do. And by the way, your artists are grinding their little fingers into stubs for you, so you'd better damn well appreciate it. Now what do you say we go get a drink? My treat.

WALT:

I need to get home to Lilly and the girls. Thanks. *(Shakes AL's hand.)* You know, “Reluctant Dragon” turned out to be a cute little picture.

AL:

It's hogwash.

WALT:

Yeah, but it's damned cute hogwash. Thanks for listening, Al. And good luck.

(WALT exits with the set. AL steps downstage.)

AL: *(to audience)*

And off he went to South America. Nobody crossed the picket lines to see “Reluctant Dragon” in theaters AND it got shitty reviews so that was the end of my career. But it was worth it because, well, I got the girl. And I got something else too: a rare peek inside the brain of Walt Disney. Yeah, he could be a terrifying son-of-a-bitch but in spite of everything, seems like he was just an over-achiever Dad who never understood his twelve hundred teenage kids. Now, I gotta go—got a date with a couple members of the local animators' union!

**Act Two, Scene 4: A CAFE
& WASHINGTON D.C. HEARING ROOM**

(A café table and 4 chairs. NORM and ART sit opposite AL and HELEN. There's a bottle of booze and 4 glasses—they are about to toast.)

NORM:

Here's to the happy couple!

ART:

Glad to see some stories end happily ever after. Congratulations, you two.

(They clink and drink. NORM refills their glasses.)

HELEN:

And congratulations to you two. I didn't think you'd ever speak to each other again.

ART:

What makes you think I'm speaking to him? Al, please tell Norm to stop hogging all the booze.

NORM:

Al, please tell Art he's the world's biggest jack-ass.

HELEN:

Ahem, there's a lady present.

NORM:

Sorry, Helen. Art, stop being a jack-ass in front of the lady.

ART:

Okay. I promised myself I'd be good company tonight. How are things going since you wrapped up at Disney's?

AL:

Oh, I haven't worked since "Reluctant Dragon" tanked. I shoulda trusted my instincts. Nobody's gonna be fooled by all that mularkey.

NORM:

Oh, people might get a kick out of it someday, when this strike bullshit is yesterday's news. That's the thing about movies, you know? They'll be around long after we're all gone. Is your name on it?

AL:

Unfortunately.

ART:

Oh, the irony!

NORM:

You're a legend at the Studio, you know. Everyone talks about that day you marched into Walt's office and spat in his eye. You're a brave man.

AL:

Not really. Walt's really a big softie. He just doesn't want anyone to know.

ART:

I beg to differ. I think he's one of the most pig-headed bastards I've ever met.

AL:

Shhh!

HELEN: (*simultaneous*)

How can you?

NORM: (*simultaneous*)

Jesus, come on!

AL:

You were on the winning team. You shouldn't be so hard on him.

ART:

He deserves it. Since we went union, I got a pay cut and nothing but crap assignments. I don't have any respect for that man. He's not even an artist; he's just a cornball who understands the innate bad taste of the American Public.

(LIGHTS DOWN SLIGHTLY on AL/ART/NORM/HELEN and UP on WALT elsewhere on the stage in a pinspot. WALT, now 45, is being addressed by the unseen CHAIRMAN of the HOUSE UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE in 1947.)

HUAC (*voice-over*):

This hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee will come to order. Mr. Disney, thank you for coming. Please approach the microphone and state your full name and address.

WALT:

Walter Elias Disney, Los Angeles, California.

HUAC:

What is your occupation?

WALT:

I think everybody here knows what I do.

HUAC:

For the record, please, Mr. Disney.

WALT:

Well, I am a producer of motion-picture cartoons.

HUAC:

How long have you been in that business?

WALT:

Since 1920.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to AL/ART/NORM/HELEN.)

AL:

So the federal mediators got everything settled?

NORM:

Yeah, but morale is pretty low. A couple hundred artists got laid off, budgets are tight, no more art classes... they even installed a time-clock we have to punch. I miss those golden days when it was a fun little family business.

AL:

Art, didn't you worry that you'd look like the villain? The guy who threw the monkey-wrench into the dream factory?

ART:

No. Fighting for a principle is the most important thing a man like me can do. I owe it to my fellow workers.

NORM:

Well said, comrade Babbitski!

ART:

So what if it sounds like commie-talk! Communism has a lot of good ideas to protect workers from being abused and exploited.

AL:

But what about your career? You're not one of Walt's stars any more.

ART:

There are other studios. I can get a job anywhere.

(LIGHTS SHIFT TO WALT.)

HUAC:

As a matter of fact, Mr. Disney, you experienced a strike at your studio, did you not?

WALT:

Yes.

HUAC:

And is it your opinion that that strike was instituted by members of the Communist Party to serve their purposes?

WALT:

Yes. They printed stories, distorting everything with out-and-out lies; they formed picket lines in front of the theaters, and, well, they called my plant a sweat-shop, and that is not true, anybody in Hollywood would prove it otherwise. It was not a labor problem at all because—I mean, I have never had any labor trouble.

HUAC:

At the time of this strike you didn't have any grievances or labor troubles whatsoever in your plant?

WALT:

No.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to AL/ART/NORM/HELEN.)

NORM:

Hey, I got you a wedding present. *(Takes a hand-painted animation cel from his briefcase and gives it to them.)* They were throwing them away, so I grabbed a couple.

AL *(taking it, aghast):*

Throwing them away?

HELEN *(with a happy gasp of recognition):*

I painted that! You know I assumed it was a girl dragon when I was working on it. He was so dainty. We were shocked when they told us it was a boy! We started calling him Oscar, after Oscar Wilde.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to WALT.)

HUAC:

What is your personal opinion of the Communist Party, Mr. Disney?

WALT:

Well, I believe it is un-American. The thing that I resent most is that they're able to get into these unions, take them over, and that a group of people that I know are good, one-hundred-percent Americans are trapped. They really ought to be smoked out and shown up for what they are.

HUAC:

Have you any suggestions to offer as to how your industry can be helped in fighting this menace?

WALT:

Well, I know that I've been handicapped in fighting it, because they've been hiding behind this labor set-up. They get themselves closely tied up in the labor thing, so that if you try to get rid of them they make a labor case out of it. We must keep the American labor unions clean. We've got to fight for them.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to AL/NORM/HELEN.)

AL:

These are so beautiful. Why would anyone want to throw them away?

ART:

Because once it's photographed, it's useless.

AL:

But all that talent that went into creating it! All that tremendous effort, and with one click of a camera, it's obsolete?

NORM:

Just to be 1/24th of a second of film.

AL:

Do you ever think you're in the wrong business?

NORM:

What, you mean I should be a fine artist, and paint portraits, and landscapes with picturesque ruins? No, Al. I'm an actor. I act with a pencil, one drawing at a time. You probably think it's weird for these painstaking little paintings to get sucked up into a huge mechanical process that makes each frame seem insignificant. But every frame is vital to create the illusion. I see the magic spell it casts over an audience. That's not insignificant. Heck, that makes me immortal. What do I care if no one remembers the name Norman Ferguson? If a Pluto cartoon makes somebody laugh a hundred years from now, you can bet that somewhere, I'll be laughing with 'em. And who do we have to thank for that? Walt Disney. I will draw for him as long as I am able to hold a pencil.

AL: (*offering another toast*)

I wish you luck, Fergie. Whether your name is up on the screen or not, I'll think of you every time I see Pluto. You too, Art, whenever I see Goofy.

NORM:

Thanks.

ART:

Do us a favor and tell twenty million of your closest friends. (*They clink and drink.*)

(*LIGHTS SHIFT to WALT.*)

HUAC:

I have no more questions, Mr. Disney. Thank you for your testimony. You've been extremely helpful.

WALT:

Thank you very much.

HUAC:

And Mr. Disney, it's my opinion that you, as a creator of movie entertainment, are one of the greatest examples in the profession. I want to congratulate you on the entertainment you have given the American people and the world.

(BLACKOUT on everything but AL, who steps downstage.)

AL: *(to audience)*

Who knew a story about cartoons could be so dark? It's just that there's plenty of sides to every story; and when the dust settled on this one, it was a heartbreaker. Was Walt wrong? Of course he was. But he was a genius, and geniuses are crazy. Ask anyone! I'm glad I got to make "Reluctant Dragon." If you ever see it, lemme know what you think. It's still got my name on it... for all eternity.

(BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.)